

Perspectief

Charity, Prudence and Dignity

Roman Catholic and Lutheran Perspectives
on the Refugee Crisis



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Charity, Prudence and Dignity

Roman Catholic and Lutheran Perspectives on the Refugee Crisis

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General introduction

1. Research question

In the wake of the November 2015 Paris terror attacks, 31 U.S. states decided to close their territory to refugees¹. An interesting move, considering at least six out of the seven identified perpetrators of the violence in France were not refugees but had been born and raised in Western Europe².

Western countries have become particularly hesitant about admitting non- Christian refugees, especially young Muslim men. The U.S. in particular has over the past decade exhibited a preference for resettling Christian refugees: overall, about 44 per cent of the 762,000 refugees resettled in America since 2003 are Christians³. Although none of the 3,000,000 refugees resettled in the U.S. since the 1970s have been proven to be involved with terrorist activities, President Barack Obama's September 2015 decision to allow 100,000 refugees into the U.S. annually in the coming years³ was instantly met with much criticism from certain subgroups, most notably from white Evangelicals. On the contrary,

¹ Fantz, A. & B. Brumfield (2015) More than half the nation's governors say Syrian refugees not welcome accessed June 1, 2016 at <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/11/16/world/paris-attacks-syrian-refugees-backlash/>.

² Washington Post (2015) What we know about the Paris attacks and the hunt for the attackers accessed June 1, 2016 at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/world/paris-attacks/>.

³ Gordon, M.R. et al. (2015) U.S. will accept more refugees as crisis grows accessed June 1, 2016 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/21/world/europe/us-to-increase-admission-of-refugees-to-100000-in-2017-kerry-says.html>.

black Protestants and Hispanic Catholics were two of the subgroups most in favour of the proposal⁴.

The aforementioned variation in opinions on refugees amongst Christians is not only an issue in the United States. In a European context, too, the influx of refugees is the subject of widespread debate. Precisely this context of the present-day 'refugee crisis' lies at the origins of my research. The fact that a manifold of approaches and reactions to the crisis is possible makes it virtually impossible to tackle the problem in its full complexity in this study. Therefore we have opted for a very precise and particular angle, focusing on religious – i.c. Christian – belonging and the way in which this may affect the response given to the refugee issue. Hence, this study aims at investigating the following research question: 'How do the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran churches in Europe and North America verbally respond to the current refugee crisis and how do they theologically justify their standpoints?'

The choice to study these two particular churches is not an arbitrary one, as Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism are two of the most widespread Christian churches in the refugees' countries of transit and destination. The Roman Catholic Church accounted for 1.272 billion members worldwide in 2014⁵, of whom 31% resided in Europe and North America. It is the largest religious group on both continents⁶⁷. The Lutheran World Federation represented 72.3 million members in 2013, of whom 55% in Europe and North

⁴ Lee, M. (2015) Here's where America's 338,000 Christian refugees come from accessed June 1, 2016 at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2015/november/heres-where-americas-338000-christian-refugees-have-come.html>

⁵ Holy See Press Office (2016) Pontifical Yearbook 2016 and the Annuarium Statisticum Ecclesiae 2014; dynamics of a Church in transformation, 05.03.2016 accessed September 12, 2016 at <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2016/03/05/160305b.html>.

⁶ National Council of Churches USA (2012) Church giving drops \$1.2 billion reports 2012 Yearbook of Churches accessed September 12, 2016 at <http://www.nccusa.org/news/120209yearbook2012.html>.

⁷ Statistics Canada (2013) 2011 National Household Survey: Immigration, place of birth, citizenship, ethnic origin, visible minorities, language and religion accessed September 12, 2016 at <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/130508/dq130508b-eng.htm?HPA>.

America⁸. In the top five of most desired countries of destination for refugees, two have significant numbers of Lutheran citizens: Germany, in first place, and Sweden, in fifth. The remaining three countries in the top five, Hungary, Italy and France, have Roman Catholic majorities.⁹

With large numbers of refugees traveling through Eastern and Southern European countries attempting to reach Western and Northern Europe and in some cases ultimately North America¹⁰, Catholic and Lutheran churches are directly faced with those in need and therefore provide plenty of material for analysis in relation to the refugee crisis. Important for our research is that these churches are not only large communities but also have representative organs that have issued official statements on a wide variety of topics, including refugees and charity. Such representation and specific official documents are lacking in some other large Christian denominations, such as Baptist and Pentecostal churches.

2. Methodology and structure

This thesis takes the form of a comparative study of theological perspectives on refugees as expressed in writings and speeches by European and North American Roman Catholics and Lutherans. These works can be divided into three segments: official ecclesial documents, academic works and individual opinions. Considering the amount of literature available on this topic, a selection of representative texts is required. The study of these

⁸ Lutheran World Federation (2014) The Lutheran World Federation – 2013 Membership Figures Lutheran World Information 2: 4-12.

⁹ Dearden, L. (2015) 6 charts and a map that show where Europe's refugees are coming from - and the perilous journeys they are taking accessed September 12, 2016 at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/refugee-crisis-six-charts-that-show-where-refugees-are-coming-from-where-they-are-going-and-how-they-10482415.html>.

¹⁰ Palazzo, C. (2015) Mapped: where do migrants apply for asylum in Europe? accessed June 1, 2016 at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/11822343/Mapped-Where-do-migrants-apply-for-asylum-in-Europe.html>.

will allow for a valid comparison of opinions and their underlying theological arguments within and between churches.

In the chapter on Roman Catholic perspectives as well as in that on Lutheran perspectives we will start by studying official ecclesial publications on the refugee crisis. To render our findings representative of European and North American Catholic and Lutheran responses, we will look at texts originating in various countries. To provide an academic context to these documents we will study leading theological works on Christian charity and refugees, including Romano Guardini's *Der Dienst am Nächsten in Gefahr* (1956) and Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* (2007), but also, amongst others, articles and books by Christiansen (1996, 2005), Coonan (2000), Groody (2008, 2009), Miller (2013) and Balch (2015).

Towards the end of each chapter we discuss the views of individuals in each church who are neither considered to be responsible for official publications nor have published academically on the refugee crisis. The individuals whose speeches and writings will be studied in this thesis have not been selected at random but based on their influence. Each of these individuals, whether a politician, clergyman or independent scholar, is outspoken about his or her religious beliefs, and is taken seriously by a significant following. The emphasis will be on individuals' and churches' theological reasoning behind their approach to refugees, while not neglecting the fact that the theological nature of their arguments is frequently intertwined with social, historical and political assertions.

The previous and following sections form an introduction to the current refugee crisis and the two churches selected. In the following two chapters we first analyse the arguments found in the Roman Catholic Church, then those encountered in the Lutheran churches. In the third chapter we will attempt to formulate an answer to the abovementioned research question by confronting the three layers of literature and speeches with each other within and between the two churches. Moreover, the results of these theoretical confrontations will briefly be viewed from a humanitarian and political perspective because the writings and speeches discussed in this thesis comment directly on practical humanitarian and political situations. Chapter four, the conclusion, will be a summary of this study's most important findings.

3. Terminology

With the central phrase in this research being 'refugees', it is essential to determine its definition before we start an in-depth study of Christian approaches towards them. Let us look briefly at the most commonly used definition, that of international humanitarian law, and then compare it to the two churches' descriptions.

The 1951 United Nations *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*¹¹ states that "(...) the term 'refugee' shall apply to any person who: (...) owing to a well-founded fear of being *persecuted* for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is *outside the country of his nationality*, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country" (my emphasis).

The Roman Catholic Church has adopted a different view on the word 'refugee' than international law has. Although it has never released an official definition of 'refugee', due largely to the fact that distinguishing between refugees and migrants has become increasingly difficult, one can discern which people the Church attributes this label to by studying magisterial documents and statements of Church-related organisations¹². Thus it becomes clear that the Catholic Church regards as refugees anyone fleeing life-

¹¹ The Refugee Convention was adopted at a conference in Geneva in 1951, as a response to the predicaments of millions of World War Two refugees. Together with its 1967 protocol the Convention defines who is a refugee and outlines the rights of refugees and the duties of states pertaining to these rights. 148 nations have signed the Convention, the Protocol or both. (UNHCR [2011] *The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol*, Geneva, UNHCR.)

¹² E.g. Pope John Paul II (2003) *Migration with a View to Peace* accessed September 10, 2016 at http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/migration/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_20031223_world-migration-day-2004.html; Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People & Pontifical Council Cor Unum for Human and Christian Development (2013) *Welcoming Christ in Refugees and Forcibly Displaced Persons* Vatican City; Jesuit Refugee Service (undated) *Who Are Refugees?* accessed May 20, 2015 at <http://en.jrs.net/refugees>.

threatening situations, be they social, economic or environmental, and regardless of whether they cross national borders.

As will be discussed in more detail in chapter two, the Lutheran churches do not profess one single social teaching or, by extension, a clear-cut definition of 'refugee'. We therefore turn to Lutheran organisations aiding and resettling refugees. In the United States Lutheran churches and organisations aimed at ministry towards immigrants and refugees are united in the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service. This overarching organisation subscribes to the description of the United Nations but adds to the list those people "for whom escaping to another country is the only means of survival"¹³. In our research we will understand the word 'refugee' to mean people who are escaping life-threatening circumstances, regardless of whether they cross borders or not.

4. Relevance

Our study of the Roman Catholic and Lutheran perspectives on the refugee crisis can be considered relevant on three different levels, i.e. the academic, societal and ecclesial level.

Today the Western world is confronted with unprecedented numbers of people seeking refuge, with one out of every 122 humans displaced from home¹⁴. People are experiencing a tension between compassion with the strangers knocking on the doors of their countries on the one hand, and the economic, cultural, social, political and demographical protection of their own people on the other. This study aims at examining the variety of Christian responses to an unparalleled crisis. While it is currently absent in the general academic migration discourse for its perceived lack of attention towards migration¹⁵, theology would stand out as the discipline par excellence to keep academic debates focused on the humanity of migrant peoples. More than any other discipline, theology tends to recognise

¹³ Lutheran World Federation (undated) *Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations for Faith Leaders* accessed June 1, 2016 at https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/Welcoming_the_Stranger.pdf.

¹⁴ Gaynor, T. (2015) *2015 likely to break records for forced displacement – study* accessed June 1, 2016 at <http://www.unhcr.org/5672c2576.html>.

¹⁵ Groody, D. (2009) *Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration* Theological Studies 70, p. 640.

the difference between a refugee's disputable legal identity and his inviolable human dignity. By thoroughly studying "the signs of the times"¹⁶ that we currently live in theology may make valuable contributions to refugee debates.

From a societal point of view, we see that the heated debates surrounding the increasing numbers of refugees moving into Europe and North America are marked by one common concern: to what extent do we, inhabitants of these continents, have a duty to commit ourselves to the refugees' fates? Christians can offer various answers to this question, some of which would perhaps not occur to non-Christians in the debates. It is vital to investigate such responses, since the choice in perception of refugees ultimately determines how they are treated.

Finally, European and North American Christians cannot turn a blind eye to the refugee crisis, as it is unfolding in their own countries. A careful analysis of the statements they make in the on-going debates will render a clearer image of the added value of Christian faith in our times.

¹⁶ Pope John XXIII (1961) 'Humanae Salutis' AAS 54: 5-13, art. 4.

Chapter 1: Roman Catholic responses

In this chapter, the Roman Catholic Church's relation to forced migrants will be explored from multiple perspectives, starting with the Magisterium. Since its dawn in the late 19th century Catholic social teaching has provided a moral compass for Catholic lay people, religious and clergy on a wide variety of topics, including forced migration. The sheer volume of teaching on the issue of migration requires us to look at a well-considered selection of the most leading papal encyclicals, homilies and speeches.

The most recent contributor to Catholic social teaching is Pope Francis, for whom the refugee crisis has become one of the most significant topics of his pontificate. Because many of his words and writings relate to the current refugee crisis we will discuss his views in more detail.

We will then proceed to the works of three leading Catholic theologians – Romano Guardini, Daniel Groody and Charles Taylor – whose writings can provide insight into the refugee crisis from different perspectives. While Guardini is a theologian and philosopher who has written, amongst other topics, on theological anthropology, Groody is a priest who has provided pastoral care for refugees, and finally Taylor is a respected Catholic philosopher. Lastly we will look at the voices of Catholics who are neither responsible for the formulation of Catholic social teaching nor have written or spoken on the topic in an academic context, yet exert considerable influence on the societal debate on the refugee crisis.

1. Catholic social teaching

The Roman Catholic Church expresses a preferential option for forced migrants, which is clearly rooted in the Old Testament tradition, particularly in the fate of the people of

Israel¹⁷. The Church's stance is further reinforced by Catholicism's emphasis on the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. The Holy Family, having fled to Egypt to escape political persecution, has become the biblical "archetype of every refugee family."¹⁸

The Catholic Church first paid attention to migrants under the pontificate of Pius IX (1846-1878), who encouraged missionary priests to provide pastoral care for European migrants in North America, South America and Northern Africa¹⁹. The development of a clear Catholic perspective on migrants, both those voluntarily and those forcibly displaced from their homes, took flight from the introduction of Catholic social teaching onwards. While the first encyclical on societal issues, Pope Leo XIII's encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum* (1891) did not yet explicitly mention migrants, later documents expressly did so, particularly as the presence of millions of displaced people after the First and Second World War called for a response from the Church. In 1952, in the wake of World War Two and with the emergence of the Cold War, Pius XII's apostolic constitution *Exsul Familia* revolved wholly around the issue of migration and underlined the right of families to leave their region of origin and to seek better life circumstances elsewhere. While acknowledging that migration may require regulation, this document insisted that migrants' needs must be taken seriously.

In his landmark social encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, John XXIII built on his predecessors' social teachings and extended the right to migrate from solely families to individuals in case of "just reasons", stressing that people are not only citizens of a particular country but also members of the human family²⁰. This widening of the Catholic approach occurred simultaneously with the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) – which, according to the pope, had the task of *aggiornamento* or 'bringing up to date' of the Church²¹ and could

¹⁷ Christiansen, D. (1996) Movement, Asylum, Borders: Christian Perspectives International Migration Review 30-1, p. 8.

¹⁸ Pope Pius XII (1952) 'Exsul Familia' AAS 44: 649-704, art. 1.

¹⁹ De Mey, P. (2016) 'De Katholieke Kerk over migratie: een terreinverkenning' Collationes 46-2: 151-162, p. 151.

²⁰ Pope John XXIII (1963) 'Pacem in Terris' AAS 55: 257-304, art. 25.

²¹ For more background on Vatican II, see Lamberigts, M. & L. Declerck (2015, ed.) *Het concilie Vaticanum II (1962-1965)* Antwerp, Halewijn/Adveniat. The authors devote attention to the fact that the council

therefore not overlook the pressing issue of human rights, including those of migrants. *Pacem in Terris* has been called utopian for its focus on human rights at the height of the Cold War, a time in which an encyclical devoted exclusively to practical issues such as nuclear warfare was to be more expected²². John XXIII, however, outlined “a Catholic approach to peacemaking”, which regards respect for human rights as the basis for peace²³.

In the postconciliar era, the topic of human rights remained on the agenda. Perhaps the most instructive illustration thereof is the *Instruction on the Pastoral Care of People Who Migrate*, which held a strong focus on migrant worker rights. It emphasised the benefits of migration, most importantly its “[promotion of] the unity of the human family.”²⁴ Furthermore, it asserts migrants’ responsibility to make an effort to integrate²⁵, and lay people’s responsibility to assist in this integration²⁶.

Hitherto, social teaching on migration had focused on migration on economic grounds, and mostly within a European context. Catholic teaching neglected to comment explicitly on the situation of refugees, most of whom lived elsewhere in the world at the time. This geographical restriction vanished with the papacy of John Paul II. Under the era of Wojtyła, Catholic social teaching began to take special interest in forcibly displaced people around the globe. In 1981 the pope defined migration on economic grounds as a “necessary evil”²⁷, and in 1987 he characterised the refugee crisis in general as “the festering of a

witnessed the rise of groups such as the ‘Church of the Poor’ group, who explicitly stressed the Church’s need to devote itself to those in need, including migrants.

²² Christiansen, D. (2005) *Commentary on Pacem in Terris (Peace on Earth)* in Himes, K.R. (ed.) *Modern Catholic social teaching: commentaries and interpretations* Washington DC, Georgetown University Press, p. 217.

²³ *ibid.* 223.

²⁴ Sacred Congregation for Bishops (1969) ‘*Instructio de Pastoralis Migratorum Cura*’ AAS 61: 614-643, §2.

²⁵ Sacred Congregation for Bishops (1969) ‘*Instructio de Pastoralis Migratorum Cura*’ §10.

²⁶ Sacred Congregation for Bishops (1969) ‘*Instructio de Pastoralis Migratorum Cura*’ §56.

²⁷ Pope John Paul II (1981) ‘*Laborem Exercens*’ AAS 73: 577-647, art. 23.

wound”²⁸ and affirmed refugees’ rights as laid out in the 1951 Refugee Convention. These include the right to food, health care, education, work and housing.²⁹

A more concrete Catholic take on the refugee problem was laid out by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (PCPCMIP, established in 1988) and the Pontifical Council Cor Unum for Human and Christian Development (PCCU, established in 1971) in 1992 in the presentation *Refugees: A Challenge for Solidarity*. In this document the Catholic magisterium expressed criticism of the limited scope of the Geneva Convention and subsequent protocol, and pointed out that “many others whose human rights are equally disregarded” were not eligible to receive protection³⁰. The critique made clear that the ecclesial notion of solidarity stretched out to all those in need, also to the persons that were at risk of falling outside of the margins of the U.N.’s definitions. The Holy See therefore suggested broader categories in order to include victims of natural disasters and harmful economic policies, thereby distinguishing between economic migrants and economic refugees. In particular in the first decade of the twenty-first century, under the leadership of Mons. Agostino Marchetto, the PCPCMIP took on a very critical stance over against political forces in Europe and abroad regarding their limited approach of the migration issue³¹. It has furthermore condemned the increasingly hostile attitude towards refugees in certain countries, a development that persists to this day. According to the abovementioned Pontifical Council economic crises, such as the one witnessed from 2008 onwards, cannot be used as an excuse to refuse entry to people who are fleeing for their lives. Furthermore, the Holy See decried the detention of asylum

²⁸ Pope John Paul II (1987) ‘Sollicitudo Rei Socialis’ AAS 80: 513-586, art. 24.

²⁹ For a detailed commentary on the contents of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, see Zimmermann, A. et al. (2011) *The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol: A Commentary* Oxford, OUP Oxford.

³⁰ Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People & Pontifical Council Cor Unum for Human and Christian Development (1992) *Refugees: A Challenge to Solidarity* Vatican City, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, art. 3.

³¹ See also the recent book Marchetto, A. (2010) *Chiesa e migranti. La mia battaglia per una sola famiglia umana. Intervista di Marco Roncalli*, Brescia, Editrice La Scuola.

seekers that takes place in some countries, and called for just policies regarding the distribution of refugees.

2. Pope Francis

At the present day, Catholics cannot deny the influence of Pope Francis on the debate surrounding the fate of refugees. It is therefore imperative that we dedicate sufficient space to the study of his words and actions over the past three years, a timeframe which has coincided with the escalation of the global refugee crisis. Since the commencement of his pontificate in March 2013 Francis has demonstrated special attention for refugees, as “Jesus Christ is always waiting to be recognised in migrants and refugees, in displaced person and in exiles”³².

Because of the Holy Family’s own flight to Egypt, the Church attempts to “recognise [Jesus’] suffering countenance”³³ in that of refugees, thereby treating them as “Jesus in disguise”³⁴. As such, refugees offer the Church an opportunity “to enlarge her heart” and to take on her motherly role towards all humans. Francis said that it is also through these displaced people that Jesus makes an appeal to the wealthy nations who receive them: to let the less fortunate have a share in their affluence.³⁵ In his words: “[w]hat we ourselves have received, we have received for them as well”³⁶.

Yet God’s incarnation in Jesus does not merely serve to trigger a charitable response from the wealthy. Jesus, because of his simultaneous humanity and divinity, can function as an inspiration and as a consoler for refugees themselves. In his 2015 message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Francis encouraged refugees to contemplate the Holy

³² Pope Francis (2014) ‘Occasione Diei Mundialis Migrantis et Itinerantis. «Ecclesia sine confinis: Mater omnium gentium».’ AAS 106-10: 790-793.

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ [Desmond, E.W. \(1989\) *Interview with Mother Teresa: a pencil in the hand of God* accessed June 1, 2016 at http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,959149,00.html.](http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,959149,00.html)

³⁵ Pope Francis (2014) ‘Occasione Diei Mundialis Migrantis et Itinerantis’.

³⁶ Pope Francis (2014) ‘Occasione temporis Quadragesimae anno 2015: *Confirmate corda vestra* (Iacob 5, 8)’ AAS 107-2: 194-198.

Family's exile in Egypt, in order to be inspired by Mary and Joseph's faith that God would not forsake them³⁷. Earlier, in his 2014 letter to the Christians of the Middle East, he wrote that God himself "consoles us in all our affliction" and that "the birth of the Son of God in our human flesh is an indescribable mystery of consolation"³⁸. Moreover, Francis expressed his hope that these sufferings would be united to Jesus' suffering on the cross, so as to bring about many fruits for the Church. Importantly, he also emphasised the importance of bonding with people adhering to other religions, in order to prevent religious fundamentalism from developing. Lastly he encouraged and expressed his admiration for individuals and communities receiving refugees, who practice charity without discrimination, and called upon the international community to continue their diplomatic efforts to achieve peace, in order for the displaced to be able to return to their country.³⁹

In a world where the culture of comfort is widespread, a refugee becomes nothing more than an interruption of the usual, comfortable state of affairs, said Francis in a homily early on in his papacy. The voice of God is required for people to open their eyes and hearts to the other. In Genesis God asked Cain "Where is your brother?" and He repeats this question to mankind today in order to lead Man away from his inattentiveness towards the world and people around him. Refugees, Francis stated, "fail to find understanding, fail to find acceptance, fail to find solidarity". When God asks "Where is your brother?" Man says "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?"⁴⁰. Today, Man is confronted by the suffering of refugees but when asked whose responsibility it is to relieve their burdens, he says "It isn't me; I don't have anything to do with it; it must be someone else, but certainly not me". This loss of a sense of responsibility towards other human beings is characteristic of the "culture of comfort", which makes people live in "soap bubbles" and which has given rise to the "globalisation of indifference". The result of this globalisation of indifference is that people have "forgotten how to weep". They are no longer able to have compassion, that

³⁷ Pope Francis (2014) 'Occasione Diei Mundialis Migrantis et Itinerantis'.

³⁸ 2 Corinthians 1:4, NRSVCE.

³⁹ Pope Francis (2014) 'Ad Christifideles Orientis Propinqui' AAS 107-1: 21-25.

⁴⁰ Genesis 4:9, NRSVCE.

is, able to suffer with others. God however, says Pope Francis, poses the question “Where is your brother?” to and demands accountability from each and every person.⁴¹

In November 2014 the pope visited the European Parliament and the Council of Europe and took the opportunity to exhort the authorities to prevent the Mediterranean from “becom[ing] a vast cemetery”. He called for unity within the European Union in tackling the refugee crisis in a manner that respects human dignity, relying on the teaching of Vatican II’s decree on religious liberty, *Dignitatis Humanae*. An approach starting from human dignity requires efforts to combat the root of the problem, namely internal conflicts in refugees’ countries of origin, while not forgetting that at the same time the consequences of these conflicts, the displacement and suffering of people, also need to be alleviated. Policies motivated by European countries’ self-interest rather than a deep respect for human dignity can solve neither the cause nor the effects of the refugee crisis, said Francis.⁴²

It is a “concrete change of heart” of every person, and especially of the wealthy and comfortable, that Pope Francis strives for. Over the course of the past years, he has elaborated on what he sees as the antithesis to the “culture of comfort”: the “culture of encounter”. Only this antidote to indifference is able to build “a better, more just and fraternal world”.⁴³

This conversion requires asking forgiveness for one’s past indifference. For this reason Pope Francis held a penitential liturgy at Lampedusa in July 2013⁴⁴. During the homily he drew a comparison between King Herod, who killed all baby boys in order to protect his position, and the countries attempting to keep out refugees because they fear the social, cultural, political, demographical and economic consequences. Francis asked God to

⁴¹ Pope Francis (2013) ‘Homilia’ AAS 105-8: 653-656.

⁴² Pope Francis (2014) ‘Ad Europaeum Publicum Consilium’ AAS 106-12: 995-1004.

⁴³ Pope Francis (2013) ‘Occasione Diei Mundialis Migrantis atque Profugi. «*Migranti e rifugiati: verso un mondo migliore*»’ AAS 105-10: 926-930.

⁴⁴ A theological analysis of the importance of Francis’ call for conversion was given by Clifford, C.E. (2016) Pope Francis’s Call for the Conversion of the Church in Our Time in S. Van Erp & K. Schelkens (ed.), Conversion and Church. The Challenge of Ecclesial Renewal Leiden/Boston, Brill.

“remove the part of Herod that lurks in our hearts”, a part which is revealed in people’s indifference to refugees.⁴⁵ Only through penance will the world be able to meet the globalisation of migration with a “globalisation of charity and cooperation”⁴⁶ that promotes human dignity⁴⁷.

In his 2015 Lenten message Francis offered a number of practical suggestions, on the level of the universal Church, of local parishes and communities, and of individual Christians, that ought to be pursued when people become tempted by indifference. On each of these three levels, the goal is for people’s hearts to be fashioned to the likeness of God’s: “Fac cor nostrum secundum cor tuum” (“Make our hearts like Yours”).³⁶

The Church can help her members overcome their indifference by encouraging them to receive the sacraments, in particular the Eucharist. This is because the Eucharist is the body of Christ, and by feeding on it, “we become what we receive: the body of Christ”.³⁶ And in Christ’s body, there is no room for indifference: “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it”⁴⁸.

Francis then proceeds to discuss parishes, emphasising that these are the places where charity is to be put into practice. This is done by praying with Christians on Earth and in heaven, thereby forming a community in which “indifference is conquered by love”, but also by looking at the needs of people locally. Charity on the parish level leads these local ecclesial communities to become “islands of mercy in the midst of the sea of indifference”.³⁶

On the level of individual Christians, Francis claims that indifference has become a coping mechanism for people to deal with unsettling stories and images seen in the media. Faced

⁴⁵ Pope Francis (2013) ‘Homilia’.

⁴⁶ Pope Francis (2014) ‘Occasione Diei Mundialis Migrantis et Itinerantis’.

⁴⁷ Pope Francis (2014) *Message of Pope Francis to the archbishop of Agrigento on the occasion of the first anniversary of the visit to Lampedusa* accessed September 10, 2016 at https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/messages/pont-messages/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20140623_messaggio-anniversario-visita-lampedusa.html.

⁴⁸ 1 Corinthians 12:26, NRSVCE.

daily with news items of drowning refugees, for example, leaves people with feelings of powerlessness. Francis proposed prayer as a starting point, stressing that “the power of so many voices united in prayer”, on Earth and in heaven, is not to be underestimated. He himself initiated the ‘24 Hours for the Lord’, a full day of Eucharistic adoration and confession, for the purpose of countering indifference. Secondly, he encouraged charity. This can be done by supporting the Church’s refugee organisations or by finding ways to personally, physically extend a helping hand. Thirdly, such troubling news can serve as a reminder of the fragility of one’s own life and of one’s dependency on God and other people to change the world for the better.³⁶

3. Romano Guardini

Pope Francis’ views on refugees, as well as those of his predecessors as laid out in Catholic social teaching, can be understood in light of Catholic theologian Romano Guardini’s work *Der Dienst am Nächsten in Gefahr*. Jorge Bergoglio once considered writing his dissertation on Guardini’s body of work⁴⁹, and cited him multiple times in his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si’*. Not surprisingly, this theologian’s influence on Bergoglio’s thought is readily discernible.

Guardini states that charity to people in need finds its fullest depth in Christianity. The Christian message is that all people are created by God, and thus He can be encountered in every person. In chapter 25 of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus states that the very least of people, namely those who have nothing to offer to society whatsoever, are the people in which He appears. He himself becomes the ultimate motivation to extend aid to people in need.

However, in the seventeenth century people in various socioeconomic classes became of the opinion that life could only be lived to the fullest on the basis of convictions different from the Christian ones. Some people drew from the principles of pagan antiquity, others from their everyday experience.⁵⁰ The result of this abandonment of the Christian faith as

⁴⁹ Piqué, E. (2014) *Pope Francis: Life and Revolution* Chicago IL, Loyola Press, p. 308.

⁵⁰ Guardini, R. (1956) *De naastenliefde in gevaar* [original German title: *Der Dienst am Nächsten in Gefahr*] Lannoo, The Hague, p. 25.

the basis for all action, including charity, was that before long, Western society returned to a seemingly pre-Christian classification of the needy. They were divided into those who were able to contribute to the wellbeing of the nation, and those who were of no perceived use at all.⁵¹ This distinction was justified by the prioritisation of the public interest. Society was to be elevated to physical, mental and cultural perfection, leaving no space for imperfections like poverty and disease.⁵²

The main effect of this secularisation of Western society with respect to altruism was that charity came to be defined in terms of rights and obligations. Guardini calls this the mechanisation of charity, which entails a business-like bureaucratisation. A business-like attitude should not and cannot be entirely obliterated from aid⁵³ – especially because large-scale crises simply require efficiency in order for aid to be effective – but such an approach should be subordinate to the altruism that flows from a free and open heart. This is because “[c]harity finds its deepest motivation in the relation from person to person, in the liberty of calling and answering”.⁵⁴

Guardini then turns to the abovementioned objection that is often posed against the personal approach to the needy that he himself advocates: that the magnitude of, for instance, the refugee crisis does not allow for personal and customised aid. People who start working for charitable organisations are initially highly motivated, yet get discouraged and embittered once they realise the scope of the problems they are dealing with. In order to prevent this loss of ambition from happening, Guardini stresses that these masses of people in need of help should be seen not as a mass of cases, but rather as a large number of individuals. Respect for the uniqueness of each person must subsequently be conveyed through involving the needy themselves in improving their situation.⁵⁵ Guardini proposes the Christian outlook on charity as the remedy to secular society’s limited perception of charity. Belief in Christ’s presence in the most needy allows for

⁵¹ *ibid.* 26.

⁵² *ibid.* 28.

⁵³ *ibid.* 41.

⁵⁴ *ibid.* 38.

⁵⁵ *ibid.* 42.

suffering to become seen in the first place as an opportunity to love rather than as a burden.⁵⁶ Robert Krieg, in his study of Guardini's oeuvre, further explains why this theologian is so critical of modern humanism and its relation to charity. In his 1939 work *Welt und Person*, Guardini discusses the concepts of *heteronomy* and *autonomy*. Heteronomy constitutes the placement of the authority over one's life in the hands of an entity other than oneself, for example in a government, ideology, person or institution. Such was the case in Nazi Germany, for instance. Autonomy is the complete opposite, as a person places the authority over his life solely with himself. Individualism and anarchism are examples of an autonomic view on life.⁵⁷

Both heteronomy and autonomy have dramatic consequences and must be avoided according to Guardini. Only faith in the God of Jesus Christ offers a viable middle way.⁵⁸ Confronted with the refugee crisis, Western countries are reassessing their policies and reaffirming their perceived cultural identities. Guardini proposes *theonomy* for countries to avoid falling into the pitfall of either extreme: placing the authority for one's life exclusively in God, who in turn grants each human the fullness of humanity.⁵⁹

4. Daniel Groody

We will now turn to a modern day scholar who provides useful insights into Pope Francis' spirituality: Catholic theologian and priest Daniel Groody. Groody proposes three concepts fundamental to a Catholic view on migration: *Imago Dei*, *Verbum Dei* and *Missio Dei*, or the Image of God, the Word of God, and the Mission of God.⁶⁰

With millions of refugees on the move, a tendency arises to reduce them to exactly that: a statistic, and a problematic one at that. Yet as the book of Genesis teaches, and as the

⁵⁶ *ibid.* 50.

⁵⁷ Krieg, R.A. (1997) *Romano Guardini, A Precursor of Vatican II* Notre Dame IN, University of Notre Dame Press, p. 471.

⁵⁸ *ibid.* 458.

⁵⁹ *ibid.* 464.

⁶⁰ Groody, D. (2008) *Dying to Live: Theology, Migration and the Human Journey* Reflections, Yale University.

conciliar decree *Dignitatis Humanae*⁶¹ reflects, each human being is made in the image of God, bestowing upon him an inviolable dignity. The *Imago Dei* counters the dehumanisation that characterises the lives of refugees, who are frequently faced with poverty and societal exclusion. Inspired by God's limitlessly high regard of human life the Catholic Church has, in its social teaching, made explicit the right of people to migrate if their basic human rights are violated in their home country.⁶² This right to move in order to protect one's inherent dignity surpasses the right of states to protect their borders.⁶³

The belief that God chose to become incarnate in a vulnerable human being who would himself flee political persecution with his family cannot be without significance according to Groody. The Word of God could have taken on any human form, yet it was the life of a refugee, an outcast that he adopted. Groody notes that this does not mean God regards poverty and forced migration as something good, "but because it is precisely in history's darkest place that God can reveal hope to all who experience pain, rejection, and alienation." By becoming a refugee himself, God "not only reaches out to the stranger but becomes the stranger."⁶⁴

The Image of God as present in each human and the Word of God as incarnated in Christ meet in the *Missio Dei*. On numerous occasions in the Gospel Jesus shares meals with the outcasts of his time, thereby overcoming conventional barriers between (groups of) people. Christ's actions make clear that human borders are subservient to the unity of the Kingdom of God that he intends to bring about on Earth. Instead of prioritising loyalty to a specific political party or ideology, which makes possible the exclusion of certain people, Christ made clear that the "law of love"⁶⁵ is to be obeyed above all else. While he did not

⁶¹ Pope Paul VI (1965) 'Dignitatis Humanae' AAS 58: 929-941. See also Kartje, J. (2010) *Religious Freedom and the Human Person. Old Testament Perspectives on Dignitatis Humanae* Chicago Studies 49: 243-307.

⁶² Pope John XXIII (1963) 'Pacem in Terris', art. 103-107.

⁶³ Sacred Congregation for Bishops (1969) 'Instructio de Pastoralis Migratorum Cura', art. 351.

⁶⁴ Groody (2009) *Crossing the Divide*, p. 650.

⁶⁵ *ibid.* 654.

come to “abolish the law”⁶⁶, the law must always serve human dignity rather than the other way round.

In a later publication Groody adds a fourth concept to the list, namely that of *Visio Dei*, or the Vision of God⁶⁷. Christians do not only look forward to the Kingdom of God in the life to come, but also to its realisation on Earth. Such faith requires of a Christian that he place obedience to God above that to a nation or political ideology. Just as Christ crossed the human borders of his time in pursuit of the Kingdom, so his followers today are called to do the same. As Catholic theologian and professor of immigration and refugee law Terry Coonan puts it, “in the face of the stranger, the Christian community encounters the face of Jesus.”⁶⁸ The use of the word ‘face’ here is significant as it implies the necessity of a personal encounter with those in need, just as Guardini made clear in his 1956 book on charity.

5. Charles Taylor

Another prominent Catholic voice today is that of the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor. Although North American, he is also considered a leading Catholic philosopher in Europe. As he is on the lookout for the sources for our moral identity, his work is highly relevant for this paper. When discussing the concept of love for one’s neighbour in *A Secular Age*, Taylor makes a distinction between charity and *agape*: a spiritual, rather than earthly or sexual kind of love, which God has for mankind. It is an unconditional, self-giving love in which all humans are called to participate, and because it originates in God it goes further than charity, which is extended from one human to another. Because *agape* is found in the relationship between the Divine and Man, it is only fathomable to those who actually believe in this higher power⁶⁹. Jesus’ exhortations in Matthew 25 are clearly intended to be understood in terms of *agape* and therefore the Christian standard of

⁶⁶ Matthew 5:17, NRSVCE.

⁶⁷ Groody (2009) *Crossing the Divide*, p. 638.

⁶⁸ Coonan, T. (2000) *There Are No Strangers Among Us: Catholic Social Teachings and U.S. Immigration Law* The Catholic Lawyer 40, p. 111.

⁶⁹ Taylor, C. (2007) *A Secular Age* Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, p. 20.

charity must be that of *agape*. Taylor uses the parable of the Good Samaritan to illustrate how the Christian *agape* was a deviation from the social norms at the time: “If the Samaritan had followed the demands of sacred social boundaries, he would never have stopped to help the wounded Jew. It is plain that the Kingdom involves another kind of solidarity altogether, one which would bring us into a network of *agape*”.⁷⁰ Since God’s love existed before mankind became divided into communities, *agape* is all-inclusive. Yet as Western society became increasingly secular and modern humanism took hold, a substitute had to be found for *agape* that did not involve a supreme being⁷¹.

This more limited perception of charity withstands the initial claims of modern humanism that humans are inherently capable of boundless altruism. Taylor therefore notes that modern humanism did not entirely adopt pre-Christian notions of charity, but took it one step further. Whereas humanists before Christ, such as Lucretius, simply excluded the divine from their understanding of charity, modern humanists thought humans to be endowed with an intrinsic capability of determining just boundaries within which to conduct their charitable acts. The selflessness of *agape* was by them deemed to be over the top.⁷²

6. Critical voices

As we have seen, the Roman Catholic Church, through its official social doctrine, expresses itself in favour of admitting people fleeing life-threatening circumstances to more stable countries. Since the introduction of this teaching in the late nineteenth century the magisterium has become increasingly explicit about the rights of refugees and duties of states in relation to refugees. Pope Francis has himself visited refugees in Italy and Greece and regularly speaks about refugees in his homilies.

The scholars we have discussed – Guardini, Groody and Taylor – provide a theological explanation for Francis’ statements. Yet despite Catholic social teaching being in favour of receiving and providing pastoral and physical care for refugees, and being explicitly

⁷⁰ *ibid.* 158.

⁷¹ *ibid.* 245.

⁷² *ibid.* 247.

against refusing entry to people fleeing life-threatening situations, not all members of the Church share this position. While respecting the example of Christian charity such an attitude displays, they comment that the virtue of prudence must be observed as well.

In September 2015, the Hungarian archbishop Péter Erdő forbade Hungarian Catholic churches to accommodate refugees, as he believed this would constitute complicity to human trafficking. Another bishop of the country, Laszlo Kiss-Rigo, remarked that Pope Francis “doesn’t know the situation”, asserting “they’re not refugees. This is an invasion. (...) They want to take over.” He also claimed that many refugees behave in an arrogant manner.⁷³ In a joint statement, the Hungarian bishops expressed their concern for the plight of Christians in the Middle East, but also emphasised the duty of the State to protect its borders and citizens⁷⁴.

Others cite the Catechism of the Catholic Church^{75,76}, which explicitly states that prudence “guides the other virtues by setting rule and measure”⁷⁷. According to this point of view, in the case of the refugee crisis charity is the main virtue that requires guidance. A limited extension of charity on the grounds of prudence “is not to be confused with timidity or fear”⁷⁸. Another relevant element of Catholic social teaching discussed in the Catechism is the common good. The Central Committee of German Catholics (ZDK) criticised Lutheran chancellor Angela Merkel’s views on immigration, which will be elaborated upon in the

⁷³ Witte, G. (2015) *Hungarian bishop says pope is wrong about refugees* accessed June 1, 2016 at https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/hungarian-bishop-says-pope-is-wrong-about-refugees/2015/09/07/fcba72e6-558a-11e5-9f54-1ea23f6e02f3_story.html.

⁷⁴ Haszanz (2015) *Erdő Péter szerint embercsempésszé válna az egyház, ha befogadná a menekülteket* accessed June 1, 2016 at <http://444.hu/2015/09/03/erdo-peter-szerint-embercsempessze-valna-az-egyhaz-ha-befogadna-a-menekulteket/>.

⁷⁵ Kilpatrick, W. (2015) *Dangerous Compassion in the Syrian Refugee Debate?* accessed September 12, 2016 at <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/dangerous-compassion-in-the-syrian-refugee-debate>.

⁷⁶ Unknown author (2016) *Prudential judgement* accessed June 1, 2016 at <https://americanmorals.wordpress.com/2016/02/15/prudential-judgement/>.

⁷⁷ Catholic Church (1992) *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Vatican City, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, art. 1806.

⁷⁸ *ibid.* 1806.

next chapter, by stating that she is putting the common good at stake and that she should focus more on the causes of the refugee crisis. Unlimited acceptance of migrants “cannot be Christian”.⁷⁹

Popular Catholic blogger and theologian Taylor Marshall published an opinion article in which he studied the current refugee crisis from the perspective of Thomas Aquinas. While encouraging kindness towards Muslims, since “kindness brings about conversion and understanding,” Marshall points out the irreconcilable doctrinal differences between Islam and Christianity. He also warns that “Muslims are bound by conscience to erect Sharia law in your nation,” and that this will be possible for them to achieve once they constitute 51 per cent of a country’s population.⁸⁰

Aquinas, according to Marshall, would emphasise the common good of each sovereign nation. Europe and North America, because of their Judaeo-Christian roots, have an obligation to resettle Christian refugees but also a duty to refuse Muslim refugees in order to protect this common good. Marshall proposes to follow the example of the Good Samaritan, who charitably took an injured man to an inn and paid for his recovery rather than taking him home. Translating this parable to today’s situation, he argues in favour of humanitarian aid as close to the refugees’ homes as possible. Despite the religious differences, “we are obliged to help them” as is commanded in Proverbs 25:21: “If your enemies are hungry, give them bread to eat; and if they are thirsty, give them water to drink.”⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Die Welt (2015) *Katholiken finden Merkels Kurs “nicht christlich”* accessed June 1, 2016 at <http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article148755826/Katholiken-finden-Merkels-Kurs-nicht-christlich.html>.

⁸⁰ Marshall, T. (2015) *Islamic refugee crisis: Good Samaritan or Maccabean response? Or both* accessed June 1, 2016 at <http://taylormarshall.com/2015/11/islamic-refugee-crisis-good-samaritan-or-maccabean-response-or-both.html>.

Chapter 2: Lutheran responses

Whereas the Catholic Church has developed a clearly defined and universally binding social teaching since the late 19th century, the various Lutheran churches do not have a similar unifying magisterium. This absence of a clear-cut perspective on refugees has had as a consequence a lack of academic enquiry into Lutheran perceptions of refugees. However, the Lutheran community itself experienced exile and flight on numerous occasions in history, experiences that have undoubtedly marked the way Lutheran churches view themselves and refugees, as well as their mutual relationship.

In this chapter we will look at the Lutheran World Federation, the Lutheran body most similar to the Catholic Magisterium, although the significant differences between the two will not be overlooked. We then proceed to discuss academic articles by David L. Balch and Wayne N. Miller. Balch is a New Testament professor who has from this perspective written on a wide variety of topics, including migration, family life and ethnicity. Miller is the Lutheran bishop of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod, and is amongst other social outreach positions a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's (ELCA) episcopal immigration reform task force. In this function he has also been involved with the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service. Balch and Miller's articles on migration discussed below were published in the ELCA's *Journal of Lutheran Ethics*, which aims to be "[a] bridge between the academic study of Christianity and the contemporary life of the Church"⁸¹. Paralleling the previous chapter on Roman Catholic perspectives, we will finish with an analysis of the voices of individual Lutherans who are neither affiliated with the Lutheran World Federation nor with an academic institution.

⁸¹ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (undated) *About JLE* accessed September 12, 2016 at <http://www.elca.org/JLE/Pages/About>.

1. The Lutheran World Federation

While Lutheran churches do not acknowledge one religious leader comparable to the position of pope and do not profess one social teaching, most of them are united in the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). In the past the LWF has issued several statements on the topic of refugees, and its Department for World Service is involved in aid to two million refugees around the world, not only in their countries of destination but also in their countries of origin. Stating "it is crucial to remember that only a very small percentage of the 60 million refugees even try to come to Europe,"⁸² the department encourages long-term political solutions and peace building in conflict areas. At the same time however, it funds psychological aid to refugees arriving in Southern and Eastern Europe and distributes items such as blankets to alleviate immediate physical needs. It also calls on European political leaders to take action in line with the commitments they made when signing the 1951 Geneva Convention, noting that receiving and helping refugees is not merely a "moral obligation" but also a legal one.⁸³

The European Lutheran churches consider the welcoming of refugees in their countries theologically "natural", calling the hospitable attitude of churches a "prophetic presence", in the sense that such behaviour helps bring about the Kingdom of God on Earth. The LWF feels encouraged by the opinion of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who recognises the vital role of the churches and their leaders in humanitarian crises like the current one⁸³. The Christian task in this context is twofold: not only immediate practical aid to refugees but also on-going advocacy in favour of the recognition of each person's dignity and against xenophobia. In this light, the LWF proposes three concrete suggestions to European governments:

⁸² Lutheran World Federation (2015) "*What have you done or failed to do for one of these?*" accessed June 1, 2016 at <https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/what-have-you-done-or-failed-do-one-these>.

⁸³ Lutheran World Federation (2015) *Letter to the LWF member churches in Europe* accessed June 1, 2016 at https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/150904gs_letter_to_european_mc_3.pdf.

- The establishment of a European-based search-and-rescue program, similar to the Italian government's former *Mare Nostrum*⁸⁴ operation, to patrol the Mediterranean Sea;
- The creation of "safe passage corridors", destined especially for refugees from Syria and Iraq;
- The establishment of a just system of distribution of refugees amongst the European Union's member countries.⁸⁵

In cooperation with the UNHCR and faith-based organisations, the LWF has published a document entitled *Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations for Faith Leaders*, which recognises all major religions' emphasis on welcoming strangers and international humanitarian law's roots in religious texts pertaining to hospitality⁸⁶.

2. Lutheran theological perspectives

Mirroring the chapter on Catholic perspectives, we will now analyse the theological perspective of a Lutheran theologian and that of a clergyman, the Lutheran bishop of Chicago. Exegete David Balch is a professor of New Testament studies, while Bishop Miller

⁸⁴ Operation *Mare Nostrum* was a search-and-rescue program initiated and financed by the Italian government in October 2013 after multiple fatal migrant shipwrecks. It was terminated in October 2014 as Italy could no longer afford the €9,000,000 monthly cost and other European countries refused to contribute financially. It was followed up by *Operation Triton*, a border control operation supported by fifteen European states yet with a significantly lower budget. The number of migrant deaths at sea has increased ninefold since *Triton* replaced *Mare Nostrum*. (Ministero della Difesa (undated) *Mare Nostrum Operation* accessed June 1, 2016 at <http://www.marina.difesa.it/EN/operations/Pagine/MareNostrum.aspx>; Denti, A. (2015) *Hundreds drown off Libya, EU leaders forced to reconsider migrant crisis* accessed June 1, 2016 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-idUSKBN0NA07020150419>.)

⁸⁵ Lutheran World Federation (2015) *Resolution from the European LWF Church Leadership Consultation* accessed June 1, 2016 at https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/LWF_European_Church_Leadership_Trondheim_Resolution-2015.pdf.

⁸⁶ Lutheran World Federation (undated) *Welcoming the Stranger*.

is part of the Task Force on Immigration Reform of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

In line with Martin Luther's doctrine of *sola scriptura* ('scripture alone') Lutheran theologians root their responses to the refugee crisis primarily in the Bible. Balch, for example, uses Paul's letter to the Galatians as a basis for a Lutheran approach to welcoming foreigners. He explains that the immigrant Gauls were viewed and depicted as subhuman and barbaric, as well as strongly inferior in battle, by the Greeks and Romans at the time of Paul's writing⁸⁷. Balch asserts that in the cultural context of the time the Greeks and Romans viewed the Jews in the same way as they did the Gauls. As a result, he claims, Paul's statement that "[t]here is neither Jew nor Greek"⁸⁸ could just as well be read as "there is neither Jew/Gaul nor Greek". Such a universalised reading of this verse would make clear that the gospel Paul professed "countered racism against emigrants in the Roman Empire"⁸⁹. The fact that Paul's words ran contrary to the laws of the time, undermining both the Mosaic law that prescribed circumcision and the Roman law that regarded Gauls as inferior, was precisely the reason that a vast number of Gauls were baptised⁹⁰. They converted after learning from Paul that man is "not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ"⁹¹. This line of thought immediately brings in the classic Lutheran emphasis on *sola fide*, or salvation through faith alone. Furthermore, "God's ethnic inclusion of emigrants" and appreciation of different ethnic groups requires Christians, too, to move across established ethnic borders, even if this is regarded as illicit by the law and by the majority of society⁹². If an inclusive approach is the norm for Christians in the case of voluntary migrants such as the Gauls, it can only be even more normative when Christians encounter people fleeing for their lives.

⁸⁷ Balch, D.L. (2015) Paul's Mission to Rome's Enemies the Gauls: Faith Welcoming Foreigners Journal of Lutheran Ethics 15-10, §9.

⁸⁸ Galatians 3:28, NASB.

⁸⁹ Balch (2015) Paul's Mission to Rome's Enemies the Gauls §17.

⁹⁰ *ibid.* 22-24.

⁹¹ Galatians 2:16, NASB.

⁹² Balch (2015) Paul's Mission to Rome's Enemies the Gauls §1.

While Balch studies migration in light of the New Testament, the Chicago bishop Wayne Miller focuses on the calls for hospitality to the stranger issued in the Old Testament, arguing that the notion of being a welcoming people is not a durable approach to immigration in today's world⁹³. His first claim is that in today's North American society hospitality is increasingly thought of as a mere form of politeness. This is not unproblematic: since – according to Miller – good manners have eroded and become optional rather than self-evident, welcoming the stranger too is no longer regarded as necessary. Thus the morally imperative character of hospitality is forgotten and the Biblical mandate of a warm welcome has lost its authority.⁹⁴ Secondly, Miller observes that the notion of hospitality emphasises the virtuous generosity of the helping party rather than the inherent dignity of the stranger. Framing hospitality in such a manner perpetuates feelings of superiority on the part of the host.⁹⁵

Miller then builds upon Luther's theology of the cross to help develop a particularly Christian attitude towards immigrants, noting that the way Christians treat strangers is "a matter of primary confessional theology rather than being a question of elective etiquette"⁹⁶. Stating, like Luther, that Christ's act of redemption on the cross, as a free gift of grace, should be the basis of all Christian theology, Miller points out that at the moment of Christ's death "the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom"^{97,98}. The purpose of this curtain had been to separate the holy from the unholy and the privileged from the unprivileged; as a result of its ripping apart God's grace was no longer accessible only to a select few, but to everyone. Each human being now has the freedom to pursue holiness, that is, the vocation that God has designed for each individual. This freedom may not be hindered by human structures of sin, for example by unreasonably strict immigration laws for migrants and refugees, or dehumanising detention measures. In some American states immigration law has even come to resemble persecution, says

⁹³ Miller, W. (2013) Beyond hospitality *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* 13-8, §5.

⁹⁴ *ibid.* 4.

⁹⁵ *ibid.* 5.

⁹⁶ *ibid.* 6.

⁹⁷ *ibid.* 7.

⁹⁸ Mark 15:38, ESV.

Miller.⁹⁹ Prohibiting the very option of migration, when this is necessary for people to protect and provide for themselves and their families, to fulfil their God-given potential, denies Christ's redemptive work that was meant to bring freedom of pursuing one's vocation. Forced migration, then, from a Lutheran perspective, is a matter of *Status Confessionis* (a term proposed by Luther), meaning that it cannot be impeded or met with "silence, compliance and indifference" lest it "become apostasy"⁹⁹.

Rooted in the soteriological foundation developed above, a Christian approach to migrants, particularly refugees, should take two forms: a positive one, namely assistance, and a negative one, resistance¹⁰⁰. Christians must start with assistance, as "the places where resistance is needed often emerge as our freedom to respond positively is limited by the barriers of systemic injustice"¹⁰¹.

When it comes to Christian migrants, locals' attitudes to newcomers should be rooted "less in charity than in our essential unity in Christ"¹⁰². For refugee resettlement in general, Christians are called to put into place structures that are conducive to the refugees' following of their vocation. Assistance in the form of emergency aid such as shelter and food, and help in finding housing, education and employment enables refugees to fulfil their potential whilst simultaneously increasing awareness amongst Christians of the plights of fellow human beings.¹⁰³ Whereas charity implies aid from a privileged person or group to an unprivileged one, assistance means walking next to another person and humbly supporting him in following his vocation.

Besides providing assistance, Christians are also called to resist structures of sin that deter refugees from freely responding to God's call. The catch in this resistance is that it sometimes requires peaceful disobedience to civil law, for example when providing shelter for people without documentation in countries where this is illegal. Miller advises Christians to prayerfully discern whether civil disobedience is called for in a given situation,

⁹⁹ Miller (2013) *Beyond Hospitality* §12.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.* 13.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.* 11.

¹⁰² *ibid.* 14.

¹⁰³ *ibid.* 15.

but does not discourage them from defying the law. If it is indeed called for, bearing the potential resulting punitive measures are a way of taking up one's cross.¹⁰⁴

3. Individual support

Martin Luther, whose teachings constitute the basis for Lutheran theology, spent almost a year as a refugee from the 1521 Diet of Worms onwards¹⁰⁵. Luther's experience as a refugee is for some Lutherans a motivation to be welcoming towards refugees today, including for the American Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service¹⁰⁶. It must be noted however that his situation was not comparable to that of many asylum seekers today: his life was not in immediate danger¹⁰⁷. The flight of Lutheran refugees from Europe to North America, particularly after the First and Second World War, added to the solidarity of Lutherans with refugees in general¹⁰⁸.

One prominent Lutheran who justifies her opinion on the refugee crisis with theological arguments is German chancellor Angela Merkel. The daughter of a Lutheran pastor, she is known to be a practising Christian and is the leader of the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU)¹⁰⁹. Recently, Merkel has expressed herself strongly in favour of resettling refugees in Germany and in the rest of Europe, while simultaneously supporting increased border controls, and has been open about the Christian motivations behind her political viewpoints. Her positive attitude towards refugees has not been beneficial to her

¹⁰⁴ Matthew 16:24.

¹⁰⁵ For an analysis of Martin Luther's life, see Kolb, R. (2009) *Martin Luther: Confessor of the Faith* Oxford, OUP Oxford.

¹⁰⁶ Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (undated) *Refugees* accessed June 1, 2016 at <http://lirs.org/our-work/people-we-serve/refugees/>.

¹⁰⁷ Terpstra (2015) *Religious Refugees in the Early Modern World: An Alternative History of the Reformation* Cambridge UK, Cambridge University Press, p. 142.

¹⁰⁸ Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (undated) *History* accessed June 2, 2016 at <http://lirs.org/our-work/about-us/historyfaith/>. See also Gassman, G. & M. Oldenburg (2011) *Historical Dictionary of Lutheranism* Lanham MD, Scarecrow Press.

¹⁰⁹ Esler, G. (2012) *Germans can't escape their Lutheran past* accessed June 1, 2016 at <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-17489035>.

popularity amongst the German population, reaching a particularly low point after the terror attacks in Paris in November 2015 and the sexual assaults in Cologne on New Year's Eve 2015. Both situations were initially believed to have been instigated by refugees. In spite of the German population's and her party's decreasing trust in her, Merkel has remained adamant in her opinion that Germany must remain open to refugees. In December 2015, she reminded her party members that the CDU's political ideology is rooted in "the God-given dignity of each individual person. That means that today, it isn't a mass of people that is coming to us. It means they are individuals." A few weeks later she remarked that this dignity, anchored in the German constitution, did not solely apply to Germans or to Europeans, but "to all people – to every person as God's creature."¹¹⁰

4. Critical voices

However, as in the Roman Catholic Church, several influential Lutherans have spoken out against receiving refugees in their countries. Merkel's own party CDU forms a remarkable example. While she, being the CDU's leader, has spoken out in favour of resettling refugees in Europe, some of the party's Christian members disagree. Even before the attacks in Paris she was attacked by the local CDU of Saxony, which accused her of naivety: "You do not know who comes in. You do not know how many come in. You do not know how many are already here."¹¹¹ These party members are clearly in favour of a more prudent approach.

Another example is Sylvi Listhaug, member of the (Evangelical-Lutheran) Church of Norway, who was appointed Minister of Migration and Integration in Norway in December 2015. This position was created in response to the refugee crisis, which caused Norway to experience, like many other European countries, unprecedented numbers of asylum

¹¹⁰ Feldenkirchen, M. & R. Pfister (2016) *The isolated chancellor: what is driving Angela Merkel?* accessed June 1, 2016 at <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/why-has-angela-merkel-staked-her-legacy-on-the-refugees-a-1073705.html>.

¹¹¹ Focus (2015) *Das sind die 5 härtesten Vorwürfe, die sich Angela Merkel in Sachsen anhören musste* accessed June 1, 2016 at http://www.focus.de/video/politik/das-ist-nicht-mehr-meine-kanzlerin-das-sind-die-5-haertesten-vorwuerfe-die-sich-angela-merkel-in-sachsen-anhoeren-musste_id_5015273.html.

seekers. Listhaug has criticised the “tyranny of goodness” that Norway enforces through foreign aid, as she believes it would be more effective and exemplary of Christian charity to aid refugees close to their countries of origin.¹¹²

¹¹² Lepperød, T. (2015) *Ser ingen motsetning mellom kristen nestekjærlighet og stramme tøyer i asylpolitikken* accessed June 1, 2016 at <http://www.nettavisen.no/politikk/ser-ingen-motsetning-mellom-kristen-nestekjrlighet-og-stramme-tyler-i-asylpolitikken/3423172263.html>.

Chapter 3: Comparative analysis

In this thesis we have discussed a representative selection of writings and speeches on the refugee crisis within the Roman Catholic Church and Lutheran churches. We have studied official ecclesial documents published by the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation, theological articles and statements by influential individuals in each church. We will now proceed to a comparative analysis of Catholic and Lutheran perspectives on the refugee crisis and seek out the convergences and divergences present within and between the two churches.

Firstly we will consider their doctrines pertaining to migration and refugees and their underlying theological argumentation. Since these arguments are not solely theoretical but pertain directly to practice and are therefore the basis for Christian humanitarian and political action, we will then briefly compare the two churches' practical responses to the crisis as well as confront the positions found in both churches with international humanitarian law.

1. Doctrinal divergences and convergences

Catholic social teaching has been laid out in documents since the late nineteenth century but finds its traditional inspiration in both the Bible and major exponents of tradition such as Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. Although the most prominent point of departure for Catholicism's social thought lies in Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, the Catholic Church's stance on dealing with refugees in particular was developed in more recent decades. Pope John Paul II was the first to make explicit the Church's views on refugees. His documents on the topic were further elaborated upon by popes Benedict XVI and Francis. We cannot surpass the importance of papal magisterium when dealing with the Catholic position, given the organisational structure of the Catholic Church and the universal impact of the Roman magisterium, which plays a vital role in the development and proclamation of the Church's social teaching. This immediately becomes clear for

whoever studies the 2006 Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, which gathers pontifical statements proclaimed on social issues since 1891.

Already on this level, differences between Catholicism and Lutheranism surface. Stjernø observes that “Protestant social teachings have been less explicit than Catholic teachings”¹¹³. Indeed, the Lutheran churches do not have a social teaching as extensive and comprehensive as that of the Catholic Church. This has to do with the traditional differences between the two churches. The first point of divergence is the hierarchical structure of each church, which is more centralised by nature in Catholicism. The other aspect that weighs here would be the historically different approach to the sources of doctrine. Whereas pre-Vatican II Catholicism firmly maintained the Tridentine principle of tradition and scripture as the twofold sources of faith, Lutheran doctrine insisted on the sola scriptura principle, combined with the conviction that each Christian is capable of interpreting the Bible himself. These two points prevented the Lutheran churches from unitedly addressing societal issues for a long time. However, Lutheranism too has seen a development with respect to its involvement with and perspective on social matters. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), for example, has since 1991 published a dozen social statements on topics ranging from abortion and genetics to education and peace. The very first statement was entitled Church in Society and included a commitment of the ELCA to “foster deliberation on social questions”¹¹⁴. None of the published statements, however, may be considered Lutheran doctrine. The ELCA is a member of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), yet the LWF does not issue social doctrinal documents, for the ecclesiological and doctrinal reasons mentioned above.

A closer look reveals further discrepancies between the two ecclesial communities. Not only church leaders, but also Catholic and Lutheran theologians have devoted ample attention to the development of a theology of migration. The classic doctrinal differences

¹¹³ Stjernø, S. (2009) *Solidarity in Europe: The History of an Idea* Cambridge UK, Cambridge University Press, p. 75.

¹¹⁴ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (1991) *The Church in society: a Lutheran perspective*, Orlando FL, Churchwide Assembly.

also play out in this newer theological field. Catholic theologians commenting on migration and the refugee crisis predominantly take the image of God, as reflected in every human being and as incarnated in Jesus Christ, as a starting point, while Lutheran theologians writing on the same topic tend to emphasise Christ's redemptive work on the cross as an example of grace freely given.

Looking more closely into the Catholic position, in particular as it was developed by theologians such as Romano Guardini – who is of major influence on the thought world of Pope Francis – and the contemporary U.S. theologian Daniel Groody, this divergence is striking. Different from their Lutheran peers they both insist primordially that each human being has been created in God's image and has therefore been endowed with an inviolable dignity. Refugees, fleeing situations where their God-given dignity is violated, have every right to migrate. Groody furthermore points out that out of all possible ways God could have incarnated, he chose to become human in the form of a seemingly insignificant refugee fleeing political persecution. The gospels teach us that the mission of Christ, himself an outcast, was to meet and include the marginalised of the society he lived in. It is through these actions that he attempted to bring about God's Kingdom on Earth. Indeed, as Groody writes, the "true aliens"¹¹⁵ are not the people moving across borders, whether legally or illegally, but the people who are emotionally disconnected from these migrants' plights. This incarnational stress is not shared by Lutheran theologians such as David Balch and Wayne Miller. In their approach they note how Christ's death made the curtain of the temple tear, forever obliterating any separation between groups of people. The apostle Paul then continued to profess an inclusive Gospel, allowing non-Jews to be admitted into the Christian community.

Clearly, the doctrinal approaches of Catholicism and Lutheranism rely on their own theological frameworks, also when it comes to the topic of refugees. The traditional divergences on the level of ecclesiology (a universal church versus local churches), the sources of faith (Bible and tradition versus sola scriptura), and the soteriological (emphasis

¹¹⁵ Groody (2009) *Crossing the Divide*, p. 666.

on incarnation versus emphasis on the cross and on suffering) filter through and provide the theological horizon upon which is built.

All this is not to say that there is no convergence: we can discern a common theological ground between Catholic and Lutheran theology of migration. Both would agree that Christians must follow Christ in his crossing of human borders and place loyalty to his vision for humanity above that to a political party or ideology. In this regard, it is interesting to look at more dissenting or critical voices. Within the Catholic Church these appear to propose arguments similar to Lutherans critical of refugee resettlement in Europe and North America. Both churches have members who are apprehensive of the possible societal, political, economic, demographical and cultural effects of resettling refugees, such as a higher demand for houses, bigger strains on the job market and a larger percentage of Muslim inhabitants. These Catholic and Lutheran individuals share a dilemma between charity and prudence.

2. Practical comparison

While the doctrinal rationale behind the Catholic Church's and the Lutheran World Federation's perspectives on the refugee crisis appears to be quite different, the convergence in their practical responses to the crisis is striking. Throughout the past decades, both the Holy See and the LWF have called for the admission of people fleeing life-threatening situations into Europe and North America and have made strong appeals to political leaders to make this possible. Beside their public outreach through published statements they are also involved in establishing practical aid to displaced people in their home countries and in Europe and North America. At times Catholic and Lutheran churches and organisations work together.

The Catholic lay community Sant'Egidio, for example, has cooperated with several Protestant denominations, including the Lutheran Evangelical Church in Italy, as well as the Italian government in establishing humanitarian corridors for refugees. These allow some of the most vulnerable refugees living in Lebanon, Morocco and Lebanon to fly to

Europe rather than undertake the journey by boat.¹¹⁶ In the United States, nine national organisations have been selected to work on refugee resettlement on behalf of the government. The Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS) is one of these.¹¹⁷ Out of the 69,933 refugees admitted to the U.S. in 2015, 10,514 are being resettled by the LIRS with the help of individuals, local organisations and congregations¹¹⁸. Another of the official nine refugee resettlement agencies is the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) through its Migration & Refugee Services (MRS)¹¹⁹. Like the LIRS, the MRS cooperates with dioceses, local churches and individuals to assist refugees in meeting basic needs such as shelter, food, clothing, work and language classes¹²⁰.

The major difference in the two churches' practical approach to the refugee crisis results out of their ecclesial order and structures. While the Catholic Church exerts moral influence in the political arena through the legal entity of the Holy See, by which it claims universal governance over Catholics worldwide, the Lutheran churches do not have a similar central body. Furthermore Pope Francis, through his office of Roman Pontiff, represents the juridical, political and doctrinal unity of worldwide Catholicism and therefore has an outreach to more than one billion Catholics. He also serves as a moral point of reference for many outside of the Church. In addition to his political and moral weight he regularly speaks in spiritual terms about how people, and Catholics in particular, ought to deal with the refugee crisis. His admonitions are regularly echoed, albeit not always accurately,

¹¹⁶ Community of Sant'Egidio (2016) *Humanitarian corridors are open. From Italy a signal of hope for Europe* accessed June 29, 2016 at

<http://www.santegidio.org/pageID/1165/langID/en/itemID/756/Dossier-What-are-the-humanitarian-corridors.html>.

¹¹⁷ Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (undated) *Resettling Refugees* accessed June 29, 2016 at <http://lirs.org/our-work/people-we-serve/refugees/resettling-refugees/>.

¹¹⁸ Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (2016) *Refugee Resettlement* accessed June 29, 2016 at <http://lirs.org/refugee-resettlement/>.

¹¹⁹ Refugee Council USA (undated) *History of the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program* accessed June 29, 2016 at <http://www.rcusa.org/history>.

¹²⁰ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (undated) *Resettlement Services* accessed June 29, 2016 at <http://www.usccb.org/about/resettlement-services/index.cfm>.

throughout religious as well as secular media around the world, and his homilies and weekly audiences give him a platform to connect the on-going, multi-faceted issue of the refugee crisis to people's religious beliefs and to their daily lives, for instance by encouraging prayer and the housing of refugees in every Catholic parish. Such regular spiritual messages are not part of the LWF's mission¹²¹ and are left to local churches to spread.

3. Confrontation with international humanitarian law

A study of confessional perspectives on the refugee crisis cannot neglect to connect the topic to the way Catholicism and Lutheranism position themselves in relation to the international structures of law. In this study it has become evident that both the Catholic and Lutheran churches have adopted a definition of 'refugee' rather different than the one that is customary in international law. This results in their simultaneously critical position over against contemporary politics and the public debate in the media. It is worth contrasting the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* with the biblical and traditional arguments posed by churches.

Put aside their differences on the theological foundations of their respective positions, the two churches – when issuing statements on migration and the refugee crisis, strongly agree that the definition put forth by the Geneva Convention is too restrictive. This has consequences: in the actual debate, political decisions are made on the basis of precisely this juridical convention, and in more than one case, politicians are tending toward a revision of the 1951 Convention with the aim of making it even more restrictive.

On this level, the role of the churches in the crisis is of great interest. The churches are obliged to operate within the legal framework of international humanitarian law, but are critical of the way this is currently being read in the political landscape, as a result of their respective doctrinally inspired aim at going further than the strict boundaries of the Convention.

¹²¹ Lutheran World Federation (undated) *Our priorities* accessed June 1, 2016 at <https://www.lutheranworld.org/content/our-priorities>.

Interestingly, while the views on refugees professed by the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation do not agree entirely with the Geneva Convention, neither do the statements by Catholics and Lutherans who are critical of their church's positive attitude towards refugee resettlement in Europe and North America. Yet neither the Convention nor its subsequent protocol includes a disclaimer excluding particular subgroups, such as Muslims, from protection once their numbers reach alarming heights. The Refugee Convention could therefore be said to be an example of indiscriminate respect for human dignity, regardless of religion. The Catholics and Lutherans of this study, then, would regard the Geneva Convention either as too limited or as too unrestricted

Chapter 4: Conclusion

In our search for an answer to our research question, 'How do the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran churches in Europe and North America verbally respond to the current refugee crisis and how do they theologically justify their standpoints?', we have seen that a multitude of Roman Catholic and Lutheran approaches to refugees is possible. Interestingly, when entering into a comparative analysis of writings and speeches within and between the two churches, one finds convergences largely in the practical or pastoral consequences and the means for action, whereas the theological reasoning behind them partially diverges between Catholics and Lutherans.

Official documents published by each of the two churches studied, Catholicism and Lutheranism, express a remarkably similar, positive and receptive attitude towards resettling refugees in Europe and North America. Not surprisingly, then, Catholic and Lutheran organisations that involve themselves with refugees conduct similar activities and at times even work together, such as in the case of the humanitarian corridors between refugee camps and Europe.

Underlying their similar approach to refugees, however, lays an entirely differing theological argumentation. As has become clear from our study, the theological differences are strongly related to the traditional confessional differences that separate Catholics and Lutherans. This explains why the doctrinal approaches of the refugee crisis on the Catholic side focus strongly on the centralised nature of the Church, and even more on the importance of magisterial teachings. The doctrines of the popes and the teachings of Vatican II on religious liberty are a constant point of reference. Furthermore Catholic theologians emphasise the incarnation of God in Christ and therefore God's reflection in each human being as the core of their biblical inspiration. Lutheran theologians rather tend to focus on the role of the local church, and reiterate Luther's theology of the cross and the meaning of Christ's death on the cross for the way Christians are to deal with the refugee crisis. Yet however different the accents may be, theologians from both churches

express a profound appreciation for the dignity of all human beings, and apply this rationale to refugees.

Precisely this common concern for the universal human good and the protection of the dignity of the person provides a common horizon for action. Thus, on a practical level, the churches believe themselves to have a prophetic presence in this world. Yet as we have seen, members from both churches prophesy broadly two scenarios. While both the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation regard resettlement as inevitable and see the arrival of foreigners as an opportunity to live out one's Christian faith more deeply through charitable actions, some groups and individuals within these churches foresee an invasion of the Judaeo-Christian European and North American continent by Islam and advocate aid in the refugees' regions of origin rather than resettlement. The line dividing the two positions runs through each church, separating bishops, politicians and theologians on the issue. It seems imperative that the various parties engage in dialogue in order to attempt to navigate between charity and prudence. Adopting the refugees' dignity as the primary benchmark would make this navigation possible.

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Over de auteur Ilse Spruit



Ik ben geboren in 1993, heb in 2014 mijn BA behaald in Culturele Antropologie & Ontwikkelingssociologie aan de Universiteit Leiden, en in 2016 mijn MA in Christianity & Society aan de Tilburg School of Catholic Theology. Tijdens mijn master heb ik een semester aan de Norwegian School of Theology in Oslo gestudeerd, een geweldige locatie voor oecumenische dialoog. Tijdens zowel mijn bachelor als master heb ik mij vooral gericht op de relatie tussen de Katholieke Kerk en vluchtelingen, en op religieus geïnspireerd geweld (o.a. de aanslagen door Anders Breivik in Noorwegen in 2011). Momenteel werk ik voor het internationale multimediacproject 'Tweeting with GOD', dat jongeren helpt antwoorden te vinden op geloofsvragen.

Colofon

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