Pillars of Salt: Pastoral Care with Adolescents with a Migration Experience

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Abstract: "Lot's wife looked back". This detail in the migration journey of Lot and his family illustrates being caught in between needing to move forward but wanting to look back. Many adolescents who have migrated to Europe experience in-betweenness. This article begins from their reported practices of lived religion. This interpretive phenomenological analysis study brings together the domains of lived religion, migration theology, and adolescent development to better understand how pastoral care may address this liminal state. Looking at their descriptions of the presence and absence of important relationships, religious practices, and the experience of the divine shows the importance of these three areas working together. In the absence of strong proximal social relationships, many adolescents with a religious identity who have migrated to Europe turn their attention to the divine Godself. Releasing someone caught in between two places may require an awareness of the concepts of grief and loss, post-trauma theology, and skills in orienting and making social connections. One goal of pastoral care for adolescents who have experienced migration can be to provide a path out of the liminal in-between space to a place where there is room to flourish.

Keywords: migration theology; adolescent spirituality; adolescent spiritual development; lived religion

1. Caught between Places: A Consideration of Context

The biblical texts about the family of Abraham and Sarah form a long migration story in Genesis. One part of this describes Lot, the nephew of Abraham, who was, together with his wife and two daughters, directed to quickly leave the city where they had settled. The narrative in the Genesis text (Gen 18:16 to 19:29) of Lot and his family's forced removal from Sodom reads similar to a scene from a horror story. They were so reluctant to leave that an angel had to lead them out by the hand. Reading the objections and negotiations, we get the feeling that they were dragged out by the angel. This image of fleeing with only what can be carried is powerful. Lot had interceded on behalf of the city. His uncle Abraham had interceded on behalf of the city. However, there was no way to prevent the destruction. This story has all the elements of a great movie. In Europe, this may be how people imagine the story of all migrants. It must be dramatic, full of inner turmoil, full of small but important movements that save your life. This can be the story of those who migrate, carrying their ongoing trauma along with them on their journey,[1] but that is not the experience of every person who migrates. There are many aspects of migration that need pastoral attention. Rather than focus on the conditions of migration, the focus in this article is on being caught between two places. "Lot's wife looked back". This was one detail in the migration journey of Lot and his family. They had been told to face forward and go, and yet before they reached the safety of the next place—while they were still on their way—something compelled her to turn and look. She turned from an unknown future to look back at a place that held both memories and expectations.

This half sentence "Lot's wife looked back" is pulled out of a very dramatic story, capturing a moment familiar to many people who have migrated. It is a moment of movement in two different directions. The body is in-between, arrested in time, confused. There is a pull to look back even while hope lies somewhere ahead. For adolescents with

an experience of migration[2], a similar kind of wrestling can happen when caught between one place and another.

The sentence ends in dramatic fashion with the person being transformed into a "pillar of salt". In a dramatic retelling, this pillar of salt may be described as a monument commemorating the past that is constructed from the salty sediment left by the tears of longing for another place and time. While that is hyperbole, this image does illustrate the cost of being caught in between and the inability to enter the present or imagine the future.

Since 2015, migration to Europe has become a highly politicized issue. With the recent build-up of people trying to migrate across the border of Belarus and Poland in the east (Pempel 2021) and the sinking of yet another boat in the English Channel between France and the UK in the west (Landler 2021), it is clear that this politicization will not end soon. Calling attention to the people affected by these politics, Pope Francis recently visited Lesbos and called for a coordinated effort of care to put an end to what he termed "the shipwreck of civilization" (Vatican News staff reporter 2021). This was his second such visit. Since his previous visit in 2016, scholarship in social sciences, education, and psychology has increasingly considered adolescents who have migrated to Europe (Dimitrova and Aydinli-Karakulak 2016; Lorant et al. 2016; Van der Bracht et al. 2016; Linden et al. 2017; Hannover et al. 2018; Kretschmer 2018; Phalet et al. 2018; Etzioni 2019; Friberg 2019; Simsek et al. 2019). Where religion was considered in most of these studies, it was often as a "barrier to integration.

Based on a study of the lived religion of adolescents with an experience of migrating to Europe, this article begins from their reported practices of lived religion. This research brings together the domains of adolescent development, migration theology, and lived religion. Starting from the domain of adolescent development, most models indicate an increase in social awareness and engagement alongside an increase in risk taking behavior. Recently, neuroimaging has been used to better understand the connection, if any, between the two (Crone and Dahl 2012). One insight was the idea of "the inherent overlap between affective and social processing" where, for an adolescent, emotions are interpreted within a context of social reward and social threat (Crone and Dahl 2012). This means that risk taking is likely to be influenced and interpreted through social awareness, thus they are interrelated processes and not separate characteristics (Gopnik et al. 2017). The result of which leads to a "flexibility of cognitive control", which neuroscientist Eveline Crone and developmental scientist Ronald Dahl propose "may confer adaptive advantages for learning to navigate the often unpredictable social challenges of adolescence" (Crone and Dahl 2012). In other words, relationships are the context in which learning, processing, and risk taking happen.

Focusing on adolescents means that relationships and social interactions are the landscape. Risk taking provides opportunities to try out solutions to social situations. The fault lines are found where these risks do not deliver social acceptance. Social expectations and social behaviors shift during an experience of migration and so, as a consequence, the number of these fault lines increases. When speaking about their migration experiences, the loss of relationships remains a pervasive theme. While this, in itself, may seem obvious, it is the unexpected ways in which this loss is experienced that have implications for pastoral care. For youths who are attempting to resettle, looking back carries the risk of being caught in between. In what ways might pastoral care for adolescents with a migration experience include this perspective?

The second domain is migration theology. Within Europe, the focus of migration theology has been on diaspora churches (Castillo Guerra 2019), missiology (Nagy and Speelman 2017), hospitality (Bieler et al. 2019), and interreligious dialogue (Polak 2018). Each focus contributes to a growing corpus of the academic consideration of a theology that reflects on or from migration. Yet, the focus is either on adults or families, with adults as the main informant group. Much of the research also begins from the perspective of European adults receiving those who have moved into Europe. This research focuses on the

perspective and experience of adolescents who have arrived in Europe and their experience of living religion as a newcomer in a European context.

The third area that completes this intersection is the phenomena that is the focus of this research: lived religion. Rather than focus on attendance at services or the number of times per day someone prays, this domain is more concerned with what everyday practices and behaviors comprise a person's religious expression. It asks the question: how then shall we live? A succinct definition given by Nancy Ammerman is: "the ways people of all religious groups navigate among the expectations of the worlds in which they live and the traditions they have to draw on" (Ammerman 2016). Within this larger subject are "spiritual practices". These are the expressions and everyday actions that individuals perform as an expression of their religious stance. Crucially, the study of lived religion recognizes that these practices are socially located: "individual's views are always influenced by cultural meanings and valuations" (Kupari 2016). So, to investigate the "spiritual practices" of adolescents with a migration experience is to consider something that is in process, not fixed or permanent. These are the ways in which adolescents have incorporated religious experience and religious behaviors into their daily lives.

Rather than surveying those who provide care for adolescents with a migration experience, this study took a ground-up approach. Beginning with the self-reported descriptions or examples of their own lived religion prioritizes the experience of the young person. We conducted a qualitative empirical study with adolescents with a migration experience in three countries across three years: Greece (2019), Spain (2020), and Belgium (2021). This qualitative study included a variety of religious and spiritual beliefs, including Sikh, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, Yezidi, and non-religious. This variety of religious identities provided a glimpse into whether the experiences are particular to one identity or more generally experienced among adolescents.

2. Simultaneously Present and Absent: Explaining Ways They Are Caught between

One danger of looking back is finding yourself caught in between. In reality, most of the adolescents had already been in a process of reflection over their experiences. Some were living a life that was firmly rooted in the new location. The majority, however, managed themselves between two places. The temptation to look back was strong: good, known relationships; the certainty of religious experiences; and predictable ways of practicing religion with others. At the same time, they were experiencing the presence of new friendships, the immanence of the divine, and modifying their practices to meet their circumstances.

2.1. Presence and Absence of Relationships

Migration interrupts relationships, social activities, social networks, informal relationships, and, therefore, cultural knowing. Growing up in a particular religious tradition within a particular community influences children with regards to the transmission of values and religious identity (Grupp et al. 2021). This religious influence can range from positive to negative. Either way, changing cultures during adolescence interrupts this transmission. The young people find themselves navigating a new environment in which the social skills and cultural values have shifted, even if ever so slightly.

> "Another bunch of meaningful moments was probably then when I moved, I was struggling a lot mentally because I had a bunch of expectations and they weren't coming true and I struggled socially and I looked to find friends"
>
> —Mikhail, 17, Spain

Mikhail struggled to give an example that demonstrated the complexity he felt. Instead, he interpreted several "meaningful moments" together as an indication of unmet expectations that were connected to difficulties with new friendships and new social settings. This struggle became a spiritual struggle for Mikhail. Although raised in an Orthodox church, Mikhail found himself uncertain about his belief in a divine being. He connected the ability to build friendships with the practices of self-reflection and meditation that he discovered through a new practice of Buddhist philosophy.

Others described differences between expectations and the new community within a specific religious tradition. Libby, a protestant Christian, met the disconnection with a sense of curiosity and looked for internal connections.

> "I would say living here changed a lot of my faith. I would say it's really hard in the beginning. Just because it wasn't like anything I had expected. I always had planned my life and coming here I realized that's not working like this. And with all the people around me I really saw how God is working and it's the most wonderful thing I've ever seen".
>
> —Libby, 18, Greece

In both cases, the absence and presence of others was deeply connected to personal spiritual practices that became rooted in the purpose of self-development. Both individuals used the disconnection or cultural clash as an opportunity for self-reflection and change. Mikhail and Libby both turned to spiritual practices to reassess and reinterpret their differing expectations.

The absence of important and meaningful relationships was also brought up by Bisat, a 17-year-old Muslim living in Spain. As an unaccompanied minor, Bisat spoke of the loneliness of attending mosque alone, whereas before, he went with his father and brother. Hadja, another 17-year-old Muslim also living in Spain, insisted that "all foreigners have this problem, y'know": of being alone, without family. While the absence of familial relationships may be expected, the daily reminders of those absences can become difficult. Looking to the divine when there is a lack of familial support may offer support to those who are still living in the liminal space between leaving and arriving. This particular liminal space exists between two actions of migration. A person has already left one place and is physically present in another, but connections with support systems and supportive relationships are not yet built. Relationally, it is an insecure space where the person is neither known nor seen as present in the new location.

It is not only family relationships that are absent, but also supportive peer relationships. Susan, a 15-year-old Muslim living in Greece, began attending school without a command of the local language and with a different religious identity. The girls in her class would dump her things on the floor whenever she stepped away from her desk. This constant rejection went on for weeks. As a newcomer, Susan did not have another peer network to turn to for support. Since this happened repeatedly, she was not certain that she could go to the classroom teacher. Without a firm grasp of language, Susan's options to take a social risk were limited. She did have her aunt, who was acting as her guardian in the absence of her parents. Susan's aunt advised her to pray for the girls daily. The regular practice of prayer helped Susan to deal with the emotions and wait for the bullying behavior to stop.

Using spiritual practices to aid in difficult social situations was a practice that adolescents with a migration experience spoke about again and again. Avery, a 15-year-old Christian living in Belgium, spoke about the need to train—to discipline—herself to respond to others with gentleness. She chose gentleness as the appropriate response because it is mentioned as a fruit of the spirit in the New Testament.

For those adolescents seeking asylum, the wait for a decision typically takes years. Waiting them out can become lonely.

> "I thank God because it's only him [sic] that is helping us. You understand because if it's not him [sic], I don't know if we can live here, you understand, because it's diff—it's too difficult. I can't lie [to] you. You understand? Because it's too difficult. Many of us, we are [sic] leave our family. Maybe there is four or five years we don't see our family, you understand?"
>
> —Djenabou, Muslim, 18, Spain

The general feeling of being without support can be overwhelming. The need to navigate through the difficulty of being without support can happen at any time during the process of resettling.

Djenabou, mentioned above, described this during the process of arrival, while Sebastian described it during the process of leaving.

> "And we were leaving and I felt bad. I felt bad for myself. I felt bad for my brother: I know he had a close friend. And like, wow, that whole time, it just started hitting me: pray. Pray for myself, pray for my brothers, pray for all of them, for this move, pray that nothing goes wrong. So I prayed: for myself and my brothers, our friends, my best friend. I prayed that whole time".
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> —Sebastian, Christian, 17, Belgium

Among those adolescents whose families move somewhat regularly, this experience of losing friends occurs each time. As Sebastian's family sat in an airport terminal between flights, he noticed tears streaming down his brother's face. Adolescents with a migration experience are aware of the emotional reality that, even with technology, human relationships rely heavily on proximity. The manner in which many of the young people who participated in this study responded to this reality was to search for a higher connection—a divine connection. This may typically be associated with religion and thus, religious practices.

2.2. Presence and Absence of Religious Practice

> "For me, we can't do this life with no religion".
>
> —Adam, Muslim, 16, Greece

Being involved in formal religious activities was the case for many of the Christian participants in Greece, Spain, and Belgium. However, adolescents practicing other religions spoke primarily of personal practice. When asked why, there were stories of barriers to religious spaces. The first barrier is the perception that religion is not visible to newcomers, whether in Greece, Spain or Belgium.

The markers of religious belief and practice are different than those they are used to experiencing.

> "No. Religion has left. Left. [gestured with his hand in a sweeping motion]. Religion in this city—is far. Nothing—they do nothing. In [hometown] I went to the mosque in the afternoon, it was normal there, but that is far from those in Spain".
>
> —Cheikh, Muslim, 17, Spain

Cheikh described the lack of people streaming into a religious practice as a community in Spain. Adam, a 16-year-old Muslim living in Greece, questioned the religiosity in the community in Greece based on a lack of hospitality in public. Several participants in each country had no space where they could attend festivals or religious activities in an appropriate space, whether Muslim, Yezidi or Sikh. The issues of accessibility or distance were mentioned often, as was the increased police presence in the vicinity of mosques, which discouraged participation. Yaad, a 15-year-old Sikh living in Belgium, talked of her family driving hours to the closest site where they could attend a Sikh service. Marcos, an 18-year-old Christian living in Spain, mentioned travelling to a place twenty minutes or so outside the city to a Protestant Church that meets in a garage. Christian youths in Belgium mentioned the reduced transportation on weekends. For a variety of reasons, there were barriers to participation in a religious community. Instead, many focused on personal practices.

While reading sacred texts, listening to podcasts, and using apps were cited as some of the practices of these adolescents, they were most often mentioned as an added detail in an example that focused on prayer. Not surprisingly, the most common religious practices that youth participate in were meditation and prayer. When asked to explain what she meant by prayer being the way she practices her religion, Claire, living in Belgium, answered:

> "Because it shows me God is always there. I have someone to cry to. I can bring him all my worry. Yeah, I can. I can sometimes even ask questions like,

> Why? Why now Why? Why now when I'm in Belgium, I don't have a way to go the funeral?"
>
> —Claire, Christian, 15, Belgium

Claire described prayer as a way to ask God questions. In her explanation about prayer, she talked about the death of her grandfather whom she had seen just days prior to leaving. She was unable to immediately travel back for the funeral. Despite the grief and loss that she felt after the death of her grandfather, prayer reinforced for Claire both the persistent presence of the Godself as well as the personal accessibility through prayer that was available to her.

This accessibility was also part of the understanding of Marcos, a Christian living in Spain.

> "As I am standing with you here, in my mind I may be praying—you never know. You get me? I can be in my house—I'll be praying you never know. I can be on the street walking I will pray, I'll be praying to my God. My God will listen to me, but you will never know. I can be in the midst of people, but I can stand here talking to them but I will be praying in my mind. Nobody knows. And it depends on my heart and my belief that's the only thing".
>
> —Marcos, 18, Spain

Not only is God accessible to Marcos, but God is also personally interested in what he has to say. Dawuud, an 18-year-old Muslim living in Belgium, says his prayers in Arabic, but he explained that it is important to understand the words so that he can be truly asking for God's guidance, because he believes that if he really seeks God's guidance then he will receive it.

The experience of prayer being a connection to God and that the Godself is available to those who pray was also affirmed by Liya, a 21-year-old Christian living in Belgium:

> "I really stress about things. And [God] told me that I stress too much: about too much for my school, about my family—for everything. I prayed and God told me, 'I am here for you'. So now I don't worry about my study, and I feel relaxed and good. And my study, it's just to say, so I really believe in all these things. And I pray every night, I really see them. God says 'When you ask me what I'm doing, what I'm asking you to do is to help you.'"
>
> —Liya, 21, Belgium

Liya explained that, through prayer, she received instruction about managing her emotions. She believes that the other spiritual practices that she does are for her good. Adam, a 16-year-old living in Greece, explained that all of the behavioral expectations in Islam provide a double benefit: " . . . and this and this and this, we do it for God but then for yourself". This was echoed by Atif, a 19-year-old Muslim living in Belgium, who explained that following the behavioral expectations of Islam is good not only for your own spiritual health, but for your physical health too. In this way, daily life is enhanced through living out religion in daily habits and practices.

Youths noted that it is not only their religions that have expectations. Settling in Europe brings about a particular set of expectations that impact how they live. On the one hand, there are socio-economic expectations:

> "Because everybody want to work, and we are studying. Yeah. But y'know back at home, nah. So we have time for God all thi—yeah, we still got time for him, but not much. Because time is changing and we are growing too".
>
> —Iker, Muslim, 15, Spain

Iker, living in Spain, explained that time is used differently in Europe. That, in turn, impacts the practice of religion. This was echoed by Marcus, an 18-year-old Christian also living in Spain. When asked how religious practice in Spain differed from his home country, he quickly responded:

> "So here in Europe you agree [in] your mind, you agree everything is about time. Because if you don't respect time, time is not going to respect you. So Africa mentality is different from here, even though it is the same God".

—Marcos, Christian, 18, Spain

Importantly, these adolescents with a migration experience consider that the content of their belief remains consistent. It is just that, in the words of Atif, a 19-year-old Muslim living in Belgium, "the conditions have changed".

One response to these changing conditions is to change practices. There are some circumstances where it is necessary to bend to the prevailing culture, but not all youths are satisfied to do so. They continue their practice, continue their belief, and challenge the idea that religion is taboo.

> "So every time we talk about a topic, I always try to bring God into it to say something about God, about my own religion. And I think that's even more interesting than hanging around only Christians . . . "

—Charlie, Christian, 21, Belgium

Discussing religious beliefs with others who believe differently or do not believe at all becomes a religious practice in itself. This practice, it should be noted, is not evangelization, but the normalization of religion in everyday conversations.

2.3. Presence and Absence of the Divine

This desire to normalize religious conversation comes from the sense that religion is a valid worldview that is itself grounded in the personal religious and spiritual experiences of the interviewed adolescents with an experience of migration. Through religious and spiritual practices, the adolescents reported a personal presence of the divine. This experience of immanence was expressed by some adolescents as something that is available to all humans.

> "People like to reinforce their faith in God. What's more important is your relationship with God, that bond, and knowing who God really is, because everywhere you will go, you will feel God".

—Abigail, Christian, 21, Belgium

This preference for a personal experience of the divine over religious participation was expressed by others as well. George, a 16-year-old Christian living in Greece, differentiated between spirituality and religion:

> "Ok, yeah spirituality is really important to me. So that—it—connects me with God. So it's really important. If we're talking about religion based on the Bible, then I totally agree on it because religion is to serve the poor and take care of the widows".

—George, Christian, 16, Greece

George and Abigail's prioritization of a personal relationship over the practice of religion was not universally expressed. Adam, a 16-year-old Muslim living in Greece, expressed that it is through religion that the personal relationship with God is possible: "I understand religion makes my life different. I feel good for this religion. I think I near to God for this religion". Two consistent threads were the expectations that following a religion (1) entails certain behaviors and (2) has an experience of closeness to God.

The perspective is that you can draw close to God through religious practices or behaviors. This was expressed by several participants from each site. Renee expressed this rather honestly, saying:

> "I would say I try to be as close to God as I can on a daily basis. That works some days better than others. As far as religion, I . . . my practice is I go to church and I try to read my Bible every night. That's—yeah, and then I pray when I, y'know,

> when there's something I feel I need to say to God or when I want to ask him to speak with me".

> —Renee, Christian, 19, Greece

The fact that adolescents with a religious identity place confidence in a divine being who is both transcendent—above the world—and yet also immanent—present in the world—was implied in several comments, even when the theological terms were not used.

In this way, God is present and accessible rather than absent. As George, from above, further explained: "there's nothing that will separate you from, um, wanting him more and wanting to grow closer with him". This accessible divine presence becomes especially important to adolescents with a migration experience when times become rough, as Penny, a 16-year-old Christian living in Greece, noted: "it's very important 'cause in difficult times you have someone to talk to". This was affirmed by Jenny, a 16-year-old Christian also living in Greece, who said: "I know I have someone to trust. And God is always with me". Whether these difficulties are directly related to the process of migration or they occur in the place of resettlement, the adolescents explained that this relationship matters.

The experience of problems for these adolescents does not indicate the absence of a divine presence. In fact, problems become moments of encounter.

> "Every time I encounter problems like this, I came out thanks to God's grace. in life everything you do in life it's not just for Muslims but, in life, everyone has to have faith in God. You have to believe in Him, He is your *sauveur* (a participant translates: "savior"). For all of that I am very grateful to Him".

> —Foromo, Muslim, 18, Spain

Sometimes help comes through others, whose motivations to help are understood to come from divine inspiration. Other times, there are fortunate moments or emotional help attributed to direct divine intervention. The adolescents with a religious identity in this study largely did not speak about God being absent from them; they spoke of God's presence. In each of these situations, the adolescents interpreted the eventual positive outcomes (even when they took months) as God's personal concern and presence in their lives.

3. Discussion

Despite the losses that were experienced in many types of relationships, the participants did not describe a loss of the presence of God. After a migration experience, there is a transition period between the loss of old relationships and the formation of new ones. With technology, there can be the expectation that it is possible to maintain relationships across long distances; however, with the passing of time this becomes more complex. There are a variety of reasons that make it is difficult to maintain relationships over long distances: contact information changes; interest wanes; a common time is difficult to find. The transition between groups of friends is something that appeared in the interviews, as expressed by Mikhail: " . . . and I struggled socially and I looked to find friends". For many participants, this struggle was met with spiritual practices.

Expressed as a struggle, Mikhail and Libby each experienced that their initial expectations about their new communities did not match what they found. The process of adjustment was such a struggle for Mikhail that he wrestled with how to find friends and found it difficult to understand the new social situation. Developmental studies have shown that adolescents are socially motivated (Crone and Dahl 2012; Gopnik et al. 2017). Neuroimaging studies have shown which parts of the brain are involved in social processes, particularly with regards to rejection (Crone and Dahl 2012). This has influenced earlier understandings of how social processes and risk are related. In a study published in *Nature*, Evelien Crone and Ronald Dahl assert: "there is growing evidence that adolescence is a developmental period during which the degree of cognitive engagement is relatively flexible, depending on the social and motivational salience of a goal" (Crone and Dahl 2012). This cognitive flexibility allows teens to find and attempt creative solutions in social situa-

tions. During a study comparing children, adolescents, and adults, Alison Gopnik and her colleagues found that "adolescents were also the more flexible social thinkers: they were most able to overcome prior biases in the face of new evidence" (Gopnik et al. 2017). For adolescents with an experience of migration, this cognitive flexibility can be a useful tool in meeting social challenges, including those surrounding religious identity.

Cognitive flexibility is apparent in Mikhail's response to his social rejection, where he creatively found a solution through meditation. By engaging in a spiritual practice, Mikhail finds that he is able to contribute to social situations rather than exploit them. In Charlie's practice of bringing religion into everyday conversations, there is evidence of cognitive flexibility as he seeks to find a way to make room for interreligious discussion in a social space. Crone and Dahl go on to explain that this flexibility may "facilitate learning, problem-solving and the use of divergent creative abilities" (Crone and Dahl 2012). Thus, adolescents with a migration experience may find creative ways to address the social challenges associated with settling after migration. This problem solving ability was demonstrated by Charlie who, rather than avoid religion as a topic of conversation, brings his personal beliefs into discussions with others who are religious. However, while there were some creative responses, there was also an awareness that talking about religion involved social risk for a newcomer adolescent in Europe.

This natural willingness to take a social risk must be weighed against having little or no social capital. For adolescents, this equation is decided from situation to situation. For pastoral care workers, such decisions present opportunities to support and develop spirituality and lived religion through this creative problem solving capacity. These opportunities are located in the social sensitivity that is considered universal among adolescents. Such a view focuses on the everyday situations that adolescents imbue with religious meaning: bringing God into conversations and seeking to contribute to others. Such practices are not the institutional references we may expect to hear. Instead, these are ways to live religion in secularized social spaces and so, they "may not be focused on beliefs at all" (Ammerman 2016). The point of being more generous toward another human is not strictly a matter of the content of religious beliefs, although you could argue that an anthropological stance is embedded in such actions. Being generous, or contributing to social situations, is the spiritual practice itself. Here, Mikhail was describing ways to demonstrate his Buddhist practice and how that practice changed his own view of others. For Charlie, the point of interreligious conversation was to make space for it to be normal to speak about the Christian God within the social context of a school in Belgium. This practice was intentional and purposeful; it was a way to bring the sacred into contact with the secular—not due to religious content, but for the sake of normalizing religion in social interactions. These are examples that link the social context with religious experience (Ammerman 2016).

Most adolescents who migrate internationally experience loss. This happens in a number of ways, but the participants in this study focused on lost relationships. Relational loss happens for all adolescents who move countries, even when there is no experience of trauma. Strong social sensitivity may be a complicating factor for those who do experience trauma before, during or after migration. Shelly Rambo explains that post-traumatic public theology offers a way to accompany people as they at first "orient", "integrate", "make" or "restore" connections and then as they incorporate the experience into "one's life" (Rambo 2010). It may not be possible for pastoral care givers to work through all of these aspects when migration has taken place because of trauma, in which case special considerations can be made. Since some migration experiences do involve trauma, it is important to recognize the particular needs of the individuals. Still, trauma experience is not definitive for migration, instead migration adds another layer of complexity for trauma care. For those pastoral care workers who are trained in trauma theology, there may appear to be an overlap between the two experiences. They may recognize in adolescents with a migration experience a process of orienting, integrating, and making social connections that is reminiscent of, but not the same as, that of trauma survivors.

One outcome for adolescents with a lived religious practice is that the experience of loss during and after migration underscores an "orientation toward God, being convinced that the Lord will help" (Polak 2018). This was seen in the comments of Claire, Djenabou, George, Abigail, Marcos, Sebastian, Foromo, and others. A reliance on a personal God is consistent with the work of Regina Polak, who explains that in migration theology, hope in God is "well educated, eminently practical, and can be learnt through training" (Polak 2018). For adolescents with a migration experience, training or discipline is often located outside of the formal religious structure, instead primarily occurring in their personal practices. This was reported by Mikhail, Susan, Avery, and Liya, each of whom adopted a particular personal practice (meditation, prayer, gentle response, emotional control).

In the absence of strong proximal social relationships, various adolescents with a religious identity who have migrated to Europe turn their attention to the divine Godself. This contributes toward the tendency to interpret the help of others as evidence of God's personal care (see Polak 2018). God, in transcendent power, is considered as able to influence others to offer help. This propensity to expect God's involvement in their lives provides an opening for pastoral care to step alongside. According to Regina Polak, the intensity of the "powerlessness, dependence, fragility, vulnerability" that is experienced during migration allows the person to experience God (Polak 2018). It is possible for those engaged in pastoral care to connect with adolescents about these specific experiences of intense vulnerability. Many times, these occur in the social world of the young person, where "being excluded can facilitate the possibility as well as the ability to ask for God and to thus become aware of God's presence" (Polak 2018). Since this is likely to have already happened in the lived religion of adolescents with a migration experience, it is not necessary for the pastoral care giver to draw direct lines. Instead, it is best to begin by asking them to describe ways in which they have experienced God. It is then the meaning making and learning processes that occur afterward that need the additional support of guidance and care.

This additional support can follow Jorge Castillo Guerra's three criteria for a theology of migration. It begins, as above, with theological reflection over the "life, faith, hope, and love" of the individual adolescent with a migration experience. From a reflection on "the sources of faith in relation to a particular context" (Castillo Guerra 2015), it becomes possible to see the lived religion and practices in the view of theological tradition. From the current expressions of the individual, it is possible to move to "the context of human mobility and migrant's faith", so that the individual experience of leaving, arriving, and resettling are reflected on pastorally. In some cases, these may not be separate reflections, but may be intertwined. Finally, the pastoral care giver asks the adolescent to reflect on the possibility of transformation within themselves or within their context. There is a call for "responsibility and concern" that "denounces injustice" while also finding ways to support those transformations that "pave the way for the arrival of the kingdom of God" (Castillo Guerra 2015).

Pastoral care can connect with the personal life, faith, hope, and love of adolescents with a migration experience. At the same time, pastoral care can facilitate reflection and the meaning making of the migration experience across cultures and across emotional landscapes. This helps to set their experiences of migration and the new community within the greater context of faith. Bringing together the three contexts allows those who have migrated, as well as those who support them, the chance to take action for transformation and therefore, to leave the in-between place. Such an interpretation of God's involvement in their lives helps them to turn from looking back to focus on the direction in which their bodies are travelling.

4. Methods

Since this study focused on the lived religion of adolescents with a migration experience, the design of the project needed to be accessible for people from a variety of religious, cultural, and educational backgrounds. A three-part interview was constructed

using existing tools from the field of psychology: a life map (see Appendix A), a relational eco-map (see Appendix B), and an interview guide (see Appendix C). This structure allowed participants the chance to collect and organize their own life narrative, identify important relationships, and then engage in an open conversation. This also allowed for rapport building, where the interviewer behaved in a calm, casual, and open manner. The semi-structured interview was intentionally conducted as a purposeful conversation (Smith 2004).

The use of interpretative phenomenological analysis informed the purposeful selection of participants. Participants ranged in age from 15 to 21. Since adolescence is an inexact age range that varies from culture to culture, participants within this range were included in the project. Participants were recruited through NGOs, religious communities, and schools. They represented a wide variety of types of migration: expatriate dependents, informal migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and education migrants. To assure anonymity, names have been pseudonymized and specific locations have been withheld. The three research sites (one each in Greece, Spain, and Belgium) were chosen because of their proximity to a smaller city where migration is common. In each non-capital city area, 21 participants were included to create a total of 63 adolescents with a migrant experience.

In most cases, the researcher first engaged in or observed a regular activity hosted by an organization. After the activity, adolescents were invited to participate in the study. At the beginning of the interview, the informed consent was read together with participants. Then, youths were asked to draw a life map, a map of their relationships, and then participate in an open interview. After the interviews were completed in each area, the analysis phase began. The interviews were transcribed, any language translations were inspected by native speakers, and then the transcripts were coded using IPA (Smith 2004). This was entered into NVivo, where a further investigation of the data was possible. The entire process was completed for Greece before the interviews began in Spain. Again, the transcriptions and analysis of the interviews from Spain were completed before the interviews in Belgium were collected. In this way, each country comprised its own project. After all three were completed, they were brought together for an overall analysis.

The project began before the pandemic, and the interviews in Spain and Belgium were impacted by the measures taken to limit the spread of COVID-19. Due to this interruption, the recruitment and interviews were also offered online but, in most cases, the interviews took place in person. This study is also focused on the personal experiences and practices of the individuals. As such, it was not possible to ascertain the normative positions of the participants. This lies beyond the scope of this initial study but is of primary interest for further research on the spirituality of adolescents with a migration experience. As an initial qualitative study, the results do indicate a pattern, but it must be kept in view that this is not a representative sample.

The design of this study required participants to look back and to think again of the process of migrating. For some participants, this was more painful than for others. However, this study did not ask participants to re-tell their particular experience of moving, nor was it a priority to determine why they moved. This was intentional, so as not to emphasize traumatic experiences or to re-traumatize those who experienced very difficult circumstances. Instead, the focus was directed on religious experiences and practices (Smith 2004). The design was reviewed by a psychologist working with children coming out of human trafficking. Every interview ended with a brief conversation about the future; this was also intentional, so as to move participants out of the reflective state. In this way, every effort was made to be sure that participants were not harmed by their participation. The study was approved by SMEC, the ethical committee of the KU Leuven for humanities and social sciences (number: G-2020-2082).

5. Conclusions: Un-Winding the Turn

Bringing these findings together, pastoral care for those with an experience of migration should start from the presence and absence of social relationships. Many religious

communities have special programs for teens or youths, but pastoral care for those with a migration experience is not simply building a cultural bridge for the purpose of integration (Wartena et al. 2007). The majority of an adolescent's social network is, at best, distant or, quite possibly, broken after migration. New social relationships must be built. Individuals involved in pastoral care may find success in helping adolescents to rebuild such a network. As their first network was built by their parents, adolescents may lack some of the skills and some of the courage to carry out this work as individuals. These networks may include social connections that are weak as well as strong, peer as well as adult, religious similarity as well as religious difference.

This insight moves away from the role that religion can play in integration to the ways that lived religious practices create opportunities for interaction. Some churches are motivated to provide tangible care for physical needs (food, shelter, clothing), which is a necessary work; however, when considering pastoral care for those who have migrated, there is a need to recognize the need for care of spiritual matters as well. Pastoral care is well positioned to address the experience of in-betweenness. This experience may be embodied and it can be emotional as well, but at its heart, it is an experience that needs the care of the spirit.

Releasing someone caught in between two places may require an awareness of the concepts of grief and loss, post-trauma theology, and skills in orienting and making social connections. Pastoral care may look more like providing a space that is sheltered from high social risk. Allowing adolescents with a migration experience to describe their social challenges may open their own cognitive flexibility. Creating a space for intercultural and interreligious dialogue among adolescents where it is possible to explore "divergent creative abilities" is a particular kind of pastoral care.

Pastoral care that considers the cognitive development as well as the social position of the individual requires a reframing of how we think about adolescents and how we think about migration. Adolescents migrating to Europe spoke of the struggles they had in relationships and the spiritual practices they engaged in to confront these struggles. Yet, most of these young people were still in between the place they had left and the land they were settling in. As the adolescent with a migration experience turns to look toward the place they now inhabit, pastoral care can build on the cognitive flexibility and social motivations that are typical of adolescence in general. One goal of pastoral care for adolescents who have experienced migration can be to provide a path out of a liminal space that feels insecure to a place where there is room to flourish.

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Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Social and Societal Ethics Committee (SMEC) at KU Leuven under dossier G-2019 11 1832 and updated with G2020-2082.

Informed Consent Statement: All participants in this study agreed that their pseudonymized interviews could be quoted and published.

Data Availability Statement: Data presented in this study are not publicly available due to the ethical concerns of working with a vulnerable people group. Data may be made available upon request from the corresponding author.

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Appendix A

The life map is a visual tool that has been used in various settings as an interview instrument. Spiritual life maps ask participants to focus on the important moments of their lives as well as times of spiritual significance—either positive or negative (Hodge 2020). The use of color, drawing, and symbols may allow participants who are uncomfortable with verbal communication to express themselves. Using a participant-created piece as the starting point of the interview underscores that it is their own experience that is at the center of the interview.

Drawing the spiritual life map can bring participants new insights into, or offer a perspective through which they may understand, their "spiritual journey in new ways" (Hodge 2020). Participants were shown three examples. The first was the example used by Hodge (2005), see Figure A1 below.
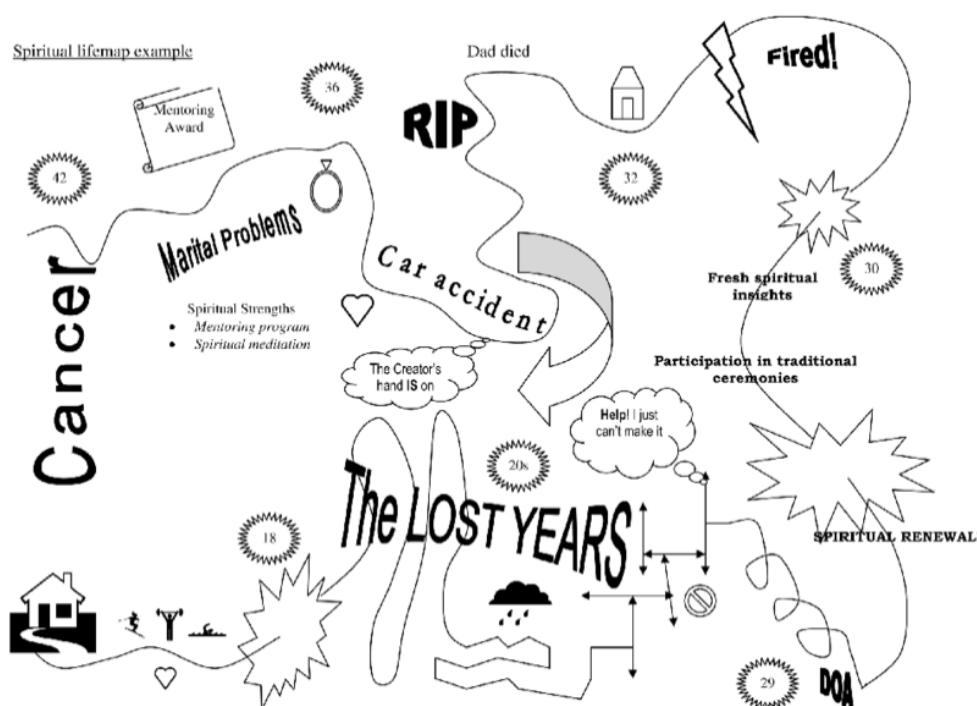
Figure A1. The spiritual life map. Reprinted with permission from Hodge (2005). Copyright 2005 Oxford University Press.

Appendix B

The spiritual eco-map was modified for the purposes of this study. Since this study focused on lived religion among adolescents with a migration experience, there was not a focus on religious transmission nor on therapeutic aims, as seen in the descriptions by Hodge (2018). Instead, using a scheme of circles, participants were asked to write down the roles of people who played a part in their spiritual journey. Then, they were asked to use colors to indicate whether an existing relationship was proximate (in the same country) or distant (not in the same country). If the relationship was ruptured or severed, participants were asked to draw an "X" on the line. This instrument is a way to visualize the loss of relational networks experienced due to migration.
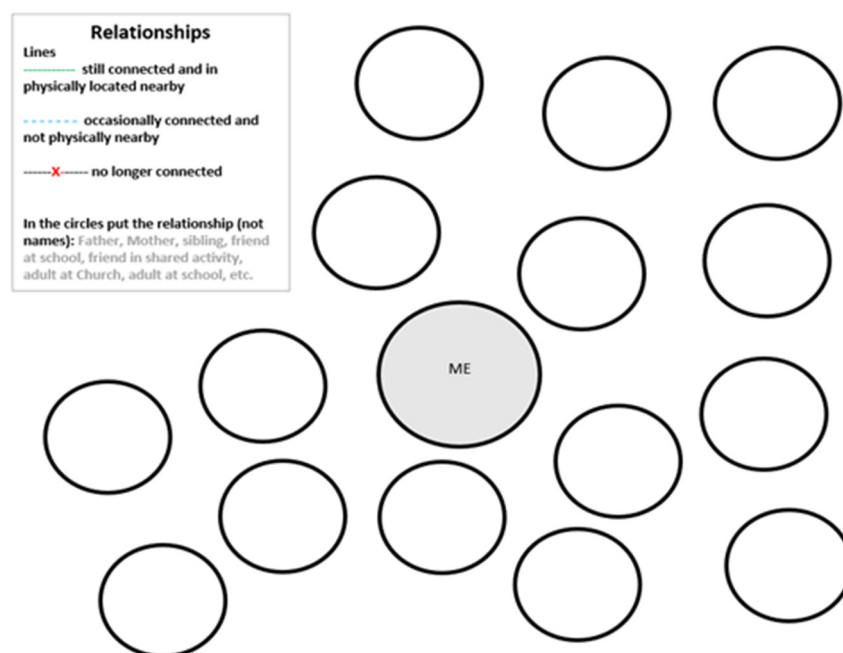
Figure A2. The eco-map.

Appendix C

The interview guide used in this project continued to develop over the iterations of the interviews. While the questions themselves were important, the goal was to move the conversation toward concrete examples or stories of particular moments. Often, these moments were on the life map, although not in every case. The most important question became: "Can you tell me more?" Although it is not listed as an interview question, the researcher was careful to direct participants toward talking about future events or future plans in order to reorient the participant to the present/future rather than continue to ruminate about the past.

Interview Guide:

1. How important is spirituality or religion (s/r) is to you?

   a. Can you tell me a story that shows what you mean?

2. Are there particular s/r beliefs or practices you find [have found] helpful in dealing with challenges [before you moved]? [After coming to Greece/Spain/Belgium]?
3. What are ways you practice your beliefs?
4. When you think about your life before coming to Spain and your life here in Spain, can you describe for me the things about your s/r that are the same? different?

   a. Can you tell me a time when that happens/happened?

Alternate Questions

1. I was wondering how your s/r has shaped your understanding and response to your current situation?
2. I was also curious if there are any specific aspects of s/r that concern you or maybe others?
3. Looking ahead, I was wondering how you incorporate your s/r beliefs and practices into your daily life? What does that look like for you?
4. Do you happen to participate in religious services of some type, [perhaps at a church, mosque, temple, or synagogue]?
5. How do you learn more about your beliefs?
6. Are they any people who you can speak to about s/r or ask them questions?
7. Do you have any 'life questions' you feel are (not) answered by your s/r?

Notes

[1] The care of families fleeing war is a particular concern for pastoral care. It is a complex situation that deserves pastoral care from a nuanced position. This article does not focus on trauma care. For a case study on pastoral care for families fleeing war, please see Casteel (2019).

[2] This is different from the term "migrant background", which includes those who experienced migration along with those born to one or more immigrant parent or grandparent in the country of resettlement. Instead, adolescents with a migration experience include those who are dependents of people who migrate for work—both skilled and highly trained laborers—as well as those applying for asylum. The sample includes children of military, diplomatic, and business men and women, those under family reunification, and those who have migrated without a visa.

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