Performing Indigenized Christianity: Adaptations of Catholic Sacraments between Tridentine Reform and Global Expansion

Leitung: Christian Windler (Bern)/Nadine Amsler (Bern)

Sacraments have long been regarded as an especially accentuated expression of reformed Catholic religiosity. The Council of Trent affirmed their sacred, unalterable nature, and post-Tridentine clergy saw the enforcement of reformed sacramental practice as a primary objective of their pastoral work. However, if we turn our attention to non-European Catholic communities, a different picture emerges. Although Catholic missionaries did not question the centrality of the sacraments, they nevertheless tolerated and sometimes even promoted adaptations of these rituals. They did not only admit the presence of non-Catholics, but also altered parts of the ritual performance in order to make the sacraments more agreeable to the local society. Although these adaptations sometimes met with resistance of the Roman authorities, they were also frequently tolerated by the curia. With this toleration, the Catholic Church tacitly subscribed to a world view which drew a line between an immutable sacred realm and a civil realm subject to historical change and cultural variability. It also subscribed to the idea that global expansion of Christianity necessitated its adaptation to different cultural settings.

Taking the performance of sacraments as its vantage point, this panel aims at shedding a new light on early modern Catholicism, which was not only characterized by post-Tridentine standardization, but also by its encounter with cultural variety on a global scale. The panel will analyze the adaptation of sacraments in non-European Catholic communities as a result of cultural exchange and as a process of indigenization. Furthermore, it will assess how this extra-European experience shaped the Catholic Church’s attitude towards the administration of sacraments in confessionally mixed European societies. By jointly analyzing ritual performance within and without Europe, the panel aims at showing that the adaptation of sacraments was not merely a non-European Sonderfall, but had an impact on early modern Catholicism as a whole.
Vorträge

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Christian Windler (Bern)

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The Practice of *Communicatio in Sacris* among the Eastern Christians of the Ottoman Empire
Cesare Santus (Pisa/Paris)

Roman Congregations and Adaptation of Sacraments in the European Missions: the Case of Mixed Marriages
Cecilia Cristellon (Frankfurt am Main)

Comment
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