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SPIRITUALITY AND PRE-SPIRITUALITY IN THE CREATED WORLD

Since the end of the 20th century, academic interest in the study of spirituality has grown considerably. More specifically, there has been an increasing interest in investigating spirituality in sports from various perspectives, such as philosophy, theology, sociology and psychology. However, the amount of theologically focused research dedicated to sports and spirituality remains limited. Nick Watson and Andrew Parker have urged both quantitative and qualitative research to develop evidence-based resources for educators.[1] Qualitative research methods are valued in practical theology, as they enable informed theological reflection on real-life situations.[2] In this study, we explore the use of photo elicitation combined with template analysis as a way to gain a deeper understanding of spirituality and pre-spirituality. We compare the characteristics of

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1 Nick J. Watson and Andrew Parker, "Sports and Christianity: Mapping the Field", in *Sports and Christianity: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Nick J. Watson and Andrew Parker (New York: Routledge, 2013), 41, ProQuest Ebook Central.

2 John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006).

both concepts as revealed in Christian Scripture with future sport specialists' (FSS) perceptions of spirituality in various social environments.

Template analysis of spirituality perceptions cannot determine the actual spiritual status of the individuals describing their life experiences, but it can provide some insight into whether the expressed views are aligned with a Bible-based understanding of spirituality. After all, people speak from the abundance of their hearts (Luke 6:45).

This research is conducted from a conservative evangelical[3] Christian theological perspective that recognizes the Bible as a unique divine revelation of the Creator in history, written down and carried over from generation to generation by human beings.[4] In the theological interpretation of biblical texts, we acknowledge the concept of *sensus plenior* – i.e., that the text can have a deeper meaning envisioned by the transcendent Spirit, even if not consciously intended by the human authors.[5] It is important to investigate the authors' immediate human context and their intentions, but the deeper meaning is revealed only by the Spirit, who illuminates God's character and salvific actions.[6] We interpret the Bible holistically in the light of the Creator's progressive revelation of the grand narrative of the gospel – creation, fall, redemption and restoration. Furthermore, we believe that Scripture and the created world inform each other.[7]

The historical time period after the resurrection of Christ and the giving of the Holy Spirit to all believers in Christ marks the dawning of the new creation and a new spirituality given exclusively to the Christian church (1 Cor 2; 2 Cor 5:17–21; Gal 6:14–16). The three main Abrahamic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – come from the same forefather Abraham, but they interpret the world and history differently. Analogously, such sports as football, rugby and American football have evolved from the same root, but they are played according to diverse rules. Therefore, an exclusively Bible-based approach has been applied in this research to define spirituality.

Definitions of spirituality and pre-spirituality will be provided below, but first, we will discuss some historical background to understand how the meaning of spirituality has diverged from its roots in the Christian Bible.

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3 David Bebbington in 1989 coined the best-known defining characteristics of evangelicals: activism, biblicism, conversionism, and crucicentrism; Timothy Larsen in 2007 added pneumaticism. See *Every Leaf, Line, and Letter: Evangelicals and the Bible from the 1730s to the Present*, ed. Timothy Larsen (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 1, 241, ProQuest Ebook Central.

4 Robert Bornemann, "Toward a Biblical Theology", in *The Promise and Practice of Biblical Theology*, ed. John Reumann (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 117–128.

5 W. Randolph Tate, *Handbook for Biblical Interpretation: An Essential Guide to Methods, Terms, and Concepts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012).

6 Gerhard Maier, *Biblical Hermeneutics,* trans. Robert W. Yarbrough (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994).

7 Tate, *Handbook for Biblical Interpretation: An Essential Guide to Methods, Terms, and Concepts*, 447; Gordon Barnes, "God's Revelation in Nature", *Faith and Thought* 111, No. 2 (1985): 161–170.

Cultural shift in spirituality

The word *spirituality* is never mentioned in the Christian Scriptures; however, it is derived from the adjective *spiritual.* Gordon Fee, through an extensive exegesis of Paul's letters, has concluded that the principal meaning of the Greek adjective *pneumatikos* used in the New Testament is confined to the Holy Spirit, and therefore – to the triune God.[8] The biblical understanding of spirituality is confirmed in the earliest use of the Latin word *spiritualitas*, in 410 AD, where it was intended to encourage life in greater conformity to the Spirit. Usage of the word *spirituality* concerning the Holy Spirit was constant up to the 12th century. Due to scholasticism that drew inspiration from Greek philosophy, in later times the word *spiritual* often alluded to human rationality. Spirituality was increasingly opposed to the material or corporeal.[9] Our understanding of spirituality is becoming even more obscured as various philosophical, scientific, political and social changes have occurred in the West since the 14th century.

James Herrick has concluded that major changes in the perception of spirituality "correspond roughly with scientific advances, corrosive biblical criticism and rising awareness of other faiths on the part of Westerners".[10] The gradual parting of science and religion, continuous rivalries of reason versus revelation and the Protestant Reformation led to de-traditionalization, characterized by the shift of authority from organizations to the individual. De-traditionalization grew during the Enlightenment and peaked in the 1960s and 1970s.[11] Since then, scepticism towards external authorities and the rise of philosophical pluralism have continued to erode the authority of Scripture as the revealed Word and the exclusive source of knowledge about the living God. For example, a public opinion survey in Latvia found that the percentage of respondents who reported not reading the Bible increased from 47 % in 2001 to 73 % in 2022.[12]

In addition, secular thinking embraces the idea of compartmentalization. Many of those who desire to live genuine lives as followers of Christ in their Christian subculture

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8   The adjective *pneumatikos* is used in the New Testament 26 times; 24 of these are by Paul. It does not appear in the LXX. Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 28–32.

9   Adam McClendon, "Defining the Role of the Bible in Spirituality: 'Three Degrees of Spirituality' in American Culture", *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 5.2 (2012): 207–225; Philip Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

10   James Herrick, *The Making of the New Spirituality* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 20.

11   Diana Butler Bass and Joseph Stewart-Sicking, "Christian Spirituality in Europe and North America since 1700", in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, ed. Arthur Holder (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 139–155.

12   Information obtained through personal communication with the SKDS Research Centre (skds@skds.lv). See also Roberto. "Bībeles lasīšanas ieradumi Latvijā". e-BAZNICA, 2018, https://www.ebaznica.lv/bibeles-lasisanas-ieradumi-latvija-90988/ (last viewed 17.09.2023)

nevertheless suppress this intention in other social environments.[13] Empirical studies have shown that Christian athletes in the contemporary world tend to separate their faith from competitive sports.[14] The compartmentalized lives of Christians are expressed through a "Christ-and-me" relationship with God as a substitute for the "Christ-in-me" Christian identity established in the Scripture.[15] It has been argued that play and sports as part of God's intention displayed in the creation may serve for the glory of God and for the purpose of spiritual formation if transformed through the Gospel.[16] Thus, we have analysed FSSs' generic understanding of perceptions of spirituality in different social environments.

Definitions of spirituality and pre-spirituality

In 2002, there were 92 different definitions of spirituality in the health literature, and twenty years later, defining the concept remains a significant challenge.[17] Lucy Bregman has concluded that attempts to divorce spirituality from religion and a lack of a clear theoretical framework have resulted in overly vague definitions. She suggests that "too many fragments of different and incompatible theories are at work within the very definitions of spirituality."[18]

Christianity is based on God's revelation to people within human history. Referring to 1 Corinthians 1:21, Gordon Barnes states that "God in His wisdom has seen fit that human wisdom unaided should be unable to reach up to Him."[19]

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13 Eddie Gibbs, In Name Only: Tackling the Problem of Nominal Christianity (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Seminary Press, 2000); Gene E. Veith Jr., *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994).

14 Watson and Parker, "Sports and Christianity: Mapping the Field", 32.

15 Cameron Wayne Wooten, "Trinitarian and Epistemological Implications for Spiritual Formation among Millennials" (PhD Thesis, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016).

16 Jeremy R. Treat, "More than a Game: A Theology of Sport", *Themelios* 40.3 (2015): 392–403; Mike W. Austin, "Sports as Exercises in Spiritual Formation", *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 3.1 (2010): 66–78; Matthew Roberts, "Willardian Spiritual Formation, Novel Spiritual Disciplines, and Basketball: A Case Study", *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 13.2 (2020): 222–245; John B. White, "Sacramentally Imagining Sports as a Form of Worship: Reappraising Sport as a Gesture of God", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy* 12.1 (2018): 94–114.

17 Anita M. Unruh, Joan Versnel and Natasha Kerr, "Spirituality Unplugged: A Review of Commonalities and Contentions, and a Resolution", *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy* 69.1 (2002): 5–19; Andrzej K. Jastrzębski, "The Challenging Task of Defining Spirituality", *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health* 24.2 (2022): 113–131.

18 Lucy Bregman, *The Ecology of Spirituality* (Waco. TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 24, ProQuest Ebook Central.

19 Gordon Barnes, "God's Revelation in Nature", 166.

In our previous research, we suggested that spirituality is "trusting in Jesus Christ and following Him in love by the power of the Holy Spirit".[20] However, this definition does not explicitly reflect the unity of the Creator who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Furthermore, it does not emphasize our ongoing personal responsibility to pursue spiritual formation. Therefore, a more extended working definition has been applied in this research: spirituality is the daily choice of a human being to trust in Jesus Christ, disown idols, follow the Son of God in love by the power of the Holy Spirit, and bear the fruit of the Spirit and give glory to the heavenly Father in life through victory over sin, spiritual forces of evil, and death.

The New Testament proposes that only those people who have received the Holy Spirit and lead their lives under the guidance of the Creator are spiritual.[21] This view contrasts sharply with the prevailing view of spirituality in the contemporary world. Since the last decade of the preceding century, spirituality has been viewed largely as an inescapable essence in the core of each human being.[22] For example, Thomas Ryan has stated, "The spiritual life is not a question of *making* us religious, but helping us realise that we already *are* religious in the depth of our being."[23] Other researchers, coming from an existentialist perspective, have described human beings as a synthesis of body, mind and spirit to claim that "spirituality exists (at least potentially) in all persons".[24]

We suggest the term *pre-spirituality* to affirm a Bible-based understanding of spirit as the breath of the Creator in each living human being, the spiritual thirst of all human beings and the potentiality to become spiritual. This usage would help to preserve the biblical understanding of spirituality, which is reserved for activities of the Holy Spirit in and through Christian believers. We describe pre-spirituality as a spirited condition of each living human being provided by the presence of the Creator's breath in the body and the Creator's image in the created essence of each human, which gives

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20 Gunita Tālberga and Andra Fernāte, "Spirituality in Sport – a Biblical Perspective", *LASE Journal of Sport Science* 7.2 (2016): 72–92.

21 Norman H. Snaith states, "Paul's whole position rests on the conviction that before the invasion of this heavenly *Pneuma* (the Spirit of God), man is *psychikos* ('psychic', natural) by nature, and not *pneumatikos* ('pneumatic' spiritual) at all."; Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 1944), 186. See also Gordon D. Fee, "On Getting the Spirit Back into Spirituality", in *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective*, ed. Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 36–44.

22 Bregman, The Ecology of Spirituality, 16–19.

23 Thomas Ryan, "Towards a Spirituality for Sports", in *Sport* (*Concilium 205*), ed. Gregory Baum and John Coleman (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), 110–118.

24 Noora Ronkainen, Mark Nesti and Olli Tikkanen, "Spirituality in Sport – Athletes' Experiences and Reflections", paper presented at the 2nd Czech Philosophy of Sport Conference, Palacký University in Olomouc, Czech Republic, 2013, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258111238 (last viewed 27.11.2023)

deep inner knowledge of the Creator and invites response to the inner craving for intimacy with Him despite our sinful human nature.

Pre-spirituality is the lived experience of human life in every aspect. The prefix *pre* points to the human condition before the birth of the Spirit (John 3:5) and reminds us of the sinful nature in each human that needs to be cut off by the grace of Almighty God (cf. Deut 30:6; Rom 2:29) so that we can know and fully reflect God. The root word *spirit* affirms that each human has the breath of God that animates the body (cf. Gen 2:7, Ecc 12:1, Zech 12:1) and is incorporated into the concept of *imago Dei* (Gen 1:26–27; 1 Cor 15:45–49; Eph 4:22–24; Col 3:10). The pre-spirituality of all human beings allows them to grasp the general and special revelation of the Creator's self-communication in the created world and to receive the redeeming work of the eternal Creator through repentance and trust in Christ Jesus. As a result of reconciliation, the Creator who is Spirit conjoins with a human spirit to renew the broken image of God.

Methodological approach to the study

Our methodological approach is characterized by a combination of deductive and inductive research that requires continuous dialogue between understanding of spirituality and pre-spirituality in biblical theology and the empirical data.

Christians believe that in Scripture the Creator speaks to us through various historical witnesses who were united by faith in YHWH. Researchers' regular immersion in the texts of the Bible, comprehension of the historical and cultural context of the biblical texts, and living faith in YHWH are significant factors to understand the revelation of the Creator properly. But it is not clear to us how much researchers' presuppositions affect the validity and reliability of this kind of sociological data analysis to be conducted within a conservative evangelical theological framework. Since pre-understanding influence the meanings that readers assign to biblical texts,[25] additional investigations by other researchers will facilitate evaluation of the effects, if any, of the present researchers' worldview on their interpretations.

The principles of the authors' historical and cultural context as well as readers' pre-understanding relate to the coding of the empirical data too.

Attentive reading and study of the texts, a humble attitude and discussions are helpful to avoid eisegesis.

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25   Welzen, "Contours of Biblical Spirituality", 40; Gerhard Maier, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 25.

Participants in the study and data collection

The second-year students in the professional bachelor's programme "Sports Science" at the Latvian Academy of Sport Education (LASE) can take an optional course "Development of Harmonious Personality". Within this course, the future sports teachers, coaches, managers and recreation specialists are invited to reflect on their understanding of spirituality through the study task "Spirituality in Photographs". Students select four photos from their personal lives to depict spirituality in four categories: spirituality generally, in their family, in their educational institution and in sports. They then write a description of at least three sentences about each picture. Before this assignment, students are not asked about their beliefs, so that their expressions will flow freely from their thoughts and experiences, without a bias. This photo elicitation exercise is adapted from a spirituality study by Matthew Mayhew.[26]

In 2019 and 2020, thirty second-year students enrolled in the course. We asked their permission to use their course assignment as data for a qualitative design study. Twenty students (16 females and 4 males) agreed to participate and provided 80 photographs with descriptions to be analysed anonymously. Compliance with ethical standards of research involving humans as subjects was approved by the LASE Committee on Ethics.

The qualitative study method

Template analysis (TA) was used to code the data obtained.[27] TA emphasizes hierarchical coding and maintains the structure in the process of textual data analysis while retaining flexibility to adapt the template to the needs of each particular study. The template is like a codebook that can be modified during the iterative application of the template to the data. Codes are organized hierarchically. The broad codes serve to give an overview of the direction, while the more detailed codes highlight distinctions. The main reasons why the authors of the current study have chosen this method are listed below.

1. TA as a research method is not tied to any particular epistemological approach from a philosophical viewpoint, such as phenomenology, positivism or social constructionism. Therefore, it is applicable by researchers who acknowledge Christian Scripture as divine revelation.

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26 Matthew J. Mayhew, "Exploring the Essence of Spirituality: A Phenomenological Study of Eight Students with Eight Different Worldviews", *NASPA Journal* 41.4 (2004): 1215–1242.

27 The following papers were used to explore and describe TA as a type of thematic analysis: Nigel King, "Template Analysis", in *Qualitative Methods and Analysis in Organizational Research: A Practical Guide*, ed. Gillian Symon and Catherine Cassell (London: Sage Publications, 1998), 118–134; Saloomeh Tabari, Nigel King and David Egan, "Potential Application of Template Analysis in Qualitative Hospitality Management Research", *Hospitality & Society* 10.2 (2020): 197–216; Joanna Brooks, Serena McCluskey, Emma Turley and Nigel King, "The Utility of Template Analysis in Qualitative Psychology Research", *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 12 (2015): 202–222.

2. TA is suitable for applied research because a top-down approach that allows identifying *a priori* themes is permitted. In the study of spirituality and pre-spirituality, *a priori* themes are used to ensure that key aspects of both concepts revealed through the Scriptures are identified and discussed in the analysis process.
3. TA is a discussion-provoking tool; if one coder has applied a code to different text segments than other coders, the disagreement leads to deeper discussion and fuller insight.
4. TA is characterized by hierarchical coding to provide the structure of the analysis, but at the same time encourages thematic development according to the richness of the data. This approach can help to distinguish themes evolving in different countries, sports or denominations, if the topic is studied comparatively in future.
5. TA permits parallel coding, i.e. the same segment of the text may be classified with multiple codes. This is important because some of the facets or aspects overlap significantly.
6. TA is accessible for continual development of the template. Themes may be added to the template through the iterative process of coding. Even the "final" template can be modified in future research. This fits well with the scope (the global Christian community is invited to participate) and the depth of the study topic (spirituality and pre-spirituality result from the transcendent Creator).
7. TA is a practical and easy-to-grasp method for beginners in qualitative research.

John Swinton and Harriet Mowat suggest that practical theologians may welcome qualitative research methods while keeping in mind that theology's significance rests on the living Word. Therefore, qualitative research serves for clarification, but not for self-identification of the theology. The metaphor of "conversion" expresses their idea that qualitative research methods require undergoing a process of being deeply challenged and changed to be faithfully utilized in God's service. During this process of conversion, some things are laid aside but other things are brought to the forefront to ensure that the academic methods used are consistent with biblical thinking.[28] Regarding the use of TA to study spirituality and pre-spirituality from the biblical perspective, a conversion of the method is needed as well, because "to speak of biblical theology means that what we say concerning these things – God, ourselves, our world, and our neighbour – is shaped and governed by the Bible".[29] The key *a priori* top-level themes based on Scripture cannot be removed from the template just because they do not appear to "fit" the data. Instead, it is important to put forward the potential reasons for their lack of appearance, to guide future investigations. A set sequence of coding levels sometimes is

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28 Swinton and Mowat, Practical Theology and Qualitative Research, 92.

29 Robert Bornemann, "Toward a Biblical Theology", 117.

crucial. For example, life in the Holy Spirit or gifts of the Holy Spirit cannot be separated from the prior trust in Christ Jesus as Saviour and King. The emerging themes from data should always be analysed and interpreted in the light of Scripture.

Development of the templates and data analysis

The data were organized into four tables based on the designated photograph categories. A different capital letter and the gender identification letter *f* or *m* were assigned to each participant. Alongside the commentary of the photograph written by the student, researchers placed a short description of each photograph.

Data were coded manually.[30] First, we read the texts several times. Then we used inductive coding by attaching themes that characterized the related fragments to provide deeper immersion in the text.

Next, initial coding templates to analyse spirituality and pre-spirituality were developed based on *a priori* themes from the definitions created in our previous research, exegesis of Bible verses that contain the adjective *pneumatikos*, and study of the use of the Hebrew word *ruach* and the Greek *pneuma* in the Bible.

Then the initial template to analyse spirituality was applied to all data, and afterwards, the initial template to analyse pre-spirituality was used. A new copy of the raw data document was provided for each type of deductive coding.

Consolidation of the results of deductive and inductive coding was performed to create the final template of pre-spirituality to include the most noticeable themes detected in the inductive coding. (As discussed below, the lack of representation of biblical spirituality in the obtained data precluded any attempt to improve the initial template of spirituality based on participants' experiences.)

The development of the templates went alongside with their use in the analysis of empirical data, reflection on relevant biblical texts, and additional study of the related literature to interpret the data and refine the definitions. Each new theme or code added to the template was shaped in the light of Scripture.

Coding template to analyse spirituality

Three top-level themes based on biblical theology formed the initial template to analyse spirituality (Table 1). Although they are interdependent, each theme and subtheme enables differentiation of important attributes of spirituality.

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30 We followed King, "Template Analysis", as our practical guide to conducting TA.

Table 1. Initial template to analyse spirituality

THREE FACETS OF SPIRITUALITY

1. Personal choice of a human being to trust in the sacrifice of Christ Jesus and His resurrection
2. A daily choice to follow Jesus Christ in love through the surrender to the Holy Spirit
    2.1. Disowning of idols to follow the Son of God
        2.1.1. Death to passions and desires that come from sinful human nature
        2.1.2. Death to passions and desires that come from the world
    2.2. Following Jesus Christ in love
    2.3. Following Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit
3. Bringing glory to the Heavenly Father by life in the Holy Spirit through trust in Christ Jesus
    3.1. Transformation into the image of Christ, i.e. bearing the fruit of the Spirit
    3.2. Life in victory over sin
    3.3. Life in victory over spiritual forces of evil
    3.4. Life in victory over death

The first theme emphasizes the Son of God as the only way to spirituality and the personal choice by a human being to trust in the sacrifice of Christ Jesus and His resurrection (Luke 23:40–43; John 14:10–17; Rom 10:4–17). The Father draws human beings to Himself (John 6:44), but a personal response to His revelation in Christ Jesus is needed. Sample phrases applicable to this theme could be "(my) faith in Jesus", "Jesus is (my) Saviour and King", "Jesus is the only way to have communion with the Father", "reconciliation with the Father through Jesus Christ", "entering into covenant with God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ", and "(our) sins are washed by the blood of Jesus". This first theme describes the living Creator's self-giving action in Christ Jesus to ensure salvation for human beings and the human response to this salvific act expressed through faith.

The second theme highlights the daily dedication to follow Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit (Mark 10:17–31; Luke 14:25–33; John 14:16–26; 15:26–27). A life based on the authority of Scripture and the power of the living God through daily obedience and surrender to the Creator characterizes this facet. When human beings humble themselves and become obedient to the point of death as Jesus did (Phil 2:5–8), they bear fruit of the Spirit (John 15:4–5; Gal 5:22) and grow into the image of Jesus Christ (Rom 8:29). A choice is an important trait of spirituality. A clear option to choose life or death, to be with or without God, is given to humankind (Gen 2:16–17; Deut 30:15–20; John 6:66–69; Heb 3:6–19). This encompasses both an initial decision and a daily choice to act in love and faithfulness. The marriage covenant between man and woman is an image of the covenant between the Creator and His people (Gen 1:27; Isa 54:5; Matt 19:4–6; Eph 5:31–33; Rev 19:7–8).

Three second-level subcodes that highlight important characteristics of spirituality revealed in the Scriptures are included under the second theme: disowning of idols, love of the Creator, and the power of the Holy Spirit. It is not possible to be a disciple of Jesus Christ if someone or something is loved more than YHWH (Exod 20:2–6; Matt 6:24; Matt 10:37–38; Matt 13:44–46; 1 Cor 10:14). Disowning of idols corresponds to death on the cross (Luke 9:23; 14:26–27) because it requires total submission to the will of the Father as did Christ's death on the cross (Rom 6:1–14; Gal 5:24). Love is a key component in the relationship of the Godhead and human beings are invited to participate in the loving fellowship of the Trinity (Matt 22:37–40; John 15:9–19; Eph 3:14–19; 5:1–2; Gal 5:6; 5:13–22; 1 John 4:7–21). This sub-theme of love applies to phrases that describe love between YHWH and human beings, in either direction – i.e., either people's love for God or God's love for people. The Holy Spirit as a person is God's personal empowering presence that enables spiritual men and women to follow Jesus Christ (Rom 8:9–14; Gal 5:16); therefore, the third sub-theme indicates how eager people are to speak about the work of the Holy Spirit.

The third top theme draws attention to the various forms of bringing glory to the Heavenly Father through our spiritual life (John 15:8). We have added four lower-order codes. The majesty of the Creator is revealed by human beings' transformation into the image of Christ (Rom 8:29; 1 John 3:2), as well as our victorious life over sin (Rom 8:1–16; 1 John 3:4–10), spiritual forces of evil (Eph 1:19–23, 6:10–12) and death (Rom 8:2; 1 Cor 15:35–57; 1 John 5:10–13) by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Coding template to analyse pre-spirituality

The initial coding template to analyse pre-spirituality consisted of three top-level themes. After preliminary coding of the data, two other top-level themes, "image of the Creator" and "sinful nature", were included.

The concept of the *imago Dei* is not clearly explained in the Scriptures; therefore, different interpretations can be found throughout church history. It is beyond the scope of this research to analyse those interpretations in depth. Briefly, we agree with the substantialists' view of the *imago Dei* and acknowledge that the created essence of each man and woman reflects the Creator to some extent even after the Fall, because the Bible speaks of human beings' similarity to God even after the exile from Eden (e.g. Gen 9:6; James 3:9). Since Scripture and the created world are mutually dependent and each can be fully understood only in the light of the other, it is important to observe the self-revelation of the Creator in Scripture to gain insight into the content of the *imago Dei* reflected in human beings. God's image has been marred by sinful actions in all human beings except the Son of God, Jesus Christ.[31]

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31 Some scholars have argued that ancient Near Eastern studies point to a physical resemblance between the Creator and human beings. In Christian thought, the idea of the human being as

Table 2. Final template to analyse pre-spirituality

FIVE FACETS OF PRE-SPIRITUALITY

1. Sinful nature of human beings
2. The Creator's breath of life in human beings
3. Original image of the Creator in human beings
   - 2.1 Personal aspect
   - 2.2 Relational aspect
   - 2.3 Rational / creative aspect
   - 2.4 Volitional / free aspect
   - 2.5 Emotional aspect
   - 2.6 Spiritual aspect
   - 2.7 Moral aspect
   - 2.8 Responsible aspect
4. Inner knowledge of the Creator
5. Response to the inner craving for intimacy with the Creator

We found the work of Steve W. Lemke relevant to this research due to its substantial view of the *imago Dei*, foundation in Scripture and clear structure that is applicable to qualitative research in practical theology. Lemke gives eight primary characteristics of human beings' essence that reflect God. His list is not meant to be exhaustive and therefore is well suited for evidence-based qualitative analysis of pre-spirituality.[32] The final template for analysing pre-spirituality (Table 2) contains five highest-order codes and eight sub-codes.

The first code, "sinful nature of human beings" (Gen 3; Ps 14; Rom 3:10–20) identifies a corrupted image of the Creator in humans, worship of the creation instead of the Creator, pride and disobedience towards the Creator's self-revelation and laws, distorted understanding of the Creator and His attributes, an imbalanced view of attributes of the Creator and collaboration with evil spiritual forces.

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a carved statue made by God has been expressed since the fourth century. The New Testament indicates that the transcendent Creator indwelt a human body to live on Earth as Jesus Christ and also indwells believers in Christ as the Holy Spirit to restore the image of Christ, i.e., the image of the Creator, in each believer. Believers can progress towards this similitude in aspects other than physical resemblance. Likewise, when we see the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit as one, we recognize that physical characteristics are not the key determinants of their oneness.

32 Steve W. Lemke, "The Intelligent Design of Humans: The Meaning of *Imago Dei* for Theological Anthropology", paper presented at the Southwest Regional Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Houston, Texas, 2008, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274312788 (last viewed 27.11.2023)

The second code, "the Creator's breath of life in human beings" (Gen 2:7; Num 27:16; Acts 17:25) relates to accounts where the Creator is acknowledged as the provider of life in human beings or any reference to the ultimate Giver of human life is found.

The third code, "original image of the Creator in human beings" (Gen 1:27; 9:6) was subdivided into eight lower-order codes to examine various aspects of the *imago Dei* appearing in the data. A description of each aspect will be given in the presentation of the findings. Although the sub-code "spiritual aspect" coincides with two top codes, "the Creator's breath of life in human beings" and "response to the inner craving for intimacy with the Creator", we decided to include it as a sub-code to facilitate observation and comparison of *imago Dei* aspects.

The procedure was to read through the data various times and relate all statements in students' perceptions of spirituality to corresponding aspects of the *imago Dei*. In the end, we selected a representative quotation for each of the four categories (spiritually generally, in the family, in the educational institution and in sports), if there was a suitable one to choose.

Due to the significant overlap of all aspects, researchers must be cautious about their classification of statements. Here is an example from the response of student C: "*This picture depicts one student helping another. It is very important in LASE and that is how spirituality is formed here. It is hard to be peaceful and positive without help being provided because everyone needs a friendly shoulder to rely on.*" This description of spirituality in the student's educational institution was considered for association with the moral aspect of the *imago Dei*. We concluded that the wording here does not emphasize concerns of right and wrong, but supportive responsibility in social relations connected to feelings, thus, it represents responsible, relational and emotional aspects as themes to be coded.

"Inner knowledge of the Creator" (Rom 1:19) is the fourth highest-order code. It indicates recognition of the Creator and His attributes (e.g. goodness, love, justice, holiness, peace, joy) as found in the perceptions of spirituality.

The fifth facet of pre-spirituality is described as "response to the inner craving for intimacy with the Creator" (Ecc 3:11; Acts 17:26–27). This code identifies the longing for an experience that corresponds to attributes of the Creator, the search for the meaning of life, and the quest for identity, as well as openness to any kind of religious experience.

Comparison of spirituality and pre-spirituality concepts

All facets and aspects of pre-spirituality are also relevant to a person who lives in the spirituality mode,[33] but the primary focus of spirituality is the transformation of

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[33] We use the term *mode* here because several accounts in the Scriptures indicate that it is possible to revert from spiritual life into carnal life (1 Cor 3:1–3; Gal 5:16–26; Heb 10:23–31; 12:14–24; 2

the human being into Christlikeness by the Holy Spirit. The concept of pre-spirituality describes only anthropocentric endeavours to develop in various aspects of the *imago Dei.* In contrast, in Christian spirituality, the work of the Holy Spirit as the source of human growth is consistently affirmed.

According to the Scriptures, complete removal of the sinful nature is received by faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 3:22–24) from the perspective of eternity (cf. 1 Cor 13:12; Eph 2:4–10; 1 John 3:1–3; 1 Pet 1:1–5). Therefore human beings can commit sinful actions before and after their birth in the Spirit (1 Cor 6:9–20; 1 John 1:6–2:3). However, truly spiritual human beings seek constant fellowship (Gk. *koinōnia*) with the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph 4:1–6). As a result, they celebrate victory over sinful inclinations and spiritual forces of evil by placing trust in Christ and forming identity and righteousness in a living relationship with Him (Eph 4:17–6:20).

Spiritual and pre-spiritual human beings are equally animated by the breath of God to live on this earth because YHWH is the Lord of the spirits of all flesh (Num 16:22; Acts 17:25). However, through the process of regeneration, believers have yielded their human spirit to the Holy Spirit to live a spiritual life in fellowship with YHWH. This is how Paul talks about the transformation of his spirit in Romans 1:9. He describes the Spirit of God praying through his spirit (1 Cor 14:15–16; Rom 8:26). Paul affirms that the Spirit gives witness to the spirits of believers that they are children of God (Rom 8:16).

After rebirth in the Spirit, i.e. after moving from a pre-spiritual condition to the spiritual mode, the human being continues to live in the same perishable body that was acquired through the natural birth, but also receives by faith a spiritual body (1 Cor 15:44) to live in the Kingdom of God eternally (1 Cor 15:50) through Christ's victory over death (1 Cor 15:20–26).

Both pre-spirituality and spirituality encompass one's whole life. The difference lies in the condition of the human spirit, which affects all other areas. The human spirit separated from fellowship with the Creator due to inherited rebellion is bound to ignore Him in each aspect of life; the human spirit united with the Holy Spirit through regeneration transforms all areas of human personality to worship the Creator holistically.

Findings

During data analysis, it became clear that none of the FSSs offered a perspicuous representation of spirituality from the biblical perspective. Therefore, we will set forth our findings only with relation to the pre-spirituality concept.

Pet 2:19–22; Rev 2:1–7).

Sinful nature of human

An illustration shows that this facet can be discerned clearly only by the revelation of the Holy Spirit in the light of Christian Scripture (cf. John 16:7–15; 2 Tim 3:14–17). Student P (female) wrote, "*My essence, my thinking, my words, my actions, my opinions, my values, my cunning, my dignity, my appearance, my character. All of it is my spirituality.* [..]". Student P has accented the uniqueness of each human being in her description and personality as an aspect of the original *imago Dei*. But a cunning or deceitful character comes from an evil heart and is reflected in the corrupted *imago Dei* after the Fall (cf. Mark 7:20–23; Matt 10:16; Eph 4:14–15). Further, her understanding of spirituality is entirely self-centred, but not Christ-centred. Considering that the facet of "sinful nature" is merged with other characteristics of pre-spirituality, we will continue to present it along the way.

The Creator's breath of life

Student L (male) noted in his description of spirituality, "*It is a great honour to be alive and you should be happy for every moment, thanking some inner force or higher being as it gives a feeling of peace to humans.*" This student acknowledged that life is not a self-evident occurrence, but is provided by someone. Yet he did not recognize that the giver of life is a sovereign, personal being. Accordingly, we observe here references to "the breath of life" and "sinful nature". Of eighty spirituality characterizations, this was the only description that referenced the giver of life in some way. Ignorance of the Creator is a clear characteristic of human sinful nature.

Original image of the Creator

First, we will set forth each aspect of the *imago Dei* by giving Lemke's description of the aspect and providing illustrative quotations from students' perceptions of spirituality that were found to correspond to each aspect.[34] Next, we will lay out our observations and describe various overlaps of the aspects representing the *imago Dei* that appear in students' descriptions of spirituality.

(1) *A Personal Being:* God is personal in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each individual has a personality that is reflected in consciousness, personal memory, intentionality, self-directedness and self-transcendence.
SPIRITUALITY (P-f): "*My essence, my thinking, my words, my actions* [..]. *All of it is my spirituality. I emphasize greatly the word 'my' because it doesn't belong to anybody else; it is different for each of us.*" (Photo of a little girl standing in front of a car.)

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34 Lemke, "The Intelligent Design of Humans: The Meaning of *Imago Dei* for Theological Anthropology".

SPIRITUALITY IN MY FAMILY (U-f): "*In my family, everyone looks at spirituality differently. [..] We [..] look at it individually.*" (Picture of sunglasses directed at the sun.)

SPIRITUALITY IN MY HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION (HEI) (I-f): "*Spirituality in our academy is to help out, to explain, to understand each other because we are so diverse. Everyone has problems and "no-problems" of one's own to deal with.*" (In the photo, some students are sitting at the tables and talking; one student is thinking and another is working on a laptop.)

SPIRITUALITY IN SPORTS (J-f): *"In this game, I found my way to get inspired for the game. Each person has one's way to get focused.*" (Picture of a pennant from a UEFA Euro U19 Championship Qualifiers game.)

(2)   *A Relational Being*: The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are in a relationship and likewise human beings (male and female) are created to be in a social relationship. Humans find fulfilment only when they are properly related to God and other humans.

SPIRITUALITY (C-m): "*I chose this picture because usually people talk at the table and listen to each other. In the Bible, Jesus also sat at a table. I think you need to respect others to respect yourself. There will not be a positive atmosphere at the table if there is no respect.*" (Photo of a table set for a meal.)

SPIRITUALITY IN MY FAMILY (B-m): "*To get together. To remember your close ones, to meet them. Respect, love, health, trust – that is spirituality in the family.*" (The photo depicts a crowd of people of various generations. In the middle, a senior lady is sitting with flowers in her hands.)

SPIRITUALITY IN MY HEI (O-f): "*Girls are dancing and they all are united in common dance steps. We are a friendly group; we support and encourage each other.*" (Six students are seen standing in a lecture room in a circle with hands on each other's shoulders. Other students observe.)

SPIRITUALITY IN SPORTS (S-f): "*Spirituality in sport is trust in your teammates. [..] I play volleyball and it means that I can rely on my teammates. We support each other in the sport and outside it.*" (Picture of the volleyball team in a gym.)

(3)   *A Rational / Creative Being*: God is omniscient and wise. He has created humans with a mind that has the potential to exercise creativity and reasoning.

SPIRITUALITY (F-f): "*I feel good when I see that I manage something and one of these things is to be photographed and filmed [..]. That is my hobby where I get spirituality and peace of soul.*" (Collage of four photos from the process of model's photo and film shooting.)

SPIRITUALITY IN MY FAMILY (T-f): *"Spirituality in my family is my friends from school and my family. We support each other, [..] learning together and from one another.*" (Collage of three photos with people by the sea.)

SPIRITUALITY IN MY HEI (D-f): *"I see spirituality in humans. My course-mates and lecturers are people of mutual understanding, rational and intelligent beings."* (A student group and lecturer stand in a track and field arena.)

SPIRITUALITY IN SPORTS (A-f): *"I have an opportunity to be a coach for the little ones in figure skating. I think that the coach is the one who creates a pleasant atmosphere in training and that is spirituality. [..] Coach is the one who shapes a trainee to become a personality."* (Little girls sit in front of the TV and watch figure skating.)

(4) *A Volitional / Free Being*: God is free and sovereign. He has created humans with the capability to choose.

SPIRITUALITY (N-f): *"I think that every human chooses their own way to walk and find answers about spirituality."* (The picture depicts wooden stairs leading down to the sea.)

SPIRITUALITY IN MY FAMILY (U-f): *"In my family, everyone looks at spirituality differently; it is not unified and imposed on anyone."* (Picture with sunglasses directed towards the sun.)

SPIRITUALITY IN MY HEI (T-f): *"When I entered the academy, I was not 100 % sure that I had chosen the right way, but after one month I understood that this was the right way."* (A person is sitting immersed in thought by the wall of an indoor stadium.)

SPIRITUALITY IN SPORTS (H-f): *"The greatest value in sports is to participate in sport and to support it. Well, something like being a volunteer."* (Image of medals and cups.)

(5) *An Emotional Being*: God is love and He created humans with the capacity to love[35] (1 John 4:7–20). Properly used emotion is a positive reflection of the image of God.

SPIRITUALITY (E-f): *"I chose a picture from my mom's wedding day when I was happy and could smile for all small things."* (A young woman in a long dress stands with raised hands and laughs.)

SPIRITUALITY IN MY FAMILY (O-f): *"You see a little gift that I gave to my mom to give her joy and warmth in the cold autumn evenings. Love gives positive energy, creating a feeling of safety."* (There are a candle, a card and flowers on the table.)

SPIRITUALITY IN MY HEI (N-f): *"I think it is a combination of entertainment and studies that allows experiencing positive emotions."* (A joyful team photo from the volleyball tournament. One student is with a colourful wig, another wears a gnome's hat.)

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[35] Biblically, love (Gk. *agapē*) is more than an emotion; it is directly linked to will and choice to love. Scripture also reveals such emotions of the Creator as joy, sorrow and anger.

SPIRITUALITY IN SPORTS (K-f): *"Spirituality in sport is not only victories but also emotions that are experienced together."* (Photo of a young woman sitting on the shoulders of a young man, her arms raised in a power pose above her head. They are dirty with mud. Both have competition numbers attached to their clothes.)

(6)   *A Spiritual Being*: God is Spirit and He has created spirit in each human being; therefore, each human being has an innate need for God and the potential to worship Him in spirit and truth.

SPIRITUALITY (L-m): *"It is a great honour to be alive and you should be happy for every moment, thanking some inner force or higher being because that gives peace to humans."* (In the photo, a man with a backpack looks at the coniferous forest and the Tatra Mountains.)

SPIRITUALITY IN MY FAMILY (D-f): *"I associate spirituality with religion. There are people from various denominations in my family – Roman Catholic and Orthodox. Notwithstanding, we come together at Christmas and Easter. We are united in prayer before the meal."* (Five people of various generations sit behind the table. There are icons on the wall behind them.)

(7)   *A Moral Being*: God is holy. He created humans to be holy and display justice. God has created a conscience within all humans (Rom 2:14–15) with the ability to discern between good and evil.

SPIRITUALITY IN MY FAMILY (A-f): *"Since childhood, we have had animals at home saved from life on the streets. We took care of their medical treatment because former owners had been cruel to them."* (A family picture of five people and a dog in front of a house.)

SPIRITUALITY IN SPORTS (D-f): *"Spirituality precludes hostility, envy and unethical actions. It is important to be glad not only about yourself but about your sister, cousin, neighbour or friend."* (Three athletes stand on the highest platform of the pedestal after an award ceremony.)

(8)   *A Responsible Being*: God is the ruler who cares about His creation. Accordingly, He has given human beings dominion over the world to represent Him and perform care for the created world.

SPIRITUALITY IN MY FAMILY (A-f): *"In my family there lives a boy who is in guardianship and now he has become my brother. My family taught me the most important thing: you can care for those in need."* (A family picture of five people and a dog in front of a house.)

SPIRITUALITY IN MY HEI (C-m): *"This picture depicts one student helping another. […] It is hard to be peaceful and positive without help being provided because everyone needs a friendly shoulder to rely on."* (Picture is

taken in an indoor stadium. A young woman seems injured and is leaning on the shoulder of a young man to move forward to the chairs.)

SPIRITUALITY IN SPORTS (I-f): *"Spirituality in sports means that it is important to be responsible individually for your actions and to be responsible as a team. My sport is volleyball and it is a team sport that requires great responsibility from each player, but at the same time the whole team is responsible because we are playing all together at that moment."* (A women's volleyball team and their coach are in the photo.)

It was often observed that several aspects of the *imago Dei* overlap in one description, affirming its complexity and holistic nature. We will give some examples here. The personal aspect representing the uniqueness of a human being was linked with the volitional aspect when student U stated that each member of her family had the option to see spirituality in his or her way. The creative aspect was linked to the emotional aspect as student F described how her creative endeavours in a photo and film shooting raised positive emotions in her. Similarly, the relational aspect is often described together with the emotional aspect. Student I expressed spirituality in team sports as an individual and collective responsibility. This observation reflects personal, relational and responsible aspects of the Creator when humans play a team game. Helping someone who is in need was described as spirituality; here, two sets of aspects – moral-responsible-relational or emotional-responsible-relational – were conveyed together.

In the studied dataset, the spiritual aspect was not displayed through perceptions of spirituality in HEI and sport. The main underlying reason may be that religion and its expressions in secular culture are pushed into the private sphere. The moral aspect was not disclosed in the overall understanding of spirituality or spirituality in HEI. We connect this fact to postmodern tendencies towards value relativism. In postmodern spirituality, inner feelings are more strongly emphasized and the sphere of morality becomes rather redundant due to outspoken pluralism.

The responsible aspect of the *imago Dei* was uncovered through perceptions of spirituality in various social environments, but not in the generic understanding of spirituality as expressed through photos. This demonstrates that reflecting on the concept of spirituality through several areas of lived experience may sometimes help to reveal aspects of the *imago Dei* better than abstract contemplation on the topic of spirituality.

Inner knowledge of the Creator

FSSs connected spirituality to loving and caring relationships, peace, joy, hope, beauty, unity and goodness. This is compatible with the nature of the Creator as revealed in Scripture and reflects the facet of the "inner knowledge of the Creator". However, such attributes of the Creator as justice and righteous judgement were never mentioned in students' thoughts on spirituality, although they are linked to fair play in sports and

might appear in the descriptions. This omission reveals the aspect of "sinful nature". Without guidance from the Holy Spirit and Scripture (cf. John 16:7–15), humans tend to have an imbalanced grasp of the Creator that highlights some characteristics and forgets about others.

Response to the inner craving for intimacy with the Creator

The Scriptures state that human beings are created to seek and find their Creator (cf. Acts 17:24–27; Matt 7:7–11). Human beings in their essence are seekers, lovers and worshippers; thus, their devotion may be directed towards the Creator or the created world.

The data showed that FSSs looked for spirituality in nature and relationships. For example, student H (f) said, *"I think that a person finds spirituality only when there is peace in the soul and harmony, no stress and hurry in daily life. Study season is so stressful that I can seemingly forget about spirituality. Therefore, I love summer – sun, warmth and joy. That is my favourite season when I spend time with my family; we travel around Latvia and there is inner peace and a feeling of comfort."* There were many photos depicting nature: sunset, sunrise, water, forest. Students admitted that nature helps them find peace, relax from stress, and gain energy. Under the titles "Spirituality", "Spirituality in my Family" and "Spirituality in Sports", nature was represented as an environment for solitude and contemplation, as well as for physical activities.

To describe spirituality in their family, students depicted dogs and cats, explaining that it is fun to have an animal at home, play with it, care for it and love it. This experience was described as filled with joy and happiness. Positive, friendly, respectful, joyful, caring and cooperative relationships among humans (family members, relatives, friends, fellow students, teammates, coach and trainee, student and lecturer, athlete and spectator) were described as spirituality in various social environments. This reflects the Creator's nature that FSSs long for and find in the created world while not being aware of it.

Learning activities, physical activities and entertainment were described as sources of spirituality that give growth, satisfaction, joy, energy, and peace. Student G (m) wrote, *"I understand as spirituality everything that gives me peace and a good mood, turning me away from bad thoughts. Volleyball makes me forget daily haste and problems; it improves my mood."*

Creation was made to be good and enjoyable, and there are many good things in our world even after the Fall. Nevertheless, when people seek creation as the ultimate source of peace, love, joy and all other good entities that flow from the Creator, they are idol worshippers and do not receive the full blessings the Creator has intended for them. Inclination to seek spirituality in the created world with no reference to the Creator is a symptom of a prideful heart corrupted by sin that honours perishable creation more than the eternally living Creator (Rom 1:18–23).

Openness to any kind of religious experience embodies an effort by human beings to find the One who transcends creation and can satisfy inner yearnings (Acts 17:22–24). But Scripture states clearly that it is not possible to renew communion with the Creator apart from surrendering to His act of salvation in Jesus Christ (John 14; Rom 5:1–11). Jesus is the only one who fully satisfies the hunger and thirst of the human soul (John 4:14; 6:35). In the analysed dataset, there were no descriptions connected to any religion other than Christianity.

Two female students chose pictures depicting church buildings to show spirituality because of their involvement in sacred activities linked to these buildings. Two other female students selected pictures from baptism events.[36] Student S stated that spirituality in her family means being together to attend church on Christmas Eve. Student D indicated that prayer before meals during Christmas and Easter celebrations is important in her family. Student C pointed to Jesus as an example of cultivating fellowship and mutual respect during the meal. Although these perceptions of spirituality are closely linked to Christianity, that does not necessarily mean that these students understand spirituality as following Christ and living life in fellowship with the heavenly Father under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. None of the students clearly described the salvific and regenerating act of the Creator in Christ Jesus. Participating in sacred actions linked to Christianity may be a cultural practice instead of expressing an intention to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, these perceptions of spirituality describe a response to the inner craving for intimacy with the Creator.

Conclusion

In this article, we have presented a methodological approach and the results of qualitative research exploring concepts of spirituality and pre-spirituality linked to human life experiences. We discovered that photo elicitation helped to connect spirituality perceptions to real-life situations, even though pictures were sometimes used as metaphors. We found TA as a flexible tool for thematic coding, to be a promising qualitative method to analyse respondents' thoughts on spirituality in a structured manner and compare them to biblical revelation. However, more research is needed to uncover the strengths and weaknesses of the methods applied, as well as the impact of researcher's worldview on validity and reliability in this kind of study.

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36 In the descriptions added to these photos, students gave a vague message that Christian or spiritual values were important to their families, but did not mention faith in Christ.

Empirical research on sports, spirituality and Christianity that has focused on church attendance, prayer life and other behavioural expressions of faith[37] could be supplemented with investigations into the conformity between respondents' spirituality perceptions and scriptural understandings of spirituality.

The authentic Christian way of experiencing spirituality since the first century has been distinctively expressed through a relationship with God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and who has redeemed the believer from sin into a new life in the Spirit (cf. 1 Thess 1:1–5).[38] Taking into account the cultural shifts through the centuries regarding the meaning of spirituality, it is important to study Christian and non-Christian communication about spirituality so as to retain the Scripture-based core of Christianity. The Holy Spirit has often been marginalized in the church for various reasons,[39] yet biblically the Christian community aims to express spirituality through words and deeds as participation in the trinitarian life of the Godhead.

Further research is suggested to analyse spirituality perceptions in various cultural contexts and across different sports by purposefully selecting Christian representatives, such as people involved in Christian sports ministries or self-professed Christian athletes and coaches.

This study affirmed the need for special revelation to grasp God's general revelation properly. We propose that the findings of the study may be applied to provide examples of the Creator's self-expression in the created world when the gospel is proclaimed. Making connections to the listeners' human experience is an approach modelled by the apostle Paul in his mission work (Acts 17:22–32).

KOPSAVILKUMS   Garīgums un pirmsgarīgums radītajā pasaulē

Kopš 20. gadsimta beigām pieaudzis zinātnisko pētījumu skaits, kuros vērtēta garīguma un sporta mijietekme. Tomēr joprojām trūkst teoloģiski orientētu empīrisku pētījumu sporta izglītības teorētiskās bāzes attīstīšanai garīguma jautājumos. Rakstā analizēti

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37 For example, Jennifer Livingston, "Competitive Youth Athletes: How Do Their Families Prioritize Faith Development While Participating in Sports?" *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 24.3 (2019): 276–89; Jennifer Livingston, "Competitive Youth Athletes: Are They Choosing Between God and Sports?" *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 25.1 (2020): 51–63.

38 Anne Hunt, "Trinity, Christology, and Pneumatology", in *The Cambridge Companion to the Trinity*, ed. Peter C. Phan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 365–380.

39 John J. Davis, "Is the Holy Spirit Really a 'Person' – with a Distinct Personality?" *Themelios* 47.3 (2022): 550–558.

Latvijas Sporta pedagoģijas akadēmijas studentu uzskati par garīgumu vispārīgi un tā izpausmēm dažādās sociālajās vidēs (ģimenē, augstākās izglītības iestādē un sportā), aprakstot kvalitatīvās pētniecības metožu "foto ierosa" (*photo elicitation*) un "matricas analīze" (*template analysis*) izmantošanu garīguma un pirmsgarīguma izpētē.

Pētījums veikts konservatīvi evaņģēliskā paradigmā, un garīgums tiek skatīts bībeliskās teoloģijas gaismā kā cilvēka ikdienas izvēle uzticēties Jēzum Kristum, atsakoties no elkiem, lai sekotu Dieva Dēlam mīlestībā un Svētā Gara spēkā, briedinot Gara augli un godinot Debesu Tēvu savā dzīvē caur uzvaru pār grēku, ļaunajiem gariem un nāvi. Īpašības vārda *pneumatikos* lietojums Jaunajā Derībā skaidri parāda, ka garīgums ir neatraujami saistīts ar Svētā Gara darbību jaunradītajā cilvēkā un cilvēka vēlmi atsaukties Dieva darbam Jēzū Kristū. Mēs lietojam terminu "pirmsgarīgums", lai iezīmētu cilvēka unikālo vietu radīto būtņu vidū un vienlaikus akcentētu stāvokli pirms piedzimšanas no Svētā Gara. Pirmsgarīgums ir ikviena cilvēka dzīvīgums, kuru nodrošina Radītāja Jahves dzīvības dvaša ķermenī un Radītāja tēls (*imago Dei*) katra cilvēka būtībā, kas dāvā dziļas iekšējas zināšanas par Radītāju un rosina reaģēt uz alkām pēc tuvības ar Viņu par spīti mūsu grēkā kritušajai dabai.

Respondentu uzskatu izpētē izmantojot matricas analīzi, nav nosakāms, vai cilvēks ir piedzimis no Svētā Gara, tomēr ir iespējams izdarīt secinājumus par pētāmās sabiedrības komunikācijas veidu un uzskatiem par garīgumu. Izanalizējot divdesmit studējošo brīvprātīgi iesniegtās astoņdesmit fotogrāfijas un to aprakstus, tika konstatēts, ka visi pētījuma dalībnieki pauduši skatījumu, kas atbilst pirmsgarīguma būtībai, nevis Bībelē balstītai izpratnei par garīgumu. Izpēti nepieciešams turpināt, veidojot reprezentatīvu izlasi no sportā iesaistītiem kristiešiem, lai pilnīgāk izvērtētu izmantoto pētniecības metožu priekšrocības un trūkumus.