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New monasticism : accountability in Christian communities

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New Monasticism
Accountability in Christian Communities

The concept of religiosity as a highly individual aspect of religion does fit with the self-understanding of many mainline state churches with parish structures in Europe. This becomes especially evident by reviewing the homepages of those churches: the central aspect the churches present are the offers you can get, comparable to a market situation. But the case looks different when looking at missional movements like new monasticism, emerging conversation and fresh expressions of Church as well as digital Christian communities. Missional movements and digital communities create a specific context where religion is experienced at first hand and where affiliation happens through participation, identification and accountability and not through formal membership. The relationships in those communities are flexible and the connections and friendships emerge through religious experiences, needs, preferences, shared values and biographical identification. A solidary bond connects people and leads to a common religious lifestyle. Its climax can be observed in new monastic communities that emerge in many cities in the western context.

1 Background

Starting with an experience I had at a conference in Switzerland. A couple of cantonal churches of central Switzerland organized a conference on volunteering, empowerment and church development. I was invited as a speaker. I started by noting that the church is more than just the offers on the homepages and that volunteers want to be participants and not recipients of tasks. I raised confused looks, especially with the notion that the national churches in Switzerland don't have a bright future when they keep seeing their primary task as to produce offers and follow the principle: one-size-fits-all. The church elders and wardens were very surprised; they have been trained to see the church as an institution that produces offers such as services, coffee afternoons for older people, or chanting services for children and parents as the core of what constitutes the church. The reaction of the churchwardens and elders is not surprising, and it describes what has already been acknowl-

edged in the 4th Kirchenmitgliedschaftsuntersuchung: Church work as a service program (cf. Vetter, 2016, p. 137). Combined with the equation of church and the provision of services, there has been a highly influential way of measuring church according to membership, church exits and church taxes (cf. for example ‘Gezählt 2019. Zahlen und Fakten zum kirchlichen Leben.’, n.d.). This is specific to the western European context. Through the church growth movement and new possibilities of measuring members, the actual output and the economic side of the church has become the central point of evaluation. The vividness of church has been measured similarly to organizations by production, money, membership and social capital. Thereby religion is seen as an individualized practice that is constituted by a set of values formulated as belief. But the focus is not on the individual and their religious development in church theory discourses but the structure and organizational forms of church (cf. for example Hermelink, 2011). It is as if the individual’s religiosity has not a lot to do with the theory of church and church development. Therefore, members, numbers and finances are counted by the institutional church, but they fail to see the experiential, religious phenomenon and the self-induced and self-directed dynamics, which fosters ecclesial accountability.

In the western, especially the Anglo-Saxon, world during the 1980s and 1990s, in practice, church development was closely related to the numerical growth of churches. Donald A. McGavran’s books «The Bridges of God – A Study in the Strategy of Mission» (1955) and «Understanding Church Growth» (1970) acted thereby as catalysts. Typical examples of such implementation in North America are the mega-churches, such as the Willow Creek Community Church, Illinois (B. Hybels, 2004; L. Hybels & Hybels, 2016), or Saddleback Church California (Warren, 2016). Another famous example can be found in Australia: Hillsong Church (‘Hillsong Church’, n.d.), which is famous for its worship music. A European example, which in its early days was very much influenced by Willow Creek, is the International Christian Fellowship (ICF)(ICF, n.d.-a). This church was founded in 1996 in Zurich, Switzerland and currently has around 79 church branches in 12 different countries(ICF, n.d.-b). Most of these churches work with an attractive type of Sunday service and are an enterprise itself. They produce programs and music for ministry, which can be used globally like the Sunday school program «Promiseland» from the Willow Creek Community Church and worship music from Hillsong. Independent and state churches use the material from mega-churches equally. In this mindset, which was exemplarily shown in the story at the beginning, the church is considered an enterprise that can be built up if the program is good and attractive enough. Again, the focus is very much directed toward external conditions and the question whether people find this program entertaining.

However, evaluations of membership, Sunday attendance, baptisms, weddings, funerals paint a dark future for national churches (cf. for example Statistik, n.d.). Since Jörg Stolzes book «Die Zukunft der Reformierten» the slogan: smaller, older,

poorer is like a self-fulfilling prophecy omnipresent in reformed churches in Switzerland (Stolz & Ballif, 2010; The slogan has been taken up in countless newspapers and is still being taken up by the Swiss media. Cf. for example Herren, n.d.). Based on this dark prophecy, structural reform programs are done all over Switzerland. Hand in hand with this prophecy comes the conviction that people get more secular and still more individualized and believe and care less. Because the focus of national churches is still predominantly on the big changes, high numbers, and religiosity that they can control, they overlook the small (often ecumenical) cells of Christian communities that emerge within and outside of institutions in networks, neighbourhoods and online: new monastic communities, online network churches, fresh expressions of Church (the term «Fresh expressions of church» has been used since 2004 in the Church of England, to refer to small contextual churches that start alongside, but aim to be different to parish churches), small Christian communities, emerging conversations and many more. Many which can be summarized under the umbrella term: missional movements or missional communities.

2 Small fluid missional churches

Concerning church development, there is an apparent contrast between the focus of numerical church growth concepts and emerging missional movements globally. The self-understanding of missional communities, the approach, mentality and ideas of what constitutes church seem very different. However, I would argue that these cells of the church fit very much into a post-modern lifestyle and reflect and integrate the patterns of social change. However, their logic and way of connection is based on religious experience, context, themes, networks and environment (cf. Müller, 2019a).

What might seem surprising, considering the network character, they value accountability, responsibility and the theme of the common priesthood of all believers. There are many examples, regarding that, there are at least 2100 fresh expressions of Church in the Church of England (cf. Lings, n.d.) and probably a few thousand globally. The Messy-Church-movmenten (Messy Church is a way of being church for families and others. It is Christ-centred, for all ages, based on creativity, hospitality and celebration. Cf. 'Messy Church', n.d.-a) counted already in 2013 nearly 4000 Messy Churches in over 20 countries ('Messy Church', n.d.-b). In principle, there are no surveys that would even remotely suggest how many such communities exist.

In this article, further reflections will focus specifically on new monastic communities. New monasticism is probably one of the least well-known movements in the practical theological discourse of continental Europe though it shows the highest accountability. Although new monasticism is a worldwide movement, it is less co-

herent and consistent than for example the Fresh-Expressions movement (cf. Cray et al., 2004; Moynagh, 2012; Müller, 2016) or the Small Christian Communities (cf. ‘AsIPA in der Schweiz | asipa.ch’, n.d.; Hennecke & Stollhoff, 2014). New monasticism is a separate path of missional movements, but one that emerges as well in the other movements and different denominations and national churches. New monasticism could be called the most subversive movement because it can easily be interwoven in traditional parish churches or new churches formed around this topic. New monastic communities are often very fluid and hard to describe. In this article, the Stadtkloster in Zurich, a community that belongs to the reformed church of Switzerland, is highlighted. Furthermore, a digital example is introduced: the #twomplet, an evening prayer on Twitter, which is in the tradition of new monasticism.

The data presented here originate from a qualitative evaluation project on vital ecclesial diversity in the city of Zurich, which I led. The data also comes from personal participatory observations in the @twomplet and from conversations with people in this community. Furthermore, the data originates from my qualitative dissertation project on the ecclesiology of fresh expressions of Church, which I conducted in England from 2010-2015 (see Müller, 2016).

3 Examples of new monasticism

A recurrent challenge of researching and «mapping small organic style churches is, that they are not as measurable and are more sensitive to the potentially intrusive nature of surveys and research» (Seguara-Guzmán, 2012, p. 4). Often, people start with building up a small contextual ecclesial group and only after a while they realize that this phenomenon already exists globally, similar but different (Cf. Bolger, 2012, p. 8). Most of the insights on new monasticism that exists are from qualitative research, often from participant observation (cf. Müller, 2016, pp. 21–40), conversations with the communities and textual analysis.¹ Especially the Stadtkloster was only recently investigated in an intensive monitoring process by us at the Center for Church Development (‘Zentrum für Kirchenentwicklung UZH’, n.d.) and the data are very up-to-date. The @twomplet is a digital network that I have been observing intensively for two years (cf. Müller, 2019b, p. 85).text.

¹ The best quantitative data that was gathered is from the Fresh-Expressions-Movement in the UK. In this data it becomes obvious that the average number of members in a missional Christian community 43.7 people are. There may be around 2000 of them in the Church of England, both urban and rural. Lay people lead more than 50 % of these young contextual churches. Four out of five people have not been connected to church before. See ChurchGrowthResearchProject-ReportStrand3b.pdf, accessed October 3, 2016, <http://www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk>.

The Stadtkloster: a Monastery in the City of Zurich

The Stadtkloster is a reformed ecumenical new monastic community in the middle of Zurich. A group of people initiated the Stadtkloster Zürich in 2011. After a long way of negotiating and finding space and a place within the reformed state church of Zurich, people officially started living together in 2016 in a side house of the Bullingerkirche. According to the self-understanding (evaluated in the monitoring process), the Stadtkloster should be an urban sanctuary, where people feel secure and have space for prayer and lived spirituality. The founders want the Stadtkloster to be a place that sets a contrast to a separating and non-committal life in the city. The cloister community wants to show an alternative approach to life for interested people. The Stadtkloster has a daily prayer routine that is open for the public, has a guest room for people in need and wants to be an open and hospitable community. Shared meals are a central motif and visitors are always welcome. In wintertime, they have a warm room with food and coffee, a shower and laundry that homeless people can use on the weekends. The cloistered community is diverse in gender and marital status. Three levels of a bond can be observed: there is a core community that lives together; they share prayer, meals and the house. They are responsible for the activities of the Stadtkloster. The second group is people who live in the cloister for a certain time and engage in communal activities. The third group is people who are called "friends". They don't live there but participate from time to time and support the idea of an urban monastery. People in the first group agree every year to stay for another year or leave ('Stadtkloster Zürich', n.d.). The Stadtkloster is networked with other monastic communities and initiatives and is in exchange with them: Diakonissen Neumünster, Nidelbad, Don Camillo, Fokolar, Lasalle, Kollektiv 353, Dehei, experiential (Fahr Monastery), Wildberg Community, Segen Monastery in Berlin, Kloster Karlsruhe (was inspired by the city monastery of Zurich) and Iona. In the founding period, the participants were mostly people who had already been active in the Reformed Church and who were indigenous to the area. No specific target group was defined. The people of the first generation are now between 50 and 75 years old. At that time and also today, above-average number of persons with tertiary education are in the city monastery or participate in its activities. Increasingly, persons who are associated with the Sinusmilieu can be attributed to "digital cosmopolitans" (self-statements from the Stadtkloster recorded in the fieldnotes). It seems that the persons of the "new generation" (approx. 30 to 40 years old) tend to be less at home in the reformed State Church and consider themselves as spiritual seekers who also have a lower level of Christian socialization.

#twomplet: a digital compline

The hashtag #twomplet was invented on January 14th, 2014 by Benedikt Johannes Heider (*1995). Benedikt, who is now a theology student, was at that time 19 years old. He had the idea to combine twitter and the compline, and that's how the hashtag started to exist. #twomplet is a daily prayer on twitter that takes place nearly every evening through the account @twomplet. The @twomplet has more than 3100 followers ('#twomplet (@twomplet) / Twitter', n.d.). More than 30 people

from different denominations and backgrounds lead the evening prayer. Every evening at 9 pm, the prayer takes place, and everyone can join in from wherever they are. People who can't join in on time can pray later. Although the founder was catholic, the account is ecumenical. Depending on the tradition of the person who is leading the different prayer wording, stiles, worship and prayer forms can be experienced. Even though the prayer has different facets, it is oriented towards the compline from the Benedictine tradition. People from Lutheran, Reformed, Uniting, Catholic, Old Catholic, Baptist, different free church and people with any Christian background are present. Participants partake through likes, retweets and through sharing their prayer requests. During crisis and attack, the participation rises immensely. The evening after November 13th, 2015 the attacks in Paris the #twomplet had 80 tweets with 44'000 views and more than 6000 views per tweet and 650 likes (cf. Müller, 2019b, p. 85).

After asking the core team on Twitter how they experience accountability in their online community, they gave me the following answer: I find the accountability to be very high. Delays are announced, representations are organised. So far, I have rarely experienced that one of them failed - on the contrary, it was more likely that the #twapelle was used in between when needed or occasion arose.

4 New monasticism

It is difficult to track back the origin of new monasticism. The new monastic movement probably emerged in the 1970ties and 80ties in the UK. It consists of people and communities that look for contemplative life. The idea of the movement is based on the traditional concept of communal monastic life for God. But within new monasticism the central question is: How can we hold «[...]the tension about how we are faithful to Christ in context, listening to context, responding to context but not becoming syncretic by having nothing to say that's counter-cultural.» (Müller, 2016, p. 232).

As already mentioned, there are a great many new monastic communities with different names across the globe. They emerged and are still appearing separately, in various denominations and contexts. At first sight, they seem quite independent. Despite their independence, there are similar theological motifs, themes and structural questions that are obvious. In all the communities, there is high accountability obvious, not only from theologically trained people but as well from laypersons.

What is characteristic for new monastic communities is not its newness, but its ability to pass on and contextualise inherited theology, ecclesiology, tradition and spiritual experience. They are very connected with the context and life-experiences of people. The self-understanding and the purpose of the Stadtkloster are closely connected to the area they are in. The Stadtkloster works together with other social

agencies of Zurich, organises parties and works with children from the area they are in. Furthermore, new monastic communities are shaped by a missional attitude (The word «missional» refers to an inner attitude of people and church, which sees its mission grounded in the Mission Dei. One of the basic texts of this concept is: Guder et al., 1998) which is creedal based and writings on the subject show a profound orientation to the theological basis found in the trinity (cf. for example Cray, Mobsby, & Kennedy, 2010; Mobsby, 2012; Mobsby & Berry, 2014; Mobsby, Mcleary, Radcliffe, & Radcliffe, 2009). Due to the context orientation, the good working churches do not operate based on models, but rather the community spirit of the movement is drawn from common values, liturgies and experiences amongst its members. The context orientation, the daily rhythm of prayer and participation of all lead often to the will to actually transform the circumstances of people, the neighbourhood and the city. Especially new monasticism has a high orientation towards radical hospitality and serving the poor. Common values that can be found in most new monastic communities are thoughtful, prayerful and contemplative lives, communal life (doesn't mean people necessarily always live together in the same house), the focus on hospitality and practical engagement with the poor. Further new monasticism has around 12 common marks (see Clairborne, 2010; House, 2005; 'RULE OF LIFE', n.d.) which get adapted depending on circumstances and contexts:

1. Relocation at the margin
2. Sharing (economic) resources
3. Hospitality
4. Reconciliation
5. Submission to Christ's body, the Church
6. The intentional formation, novitiate, discipleship
7. Nurturing community and common life
8. Celibate singles alongside monogamous married couples
9. Geographical proximity to community members
10. Care for the creation and support of local economies
11. Peacemaking
12. Commitment to a contemplative life

People who regularly engage in those sorts of church show high accountability to those values and to the community they are in. They are ready to give a lot of time, money and energy into it. People in new monastic communities tend to long for a different way of life and lifestyle. They long for peace and justice, quietness and community and a contextually engaged life that has the power to change the circumstances. Often, they are theologically well versed, with a high faculty of theological literacy. In doing so, theology is connected to experience and action. They have experienced something meaningful and want to make room for this new perspective and calling. A good example is the famous representative of new monasti-

cism Shane Clairbone. He worked together with Mother Theresa, and this changed his attitude towards religiosity, church, religious practices and the context he lives (cf. 'Bio Shane Claiborne', n.d.).

The @twomplet is on a different level since there is no intentional community living together. But there are some similarities although neither money nor leisure time is shared, nor is ecclesial affiliation the same. But through the daily routine of praying together, people get trained to find ways to pray and speak theologically. Spirituality and theology become a regular part of everyday life. In this digital discourse, people engage according to their circumstances in life and their interests (cf. for example Luthe, 2016). In this process, individual and common religious meaning-making and hermeneutics develop (cf. Müller, 2019b). People use digital media to communicate and thereby construct group and community identity in three ways: Firstly, digital media provide technological means to bypass time and space and enable otherwise unconnected individuals to establish or maintain social relations. Secondly, digital media, topics are provided for communication and discussions in these digitally mediated forms of communication, but also face-to-face or in forms of offline communication. Thirdly social media enables people to find like-minded others. These factors support the building of online networks in the sector of religious meaning-making, which have a common hermeneutic (cf. Friemel & Bixler, n.d., p. 173f). Furthermore, digital networks often have different levels of ownership and commitment. Affiliation happens through participation and identification and not through formal membership. The new monastic @twomplet has many informal members whose lives are shaped by the daily liturgical routine, the prayers and the friendships in this digital community. Shared lives, care and spiritual and emotional support are strengthened through shared liturgical experiences, discussions and by being part of each other's lives daily through Twitter. This is not only a form of catechesis but leads to friendships that meet off- and online and to solidarity of which one aspect is accountability.

5 Religiosity in new monastic communities

There isn't one common type of religiosity in all the new monastic communities. They are too diverse for that and grounded in too many denominations and traditions. Nevertheless, certain religious characteristics can be observed both in the two examples and as well in other new monastic communities.

Most of the people engaged in this discourse seem not to be typical evangelicals from a highly religious environment that one would expect. Nevertheless, they seem to be highly religious, according to the Religionsmonitor. (cf. Huber, 2008, p. 25). At the same time, they are open-minded, for example, about ecological questions, migration, LGBTIQ, a non-literal understanding of the bible, and so on. This becomes clearly visible, for example, when one analyses the social media appear-

ance and the posts and tweets of members of the Stadtkloster or participants at @twomplet. People in new monastic communities try to connect their life, jobs and their religious being. Furthermore, they try to be a voice for the poor, the marginalized and underprivileged and they stand up for justice.

It seems a way to try to be accountable to the different dimensions of life. Speaking with Huber's Centrality of Religiosity Scale: the communities as a whole and the individuals in the community would probably score high in all the dimensions: intellect, ideology, public and private practice and experience (Cf. Huber & Huber, 2012, pp. 710–724) but most of them would not fall in a literal belief system. By taking Huber's five categories, new monasticism would be a phenomenon of people who have strong personal religious constructs that impact their conduction of life:

The **intellectual** dimension is activated in many new monastic communities as a daily or weekly practice to notice, reflect and talk about their religiosity, theological themes, politics and lifestyle. Thereby a differentiated approach to the bible, personal belief-system, the community and social actions can be observed. It is common for members of new monastic communities to have a spiritual director. This is one of the conditions for admission to the Stadtkloster, for example. The **ideological** dimension is the most obvious; they refer to a transcendent dimension, often summarized under the umbrella term, Trinity. Thereby many notions of transcendence are present and the motif of the Trinity acts as a way to differentiate and allow a diversity of approaches to the transcendent. (cf. Mobsby, 2012; Müller, 2016, pp. 288–292) The **public** practice in new monastic communities and digital new monasticism is a religious rhythm of life that can be seen in the *liturgia horarum*, the divine office. The @twomplet-community prays every evening at nine o'clock public on Twitter and some of the members also pray the @twaudes (cf. '#twaudes (@_twaudes) / Twitter,' n.d.) at seven in the morning. The daily routine of the Stadtkloster is also structured by the divine office (cf. 'Stadtkloster,' n.d.), which is public. The public dimension can, for example, in the Stadtkloster be seen in the hospitality, the shared meals and the work with homeless people and the neighborhood. The **private** aspect is lived differently depending on the network or community, but for the participants of the @twomplet as well as in the Stadtkloster it consists of prayer, meditation, but also physical access to spirituality in nature. The dimension of religious **experience** is a central aspect in the digital and analog new monastic communities. As in the monastic tradition some new monastic community practice times of silence and meditation – like a one-on-one time with the transcendence. Furthermore, all the monastic communities try to open up space where “God” can be experienced. The experiences are often embodied and connected to the community. As a **consequence**, especially the religiosity of new monastic communities leads to conduction of life that wants to have an impact on society, neighborhood, people framed in the theological motif of the kingdom of God.

This can be seen, for example, in the offers, open doors, hospitality and involvement with migrants at the Stadtkloster.

Summing the type of religiosity up: in all the new monastic communities I've visited, and I've been in contact with transcendence, was symbolically represented in a formulated subjective-interpretation of the person. Belief is seen as a mediated system therefore the connection to the tradition and a faith community and the context becomes so important. The bible is not understood literally but as a narrative that needs to be interpreted and still unfolds its power by inspiring people to social action, solidarity and becoming (contemplative) followers of God. Believing is, therefore, a continuous discipleship-process of searching and a hermeneutical interpretation of events, thoughts and relationships (symbols). An interpretation process is necessary to generate meaning. Many people in new monastic communities would address rational critics of faith and religion and still freely chose to be part of this explicit meaning-system and to trust in a transcendent God. But faith is seldom seen as something you can have, but as something, you can approach daily. Therefore, there is no contradiction between faith and science, they are separated domains and the own and personal discipleship process is open for change and interventions. That's why other religions are not seen as a threat but a possibility to learn and foster understanding for each other. Many new monastic networks and communities use a reference system to a specific tradition (within the @twomplet is the catholic compline).

Interestingly they often use old reference systems and interpret them a new rather than using contemporary church laws and liturgies. The same with tradition, tradition is significant for new monasticism, but tradition is not something to remain the way it has always been, but more of a human living document that needs adjustment and interpretation. The communities have strong values, but not as in conservative churches about sexuality and family, but about peace, social action and care for creation.

6 Accountability

New monasticism, as described above, is influenced by the longstanding traditions of monasteries. As in cloisters people try to find ways to express their spirituality. Usually the religious expression is mediated between tradition and context. The innovative potential of such Christian communities is their longing and searching of ways that are honest to the tradition and honest to their context. Meanwhile, they show high accountability for both.

In the Cambridge Dictionary: accountability is summarized as follows «the fact of being responsible for what you do and able to give a satisfactory reason for it.» ('ACCOUNTABILITY | meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary', n.d.). In the Cambridge Dictionary, accountability is closely connected to the topic of responsibility and so it is in new monastic literature: «accountability, the ability to be

responsible for what you do before God and others» (Mobsby & Berry, 2014, p. 58). An accountable lifestyle has aspired in new monasticism. It is a reflexive responsible lifestyle, one who is reflexive of its spirituality, experiences and actions. In the theological dimension of Christianity and especially in new monasticism, it can't be separated from discipleship and the priesthood of all believers.

The basis of the accountability in these movements is the free will to choose, be part and participate in this community. It is not a community that is created by a system of parish structures but one that comes into existence through common themes and topics, longings, experiences, life-circumstances, relationships, networks and interests. It is a way how highly individualized individuals connect to communities and start to accept a common lifestyle. It is by freely choosing accountability over individuality that those communities come into existence. And they are sustained through their collective actions and experiences. Accountability and responsibility in new monasticism can be seen in the following areas: money, food, time, discipleship, justice, relationships, opening up their homes, ecology, the rhythm of life.

The topic of accountability is one that seems omnipresent in new monastic communities. The goal of accountability is «not a matter of command and control, but of focusing, allowing and encouraging people to focus on what really matters.» (Mobsby & Berry, 2014, p. 41). In this effect, accountability is seen as a way of meaning-making for the individual and a community. But not only the new monastic communities long for accountable interactions, the same dynamic, less explicit, can be seen in very open digital new monastic communities that emerge around a daily prayer, like the #twomplet. From a practical-theological perspective, a few theological fields are to be named, which are closely related to accountability and arise from a new monastic lifestyle: *discipleship* and the priesthood of all believers, *experiential* way of approaching life, and the sacred and *lived theology* and the *productivity of theology*. These fields are briefly hinted at and reflected in conclusion.

7 Discussion

Religious experience: an experiential way of approaching life, community and the other

Missional movements in general but new monastic communities especially, both offline and online are networks that create specific spaces where religion can be **experienced**; they create a religious resonance space (cf. Rosa, 2016, pp. 281–298; 435–452). The religious rhythm of life that is daily practiced, the online prayer at 9 pm, the radical hospitality for the poor, the reflective times in the community and alone, and so on are lived experiences. In nearly all the cases, religious experiences

are embodied experiences with a major transformational power for contextual theological interpretations of life and theology-based ethical actions. The experiences together with the public and private practices can lead to a change of attitude towards creation, poor people, money, lifestyle and even the understanding of life. Because of the feelings of comfort and security the experiences lead to a bigger self-affirmation and strengthening of self-confidence and to greater openness and tolerance for THE other. The strength of new monasticism is that on the one hand, people are given space for religious experience in specific religious settings and, on the other hand, they are supported by hermeneutical and interpretational frameworks. In this process, **discipleship** is automatically integrated. In doing so, discipleship is not understood as a program but as a search move in life and faith. The priesthood of all believers is thereby given but has to be grasped and shaped each day anew. Discipleship is a discourse, an open change process that is oriented towards the historical Jesus: « as if Jesus meant the things he said».(see Shane Claiborne ‘Bio’, n.d...Red Letter Christians ‘What is RLC?’, 2016). Discipleship in new monasticism describes a learning process that is influenced by biographical conditions, context, a rhythm of life, and openness towards creation and all people and God. It is a process that has, in the end, always elements of unavailability. In Brownings words: «God is always finally the agent of transformation»(Browning, 1996, p. 279). The term discipleship is situated in everyday life (Vgl Müller, 2019b, p. 24). And that’s where the aim of the transformation lies: in the person, society, church, neighborhood and friendships. The goal is to grow «people spiritually in discipleship, in the likeness of Christ, so active, working out the Gospel in the world and therefore, it should have a real outward-looking element, it should be seriously serving the community.» (Müller, 2016, p. 221; cf. as well Williams, 2016, pp. 16–18). The (religious) experiences, the daily routine, reflections and the community act as catalysts for the formation of religious identity, group identity and actions. In this dynamic of new monasticism where everyone is invited and sometimes obligated to participate discipleship and the priesthood of all believers are taken seriously. In a new monastic community like the Stadtkloster or a digital prayer like #twomplet everyone can be put in the position of a priest. The liturgical responsibility changes and is passed on. In this way the priesthood of all believers, which is connected to responsibility, practice, reflection and experience, leads to the faculty of theological speech and expressions and the responsibility for **lived theology** and the **productivity of theology**. Out of the lived theology of people, a highly theological productive movement arises which shares and reflects its lifestyle in books, articles, podcasts, on youtube channels and in social media. And the communities and networks are exceedingly theological productive. Especially in the Anglo-Saxon context a wide range of literature exists which reflects new monasticism and teaches individuals and communities into contemplative life. Much of the literature is produced by the new monastic networks themselves and their

exponents(cf. for example Clairborne, 2010; Community, 2018; Gardiner, 2018; House, 2005; Lanzetta, 2018; Mobsby & Berry, 2014).

8 Conclusion

A guiding theme in the new monastic movements is: low control, high accountability. (cf. Müller, 2016, p. 178f) Accountability is a relational term, one of trust and openness around which Christian communities emerge. As I have shown, this becomes particularly visible in new monastic communities. Accountability in new monasticism is like a solidary bond that sews people together for a common idea, a shared vision of a lifestyle that understands the kingdom of God as being already present and can be discovered in the specific context. Nevertheless transcendence is seen as a mediated system of symbols that requires personal interpretation. Ownership for theology, the context and the community leads to new forms of religiosity, which are highly sophisticated and in which spirituality is an integrative part of the whole life.

Religiosity in new monasticism is woven into the whole design of life. The sacred and the profane are not separated. In doing so, transcendence becomes part of modern lifestyles and spirituality is integrated with the doing and being. Even though new monasticism has as well a real inward-looking focus, there is a high correlation between the communication of the gospel and the life of the person. The plausibility of the gospel is bound to the contextual lived authenticity of the community and its individuals. Religion is lived out in the every day and furthermore, it is reflected. Talking in practical-theological frameworks: lived religion becomes lived theology in those communities. It becomes something people are aware of, reflect and live by.

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