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A place for pastoral power: From the “government of souls” to “global struggles for souls”

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ABSTRACT

While research on geopolitical space and faith has drawn on Michel Foucault’s work on power/knowledge, subjectivity, and strategy, little use has been made of his genealogies of Christian pastoral power. Arguing that Foucault’s work on the pastorate analyzes political-religious submission, care, control, and resistance without reflexively secularizing faith (by either normalizing or abnormalizing it), this article calls for its use in research on “global struggles for souls”. However, to make pastoral power relevant to contemporary Christian and non-Christian subjectivities in Europe and beyond, Foucault’s confinement of the concept to ancient-medieval Western-European Christendom must be revisited. To that end, the article undertakes a close and concurrent reading of Foucault’s key works on pastoral power and identifies core conditions around the concept’s contemporary applicability. Moreover, in critiquing Foucault’s Eurocentric mapping of the pastorate, I argue that its analytical merits cannot extend to subaltern subjects (Christian and otherwise, in Europe and beyond) unless it is rethought through postcolonial and decolonial notions of power as relations of embodied race, class, gender, and other difference reproduced through colonial legacies.

1. Introduction

In the 1970s and 1980s, Michel Foucault conceptualized ancient, medieval, and early modern Christian relations among the pastor, the sheep (the believer), and the flock (the congregation) as *pastoral power* or “the government of souls” (Foucault, 2009, p. 88). This concept helped him describe how individual and collective submission to ethical guardianship had both consolidated and fragmented Catholicism through pre-Reformation and Reformation-era resistances. Since the sheep’s submission was predicated on the shepherd’s care and direction towards salvation in the afterlife, Foucault posited that such strategies of incentivizing desirable human conduct had informed modern tools of government in seventeenth-century mercantilist Europe (Foucault, 2009, pp. 148–150, 227–237).

However, can pastoral power help study struggles around political-religious[1] authority and conduct in the spaces Foucault rarely acknowledged, including *contemporary* European Christendom and *postcolonial* and *subaltern* geographies within and without Europe (Agensky, 2020; Jazeel and Legg, 2019; Power, 2019; Sharp, 2011; Smith, 2020)? This question matters for Foucault studies and discussions about the limitations of pastoral analysis (Clements, 2021; Gordon, 2015; Harcourt, 2021). It also relates to research on how geopolitical space and competing religious claims to populations, or “global struggles for souls” (Agnew, 2010, p. 48), shape one another.

The contemporary relevance of Foucault’s work on pastoral power is worth exploring since few works in geography and geopolitics (Megoran, 2015, 2017; Tuan, 2010) engage faith practices, relations, and vocabularies (pastor-flock relations, salvation, the flesh/soul distinction, etc.) on their terms and from within their rationalities. Mirroring Foucault’s discussion of the body beyond the truths of “scientia sexualis” (Foucault, 1978b), pastoral power historicizes faith beyond social-scientific analytics. This distinguishes it from political-geographic and geopolitics research that examines religion through imaginary and moral geographies, geopolitical imagination, “codes, script, narratives” and “visions” (Dijkink, 2006, pp. 192, 206; Sturm, 2013; McAlister, 2005; Ó Tuathail, 2000) or Bourdieusian, Foucauldian, and Lefebvrian sociological frameworks (Bryson, 2016; Cairo, 2020; Covington-Ward, 2016; Kong, 2009; McConnell, 2013).

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[1] Foucault used *religion* for “any institutionalized faith tradition” (primarily Christianity) and *spirituality* to “disrupt traditional religious meaning” (Carrette, 2000, p. 6) and capture practices of ethical self-transformation against the grain of law, science, and institutional-Christian dogma (Dean & Zamora, 2021, pp. 103–120, 145–155; Carrette, 2000, pp. 46–48). Therein, he treated pastoral power as social relations that emerged in the Christian religious pastorate, but whose functions were transferred to “governmentality” in the 17th century (Foucault, 2009, pp. 148–150, 227–237).

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Notably, critical-geographic research explores how power, various scales of space, and religion constitute one another; it critiques secular/sacred and politics/religion spatial binaries (Mavelli, 2016; Megoran, 2013; Sturm, 2013; Tse, 2014), and argues that (geo)politics and religion are entwined as "geo(theo)power", "religeopolitics" (Nyroos, 2001), "spiritual geopolitics" (Ó Tuathail, 2000), or "post-secular" global politics (Gökarıksel & Anna, 2015; Mavelli, 2012). Yet, the wider field is reluctant to study religious struggles outside conventional social-scientific concepts. This article calls on political geography to fill that gap by revisiting Foucault's work on pastoral power.

Research in human and political geography and critical geopolitics has drawn on Foucault as a "new cartographer" of power (Deleuze, 1988, pp. 23–44), utilizing his work on power-knowledge, subjectivity, strategy, and heterotopias to expand its tools and subject matter (Koch, 2018; Crampton and Elden, 2016; Philo, 2012; Ó Tuathail, 1996). Likewise, geopolitics and International Relations (IR) scholars have used Foucault's concepts of governmentality (Koch, 2018; Moisio & Paasi, 2013; Luke and Ó Tuathail, 1997) and counter-conduct (Barrett, 2020; Cadman, 2010; Death, 2016; Demetriou, 2016) but rarely (Lin, 2018) to analyze religious struggles. Moreover, his genealogy of the pastorate as a uniquely religious relationship has been scarcely (Maritato, 2021a, 2021b) used to study contemporary entwinements of religion and politics. Expounding upon that emerging effort, this article centers the geopolitical conditions and effects of pastoral relations and thereby critiques secular/sacred and politics/religion spatial binaries.

On his part, Foucault obscured the question of the pastorate's relevance in contemporary politics (Foucault, 2009, p. 148) when he asserted, without much discussion, "the lasting influence" of pastoral power in 1970s Western Europe (Clements, 2021, p. 11). Moreover, he ignored the pastorate's implications for non-Christian contexts and postcolonial and subaltern geographies. Overall, gaps in Foucault's genealogical research and existing scholarly trends privilege established social-scientific approaches to religious antagonisms. This secularizes faith in several ways. Some approaches *abnormalize* it by reducing it to "theological exotica" (Agnew, 2010, p. 44) inferior to reason (Pasha, 2017) and perilous for "the secular" (if Islam is discussed). Others *normalize* it (Beaman, 2013, p. 147) and "explain it away" as just another "social discourse", "institution", "rhetoric" (Preus, 1987; Roubekas & Ryba, 2020), political strategy (Josephson, 2012; Masuzawa, 2005; Schilbrack, 2017), or "social facts" posterior to "the social" itself (Chakrabarty, 2000, p. 16). Marxian, including Frankfurt School approaches treat religion as "a product of ideology among many others", thus "indifferentiating" its transcendental claims (Büttgen, 2021, p. 13; also: Martin, 2013; Brittain, 2012; Giddens, 1971, pp. 7–16). Furthermore, decolonial/postcolonial scholarship rejects social-scientific Eurocentrism but remains "wedded to its secular commitments" and the "secularised materialisation" of religion (Pasha, 2017, pp. 312, 325).

If certain objectification is inevitable in social inquiry, this process need not binarize faith and secularism, subjecting the former to the latter through normalization or ab-normalization. As this article will show, Foucault's genealogy of the pastorate engages faith relations through their own vocabularies and concepts, treating the genealogy of the pastor-shepherd, salvation, the Christian body-as-flesh, etc. as historically consequential. This makes faith *both* social *and* confessional, both ubiquitous/ordinary and extraordinary in its claims to salvation. It renders religion an "open series" (Foucault, 2009, pp. 35–36) rather than a separate doctrinal world. While religious and Foucault studies and philosophical theology highlight these contributions (Bernauer and Carrette, 2004; Carrette, 2000; Galston, 2011; Harcourt, 2021; Martin, 2013), their research, like Foucault's pastoral genealogy, is disconnected from contemporary, including postcolonial "geo-religious struggles" (Albrecht, 2018). It likewise overlooks the geographic genealogy of pastoral power, even in politico-ethical critiques inspired by it (Bons-Storm, 1996; Flynn, 1993), including critiques of capitalism (Tran, 2011), social injustice (Lalonde, 1993), and Christocentric religious pluralism (Pinto, 2003).

In addressing these gaps, I argue that Foucault's work on the historical rationalities and effects of pastoral power can help study submission, othering, and resistance to political-religious authority in contemporary postcolonial[2] and (non)Christian spaces, thereby exploring how population salvation and wellbeing are implicated in power struggles. Moreover, Foucault engaged these relations through faith vocabularies and on terms meaningful to (non)believers.[3] However, to be relevant to contexts previously neglected by Foucault, pastoral analysis must be rethought.

First, its contemporary applicability must be questioned along the margins that Foucault obscured when he merely asserted its "doubtless" modern relevance (Foucault, 2009, p. 148). This is crucial if pastoral power is to mirror applications of Foucauldian discipline, governmentality, and biopolitics to political geography and geopolitics (Coleman & Grove, 2009; Koch, 2018). Second, while the question of the pastorate's relevance to contemporary Western Christendom is imminent – if papered over – in Foucault's analysis, he was silent about the geopolitical Others that had challenged and reproduced the margins of European Christianity for centuries. Non-Christian spaces and (post) colonial lives are absent from Foucault's story about the effects of Christian discipline and pastoral care on modern government. Such omissions are stark given the enabling role of Christian churches and salvific discourses in the imperial violence against Muslims from Central Asia to Andalusia (Carr, 2017; Morrison, 2021), against pre-Columbian Mesoamerican polytheists (Gutiérrez, 2019), Incan animism (Ramos, 2010), animists, polytheists, and pantheists across Sub-Saharan Africa (Kebede, 2004), etc. Thus, "critique from the margins" (Scott, 1998, p. 132) or "thought from the outside" (Foucault, 1987, p. 16) about the pastorate's political-geographic space is necessary to explore the concept's fitness for research on global religious struggles. To be relevant to Christian subjectivities outside the European metropole and to non-Christian subjects globally, power relations among the pastor, the (non)believer, and the congregation must be revisited through postcolonial and decolonial histories and notions of power (Quijano, 2000; Radcliffe, 2017). Specifically, pastoral analysis must acknowledge the implication of faith practices in racial, classed, gendered, and other inequalities.

This article unfolds over three steps. First, I outline the research on religion and space to which Foucault's pastorate can contribute. Second, I situate pastoral power in Foucault's work and identify conditions that govern its applicability to contemporary Christian, non-Christian, and postcolonial geographies. Specifically, I explore Foucault's genealogy of the pastorate in *Security, Territory, Population* (STP) (2009), *Discipline and Punish* (DP) (1978), volumes I (HS1) and IV (HS4) of *The History of Sexuality* (1978 and 2021, respectively), *Abnormal* (2003a), and *On the Government of the Living* (GL) (2014). Using Foucault's archeological concept of conditions of possibility (1972, 100-9), I identify the conditions in which pastoral relations – of submission, guidance, (self)examination, and sacrifice predicated on the promise of salvation – can be said to operate in contemporary (non)Christian and postcolonial spaces. I ascertain four such conditions of applicability, including: (1) the confessional (doctrinal and practical) focus of pastoral power on the population rather than territory, and the reproduction of (2) salvific truths, (3) hierarchies, and (4) reciprocal sacrifice within the population. Finally, I outline an example of the model's postcolonial use and caution against uncritical applications of Eurocentric analytics to postcolonial, non-Christian, and subaltern geographies. Thus, the article suggests how to further research on geopolitics and faith while centering subaltern skepticism toward reflexive Eurocentrism in academia.

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[2] Chatterjee (2018) identifies pastoral counter-conducts against contemporary/postcolonial governmentality across the Subcontinent, but, following Foucault, integrates pre-19th century Buddhist-monastic care into a governmental genealogy.

[3] "(Non)believer" is a non-binary, fluctuating, and ambiguous subjectivity mediated through pastoral power. (Non)believers are a "spectrum of believing nonbelievers and non-believing believers" (Flynn, 1993, p. 471) who, alongside apparent "believers", include "lapsed", "non-practicing", and "cultural" Christians/Muslims/Hindus, etc., infrequent churchgoers, "unchurched" believers, non-denominational believers, agnostic and atheist churchgoers, the "spiritual but not religious", the fluidly religious (Bidwell, 2018; Fuller, 2001), and other liminal subjectivities.

2. Geopolitical space and faith: the absence of pastoral power

Research on religion and (geopolitical) space has secularized faith relations through social-scientific analytics[4] while overlooking Foucault's work on the pastorate. This mirrors how religious and Foucault studies neglect the political-geographic genealogy of pastoral power. Amongst the *mirroring silences*, both literatures, like Foucault, largely *disregard* the postcoloniality of faith spaces.

Namely, following the Cold War, and throughout the War on Terror, "cultural realist" (Hanson, 2006; Nau, 2002) and "Middle East" scholars (Baskan, 2016; Marshall, 2013; Ehteshami, 2007; Rashid, 2001) inspired by Huntington (1993) recast world politics as clashes driven by culturally homogenous and competitive "civilizations" and "religions" (Chan, 1997; Fox, 2005), often focusing on the geopolitical impact of "Islam" (Esposito, 1992; Fuller, 2010). While liberal (Graziano, 2017a, 2017b; Johnston, 2003; Michael & Petito, 2009), English School (Thomas, 2005), sociological-constructivist (Byrnes and Katzenstein, 2006), and comparative-theoretic IR research (Haynes, 2014, 2016) on religion, world order, and foreign policy breaks from cultural-realist and classical-geopolitical assumptions on innately conflictual world, it treats "civilizations" and "religions" as stable formations.

Conversely, eclectic sociological and IR approaches reject civilizational discourses but overlook colonial legacies in geo-religious struggles and maintain essentialist social binaries (ideas/matter, religious/secular, religion/politics, etc.) (Ayoob, 2008; Latham, 2012; Nexon, 2009; Phillips, 2011; Spector, 2009) that discount how politics, faith, and space are entwined. Similarly, institutional-ecclesiastic approaches limit faith to the Church (Leustean, 2017; Mudrov, 2016; Manuel et al., 2006) while authors on nationalism (Hastings, 1997; Marx, 2003; Smith, 2003) and religious nationalism across Asia (Kuo, 2017; Liow, 2016; Veer, 1994) and "modern Europe" (Barker, 2009) reduce faith spaces to symbolic expressions of politics.

In contrast, the "anti-hegemonic bent" (Dittmer and Sturm, 2010, p. 3) of critical research (geographic/geopolitical, historical, and anthropological) problematizes how faith practices and transnational military, economic, and racial hegemonies are mutually amplified beyond the Church (Bergen, 1996; Dittmer and Sturm, 2010; McAlister, 2005, 2018; Stephanson, 1995). Questioning the European scholarly gaze at "the Muslim world" and "Islam" (Aydin, 2017), critical scholars study American-evangelical geopolitics (Foster et al., 2017; McAlister, 2005; Megoran, 2015, 2017; Sturm, 2013) and the Catholic Church (Puntigliano, 2021; Agnew, 2006; Ó Tuathail, 2000) as a popular institution engaged in a "global struggle for souls" (Agnew, 2010). However, their research applies conventional disciplinary analytics, including imaginary and moral geographies, "codes, script, narratives", and "visions" (Dijkink, 2006, pp. 192, 206). Likewise, critical-feminist analysis rejects the geopolitical use of Muslim diasporas, mosques, and femininities in Europe (Öcal & Gökarıksel, 2022, Schenk et al., 2022) and advances a "corporeal geopolitics" of the Middle East (Clark, 2017), but treats faith as a securitized and racialized cultural discourse. Similarly, a smaller set of anthropologies of Hindu, Buddhist, atheist, and BuKongo spatial subjectivities have used Bourdieusian (Covington-Ward, 2016; Gutkowski, 2013), non-pastoral Foucauldian (Bryson, 2016; McConnell, 2013, 2016), and other post-structuralist concepts (Anderson & Longkumer, 2020).

3. What makes pastoral power possible?

As I have argued above, English-language scholarship remains reluctant to think faith practices beyond social-scientific analytics and study them through relations (e.g., penance or salvation) meaningful to (non)believers. But Foucault's "strong Christian, Catholic background" (Foucault in Tran, 2011, p. 1), skepticism of the humanities, and atheism (Macey, 2004, p. 130) help explain his comfort with pastoral vocabularies, even as his engagement with religion was programmatically inconsistent (Bernauer, 2021), gradually shifting from "a suspicion towards confession as a tool of Catholic power" to "a critical genealogy of subjectivity from western antiquity to modernity" (Clements, 2021, p. 1).

In studying the subjects and strategy of the pastorate (Foucault, 2009, pp. 215-6), Foucault engaged its endurance *from within* its relations and on their terms. He described Christianity's "technologists of the soul" (Hook, 2003, p. 621) as "the flock's" caring "pastors" or "shepherds" (Foucault, 2009, pp. 152, 192) and explored the effects of their guidance without framing salvation and sacrifice as tools or expressions of territorial, sovereign, class, or racial struggles. Instead, Foucault recognized that, as relations of *power*, pastoral relations both differed from and intersected with political-economic (Dean, 2010, pp. 90-3; Foucault, 2009, p. 226), sovereign (Foucault, 2009, pp. 154, 165), gender (Foucault, 2009, pp. 196-7), and sexual struggles (Foucault, 1978b, 2021), which made the pastorate at once "autonomous" from (Foucault, 2009, p. 152) and intertwined with them (Foucault, 2009, p. 154). This made his treatment of institutionalized religion and pastoral power "ambivalent" (Carrette, 2013, p. 371): he studied the "pastoral organization" of "religious power" (Foucault in Carrette, 2013, p. 375-6) rather than transcendental claims themselves. Nonetheless, the transcendental, the "mystical calculus of the infinitesimal and the infinite" (Foucault, 1995, p. 140), helped him explain how pastoral power could be *both* "directed towards the world beyond" *and* "terrestrial" or how, while "distinct from political power", it could have "a series of conjunctions, supports, relays, and conflicts" with it (Foucault, 2009, p. 154). This genealogical ambivalence helped Foucault study pastoral histories through religious texts and vocabularies without imposing preexisting social-scientific concepts on them, making his treatment of religion unique in critical theory. Thus, Foucault's framing of pastoral power as "the government of souls" (Foucault, 2009, p. 88; 2003a, 177) and "the problem of Catholic or Protestant pastoral doctrine" (Foucault, 2009, p. 88) should be read alongside his understanding of religion as a "political force" (Foucault, 1999, p. 107). Moreover, Foucault's nonlinear understanding of genealogy allowed him to identify pastoral strategies in modern governmentality without reducing pastoral power to a "transitional concept" .[5] Rather, he "integrated" it into "longer analytics of religious power" (Carrette, 2013, p. 373).

I have indicated that pastoral power helped Foucault capture how obedience and care in the Church had enabled modern disciplinary (Foucault, 1978a) and governmental power, or "an art of governing men" (Foucault, 2009, p. 162; 2014, 51-2). Foucault likewise argued that Christian populations were managed through the twin techniques of normalization and othering, or the designation of "abnormals" whose bodies were "culpabilized" and "discredited" (Foucault, 2003a, pp. 167–227). The pastoral also helped him study an ancient "genealogy of desiring man" (Foucault, 1990, p. 12; 1986) and Western Christian ethics of sexuality (Foucault, 2021). These genealogies have been challenged as "primarily negative" notions of a religion that "govern[s] subjects and do[es] not allow them to govern themselves" (McCall,

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[4] Megoran (2015, 2017) and Tuan (2010) stand out as exceptions.

[5] Genealogies of Christian sexuality in *Confessions of the Flesh* (2021) bolster readings of Foucault's interest in Christianity as not merely ancillary to governmentality and discipline (Daniels, et al., 2022). Moreover, Foucault claimed that "[t]he history of the pastorate in the West, as a model of the government of men, is inseparable from Christianity" (Foucault, 2009, vii).

2004, p. 7). Nevertheless, Foucault treated religion as a *productive* force that makes subjects into "themselves" (Foucault, 2021, pp. 93, 230) through "gentle" caring techniques or "tender and beneficial forms of attention and regulation" that enable "greater well-being" (Hook, 2003, p. 617) if those cared-for disclose their souls and "institute techniques of self-examination, and con-science" (Hook, 2003)

Yet, like much of the literature surveyed earlier, Foucault neglected subaltern-postcolonial, non-European Christian, and non-Christian subjects globally. Therefore, this section explores the material-historical conditions around the broadening of the work on pastoral power and its relevance for (non)European populations and geo-religious struggles engulfed in colonial legacies. In rethinking the pastoral model beyond early-modern European Christendom, I draw on a close reading of STP, HS1, HS4, Abnormal, GL, and DP and propose an account of the pastorate based in (1) its doctrinal and practical focus on the *population* rather than territory, (2) *soteriology*, (3) pastoral *hierarchies and resistance*, and (4) *reciprocal sacrifice*.

3.1. Pastoral space: population, not territory

Foucault argued that early-modern "state centralization" and Reformation-era "religious dispersion and dissidence" had generated struggles over "how to be governed, by whom, to what extent, to what ends, and by what methods" (Foucault, 2009, p. 89). Pastoral power's focus on *populations* – rather than territory – fueled these struggles ((Foucault, 2009, p. 129), altering coercive discipline (Foucault, 1995), the sovereign "territorial state" (Foucault, 2009, p. 15), and modern government in the process.

To explain how pastoral power guides populations to salvation, Foucault claimed that controlling or defending territory (city, state, etc.) is not the pastorate's purpose (Foucault, 2009, p. 129). Instead, pastoral power regulates mobile populations or "the flock in its movement", thereby enacting the shepherd-like vision of the Judeo-Christian God, as opposed to territorial, intramural, or polis-bound Greek gods (Foucault, 2009, p. 125). While Elden (2013) criticizes Foucault's decentering of territory as historically inaccurate, Bigo claims that, for Foucault, "territory has no certainty and is not an organizing principle for control and order" (Bigo, 2017, p. 42). It is rather a "contingent result of struggles of power and knowledge" (Bigo, 2017). Foucault's inversion of population-territory relations does not make space extraneous, since space is "fundamental in any exercise of power" (Foucault, 1984, p. 252). Instead, exploring how beneficence and salvation shape the population affects how we understand space and struggles over it.

Namely, Foucault's discussions of pastoral relations in DP, HS1, HS4, STP, and GL are context-specific and "microphysical" (Foucault, 1978a, pp. 26), albeit Eurocentric (Loomba, 2005; Stoler, 1995). They delineate situational and corporal conditions that enable obedience, (self)examination, veridiction, and care, focusing, for instance, on the torture wheel (Foucault, 1978a, pp. 46) or the space of the monastic cell (across HS1, HS4, STP, and GL). Therefore, Foucault's decentering of territory does not marginalize space. Rather, it privileges pastoral relations as interactional sites that reproduce population subjectivities, conducts, *as well as* territory. Foucault captures this dynamic through the concept of the *milieu*: "a set of natural givens – rivers, marshes, hills – and a set of artificial givens – an agglomeration of individuals, of houses, etc." (Foucault, 2009, p. 36). These sets are not separate realities but "open series" of events or "uncertain elements" with mutually contingent probabilities guided in desirable directions through probabilistic estimations (Foucault, 2009, p. 35–36). So, the milieu is not a Cartesian res extensa or a pre-political "empty space" (Foucault, 2009, p. 34), but an eventful enactment of relations where bodies, "artificial" things, and socially molded "natural givens" condition each other's conduct. Thus, to speak of geo-religious struggles as pastoral, their space of operation must be population-(rather than territory)-inflected.

3.2. Soteriology in the pastorate

The commanding force of the pastorate stems from societal needs for the soul's *salvation*, which Foucault embeds in the Patristic hermeneutics of the original sin and human nature (Foucault, 2021). The promise of salvation sets in motion an "*economy of faults and merits*" (Foucault, 2009, p. 173) and, if HS4 and STP are read concurrently, entire economies of virtue and transgression (Foucault, 2021, pp. 11–13, 32–34), of "illumination" and "access to the true life" (Foucault, 2021, p. 60), and "fault and salvation" (Foucault, 2021, p. 42, etc.). Their operation constitutes pastoral subjectivities as salvific.

In other words, by describing how Christian salvation rests on a calculus of one's rights and wrongs, Foucault captured how the flock is governed. He argued that relations among the sheep/believer, the flock, and series of pastor-subjects (up to the bishop and God) consist in "exhaustive, total, and permanent […] individual obedience" (Foucault, 2009, p. 183) or the logic that "every soul, without exception, needs direction" (Foucault, 2021, p. 89). Ethical direction/guidance, obedience, and the (self)examination of the (non)believer's conscience (e.g., through confession) are key to the pastor-sheep relationship as they uphold the calculus of faults, merits, and salvation. Thus, "generalized" obedience (Foucault, 2009, p. 179) and "mortification" of one's will (Foucault, 2009, p. 178; Foucault, 2021, p. 110) are both the condition and the effect of salvific relations. The very flesh (as opposed to the soul) (Foucault, 2009, p. 178) is othered, discredited, and "culpabilized" (Foucault, 2003a, pp. 167–227) because it induces will and "desire beyond subordination" (Foucault, 2009, p. 178).

However, pastoral objectifications of willfulness and libido (Foucault, 2021), much like bourgeois repressions of sexuality (Foucault, 1978b), do not merely "negate" as McCall (2004) would argue. Correlated to salvation, they produce one's ethical desire to submit to a "director" (Foucault, 2021, pp. 73–110), examine one's conscience, tell the truth about oneself, and be governed. After all, Adam's carnal transgression did not end him but *made him* "man" – a subject needing guidance, penance, and salvation (Foucault, 2021, p. 32). Therefore, pastoral relations are productive as they enable care/control through salvific conducts.

3.3. Hierarchy and resistance

While the imperative of obedience entrenches pastoral hierarchies, it also engenders resistances and "counter-conducts" (Foucault, 2009, p. 196). Specifically, Foucault identifies "a dimorphism, a binary structure within the pastoral field, distinguishing the clergy from the laity" (Foucault, 2009, p. 202) as different "categories of individuals [who] do not have the same civil rights, obligations, or privileges" or "even the same spiritual privileges" (Foucault, 2009). This dimorphism positions the clergy "closer […] to paradise, heaven, and salvation" (Foucault, 2009, p. 203), reinforces its claims to sacramental power, and generates "conflicts around the problem of conduct" (Foucault, 2009, p. 197), including over the rationality of pastoral guidance. Hence, these "conflicts" transcend "purely negative disobedience" (Foucault, 2009, p. 200) and entail self-transformative struggles to "be otherwise" (Death, 2016, p. 214; Barrett, 2020; Demetriou, 2016; Odysseos et al., 2016).

Foucault's remarks on (counter-)conduct have clear geopolitical implications. They exceed his metaphor of the carceral city's disciplinarian yet "imaginary geo-politics" (Foucault, 1995, p. 307) and imply "species" or population-level *struggle* closer to his analysis in *Society Must Be Defended* (2003b). While *Abnormal* (Foucault, 2003a) captures the othering function of the pastorate, STP shows how resistances to othering, obedience, and extant hierarchy had animated series of medieval and modern counter-movements, including women prophets, poor farmworkers, pre-Reformation groups, and a range of Protestant churches. Therefore, geo-religious struggles can be studied as pastoral if they reproduce salvific relations – even as their subjects resist particular pastoral hierarchies and strategies.

3.4. Reciprocal sacrifice

Finally, Foucault claimed that all subjects of (pastoral) power, regardless of their privileges, experience constraints: as pastors owe God obedience and confession (Foucault, 2021, p. 89), they become tangled in "a series of relations of reciprocity" with the "individual sheep and the flock" (Foucault, 2009, p. 168).

First, the pastor must save the entire flock "as a whole, as a unity", as well as each sheep individually (Foucault, 2009). As per Matthew 18:12–14 and Luke 15:3–7, this requirement is paradoxical, since saving the whole flock means abandoning it to save each sheep (Foucault, 2009, p. 169). Second, following the "principle of exhaustive and instantaneous transfer", "on the dreadful day", the pastor will also have to "consider everything a sheep has done, every merit or fault, as his own act" (Foucault, 2009, p. 170). Third, following the logic of "sacrificial reversal" (Foucault, 2009) and Christ's sacrifice for humanity, the shepherd's "Christlike" death "in this world" is necessary to save the flock and himself (Foucault, 2021, p. 311; 2009, 170–171). Finally, following the "alternate correspondence" principle, the pastor proves himself worthy when he disciplines the "recalcitrant" sheep and "struggle[s] against his own flock" (Foucault, 2009, p. 172). If the sheep never transgress, the pastor could feel pride, itself a cardinal sin. Hence another paradox: the pastor should "have imperfections" and not "hide them hypocritically from his faithful" (Foucault, 2009).

Therefore, the pastor, too, is subject to the pastorate as his salvation is due to the faults and merits of his sheep (Foucault, 2009). Any pastor, "whether abbot or bishop", only commands "because he has been ordered to command" (Foucault, 2009, p. , 179). Paradoxically, as "his refusal would be the assertion of a particular will […], he must obey, and command" (Foucault, 2009). Thus, submission as a generalized condition for salvation generates simultaneously reciprocal, unequal, and paradoxical power relations.

4. Pastoral power analysis in other spaces?

A recurring debate around the pastorate is "whether it persists in the modern world or whether the shift to governmentality during the foundation of the Classical period (1580–1650) was a distinct break from this model of power" (Carrette, 2013, p. 379). Foucault asserted, without much discussion, that pastoral power "was no doubt shifted, broken up, transformed, and integrated in various forms" and "never […] truly abolished" (Foucault, 2009, p. 148). Moreover, he claimed that its "typology, organization, and mode of functioning" were "doubtless" still relevant (Foucault, 2009) albeit not as "an invariant and fixed structure", especially since Protestantism and the Counter-Reformation had emerged out of "anti-pastoral" movements (Foucault, 2009, p. 149). These transformations, and the transference of pastoral functions to governmentality (Foucault, 2009, p. 197), reflect histories of ruptures and connections. If Foucault was right about the genealogy of the pastorate, its contemporary operation should unfold "from within" the milieus (Foucault, 2009, p. 172) of (non)believers: in political parties, town squares beautified for holidays, diplomatic discussions on "religious freedom", during pastoral home visits, etc. Moreover, if pastoral power intersected with socioeconomic inequalities in the late Middle Ages and has since interpenetrated (neoliberal) governmentality, and if the pastorate is arguably an "ecclesiastical economy" (Leshem, 2016, pp. 6), then the contemporary pastoral should likewise traverse political-economic relations.

Indeed, Kiersey traces pastoral strategies in modern "confessional capitalism" (Kiersey, 2011) and frames the neoliberal market as a pedagogical-pastoral technology of the self (Kiersey, 2021), which dovetails with Dean's claim that "the liberal economy [is] the precise field into which the Christian pastorate has migrated" (Dean, 2019, p. 13). Konings (2015) argues that the affective persuasiveness of money mimics religious icons and, mirroring Foucault's STP and *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2008), Agamben (2011) shows how different historical-theological "signatures" of "oikonomia" inform liberal governmentality. However, like Foucault, these accounts bracket off how contemporary pastoral relations reproduce faith subjectivities as both "autonomous" from and intertwined with class, market, and other relations (Foucault, 2009, pp. 152, 154).

4.1. Pastoral power beyond mere contemporaneity

The preceding examination of the pastorate's conditions of possibility offers ways of probing its contemporary relevance: if a geo-religious relationship (of submission or its rejection, ambivalence, etc.) revolves around the questions of salvation, population wellbeing, hierarchy, and reciprocal sacrifice, Foucault's pastoral model may be relevant to it. This can guide research into how geopolitical space is claimed, othered, and reproduced as variously "Christian" or as Christendom's "Other" from within the rationalities of such claims, framing them as social rather than discretely doctrinal or "apolitical" (Li, 2014; Martin, 2010).

But raising the question of the pastoral's contemporary relevance in general terms leaves unaddressed – and therefore preserves – Foucault's Eurocentric and pre-colonial notion of pastoral power. While Foucault cited Western Christianity as the space of pastoral power's emergence (Foucault, 2021, pp. 14, 201, 277; Foucault, 2009, pp. 129-30, 147-49), he never framed this mapping and its neglect of the pastorate beyond Western Christendom as an analytical *construct* that required explaining. To Foucault, the pastorate simply *was/is* Western – primarily Catholic – with trajectories involving cenobitic and eremitic monasteries and towns in ancient Turkey, Palestine-Judea, and Egypt (Foucault, 2021, pp. 86, 107, 116-35, 200, 260-67; Foucault, 2009, 2011). However, between the doctrinally formative councils of Trent (1545–63) and Second Vatican (1962-5), sacraments and pastoral relations were remade, appropriated, and violently hybridized in New Spain, Bourbon Mexico, colonial and independent Peru, US, Canada, and other colonial spaces (Brading, 1983; Christensen, 2013; Delgado, 2018; Harrison, 2014; Tavarez, 2011). These genealogies complicate the model of the pastorate as a European institution exported globally through (post) colonial missions. They challenge Foucault's silence on pastoral power outside Europe and reinforce the critiques of geographic reductionism and Eurocentrism in his work (Loomba, 2005; Said, 1984; Spivak, 1988; Stoler, 1995), perhaps disrupted only by his journalistic interest in the 1978-9 Iranian revolution (Leezenberg, 2004).

Foucault's veiled mapping and consequent geopolitical naturalization of pastoral power call for a critique of both the concept's indebtedness and relevance to geo-religious practices outside European Christendom, including the bodies and populations discredited, made culpable, and normalized through imperial-religious colonization. Studying the conditions of the pastorate's contemporary possibility *within the bounds* of Foucault's analysis would reproduce reductive genealogies in STP, HS1, HS4, DP, Abnormal, and GL. It would reinforce pastoral matters as stories of white Christian men and certain marginalized white women in Western Europe (Foucault, 2009, pp. 196-7, 222; Carrette, 2013, p. 377).

To "apply" the pastoral model beyond Western Christendom without recognizing how the "beyond" spaces have been integrated into historical correlations of colonialism, Christianity, and capitalism would merely conceal and redeem this history. It would reinforce the silencing effects of "bounded reflexivity" (Scott, 1992, p. 371) that lurks in the "diffusionism" of otherwise Eurocentric critical theories (Blaut, 1999). To expand the critique of Foucault's genealogy of the pastoral, and to test its merits in non-Christian and postcolonial faith spaces, its four conditions of possibility must be rethought and confronted with the world's "microphysical", "cellular", and bodily specificity that Foucault himself emphasized (Foucault, 1978a, pp. 149). That entails researching how pastoral relations are coextensive with colonial legacies embodied as gendered, classed, racialized (El Amrani, 2021; Mills, 2005), and ableist power (Betcher, 2010). Foucault's own conception of space as a population-specific and historically produced milieu (Foucault, 2009, pp. 35-6) provides an opening for this exercise.

Namely, if pastoral power targets the population rather than territory, then population microphysics, the thickness of human subjectivity – from class to race, etc. – should be made explicit in the "[open] series of uncertain elements" that is the milieu (Foucault, 2009, p. 36). Postcolonial geo-religious critiques (Agensky, 2020; Shenhav, 2006) can advance this effort if aided by subaltern geopolitics (Power, 2019; Sharp, 2011; Smith, 2020), subaltern geographies (Jazeel and Legg, 2019), and hybrid anthropological and political-economic critiques of how transnational market competition, private property (McCarthy, 2016; Venn, 2009), and universalizing economic strategies shape human subjectivity (Chakrabarti, 2021; Escobar, 2012; Gidwani, 2008). Such cross-disciplinary interventions can draw out the spatial desires, knowledges, and conducts shaped by development, security, migration, trade, and welfare policies steeped in colonial legacies.

Foucault's genealogical method disassociated the body from the medicalized discourse on insanity (Foucault, 1965), clinical inspection (Foucault, 1989), "scientia sexualis" (Foucault, 1978b), and the "political anatomy" of discipline (Foucault, 1995, p. 139), and it disentangled human life from the biopolitical apparatuses of the nation, state, and race (Foucault, 2003b). Similarly, disassociation from Eurocentrism would recast pastoral bodies/populations as global, transnational, or "transversal" (Foucault, 1982, p. 780) rather than intra/extra European. Alongside subaltern geopolitics and geographies, strategies for postcolonial and decolonial revisions of Eurocentric theory abound in (international) political economy and IR (Bhambra, 2021; Hobson, 2013), sociology and anthropology (Bhambra & Holmwood, 2021; Onwuzuruigbo, 2018; Seth, 2009), and religious studies (Joy, 2001; King, 1999).

4.2. *Thinking through pastoral power in the postcolony*

The limitations of this piece do not allow for a full-fledged case study testing the applicability of Foucault's pastoral model in postcolonial conditions. Instead, to illustrate the argument developed here, I submit that the pastoral model can be reworked to study how the politics of same-sex sexualities in present-day Uganda has been shaped by Catholic, Anglican, evangelical, and Muslim missions, indigenous religions, and legacies of British colonialism in the northern Great Lakes region. This case exemplifies entangled genealogies of ethnoracial, religious, sovereign, gendered, sexual, and class struggles in postcolonial societies.

A critical-pastoral lens is warranted for two reasons. First, Uganda's legislative and wider social debates on same-sex sexualities have been embedded in conflicting beliefs around God's will, His natural order, and the country's state of spiritual-bodily health (Bompani & Brown, 2015; Ward, 2015). Moreover, this theology of sexuality was first introduced to the region by Catholic and Anglican missions in the late 19th century, and transnational Catholic, Anglican, Muslim, and evangelical clergy continue to shape the ongoing debate (Bompani & Brown, 2015; Ward, 2015). Second, the first legal ban on same-sex intercourse in what is now Uganda was imposed by the British colonial Protectorate through the 1902 Penal Code, invoking a "natural order" rationale (Morris, 1974, p. 13). Moreover, such ecclesial and state regulations have historically invoked and reinforced each other (Jjuuko & Mutesi, 2018; Jjuuko & Tabengwa, 2018). Arguably, a reworked pastoral model can explore how pastoral hierachies have been conditioned by, and have reinforced gender, sex, and sexual (GSS) hierarchies in Uganda, including the historical rationalities of 2009, 2013, 2021, and 2023 attempts to pass laws re-criminalizing same-sex sexual relations – even though they had already been prohibited several times over (in 1950, 1990, 2000, and initially in 1902). Postcolonial-pastoral critique can tackle the puzzle of repetitive criminalization despite domestic political, legislative, and judicial obstacles and international diplomatic and financial pressures on the government to de-criminalize same-sex sexualities and protect sexual and gender minorities (Amusan et al., 2019).

Thereby, the pastoral model's postcolonial application entails at least three steps, each centering transformations in GSS subjectivities. First, it should outline struggles over GSS conducts triggered (since the 19th century) by Anglican, Catholic, Muslim, and Pentecostal/evangelical missions' efforts to draw and coerce populations in the region into salvific, hierarchical, and reciprocally sacrificial relations (at the expense of indigenous religions and at each other's expense). This step would correlate the suppression and appropriation of pre-colonial GSS conducts to (1) the relationship of reciprocal sacrifice (against the worshiper's unilateral sacrifice in indigenous religions), and (2) to how distinctly corporal powers and works otherwise attributed to indigenous deities (Katonda and Ruhanga), Guardians, and spirits, have been reframed and integrated into the Abrahamic notions of fault, merit, and submission to the pastor (Magesa, 2016; Muzorewa, 2014).

Second, postcolonial-pastoral analysis must study how the colonial/British privileging of Protestant missions through financial, legal, juridical, and political-economic tools (e.g., the role in trade and abolitionism) shaped the indigenous-religious and Abrahamic-missionary treatment of GSS (Médard and Doyle, 2007; Shumway, 2020). Furthermore, this step should unpack the place of GSS subjects in post-independence ethnoreligious struggles for governmental dominance and beneficial fiscal, healthcare, and welfare policies.

Third, the role of pastoral hierarchies, salvific priorities, and societal sacrifice should be examined at historically pivotal points when same-sex sexualities were recriminalized (in 1950, 1990, 2000, 2005, and 2023) or when popular, administrative, and legislative attempts to expand their criminalization failed (2009, 2013, and 2021). Therein, pastoral analysis would focus on GSS (ab)normalization by Christian pastors, imams, bureaucracies, the military, police, legislators, courts, schools, the media, etc. Throughout, the "superficial multiplicity" (Foucault, 1972, p. 76) and interpenetrations of (ab)normalizing practices and discourses should be prioritized (to avoid treating these spaces as distinct silos).

Overall, this approach encourages genealogical permeation across the three steps of analysis whereby missionary practices are examined for entanglements with the operation of the Imperial British East Africa Company and colonial Protectorate, which, in turn, condition GSS (ab)normalization in contemporary Uganda. This helps avoid the reification of separate "religious" and "political" histories of GSS subjectivities. Moreover, the pastoral focus on populations, salvific relations, hierarchy/resistance, and reciprocal sacrifice helps trace how Ugandan politicians, religious leaders, and ordinary people alike define the Ugandan body through the politics of (post)colonialism, and invoke "the normal" (i.e. hetero-normalized) as a population marker that must be defended against "Western", "neo-colonial", and "anti-Ugandan" impositions by foreign governments and international financial institutions (Ghoshal, 2014). Confronted with the history of Christianity-cum-Empire in the northern Great Lakes region, pastoral analysis can detail the work of salvific, hierarchical, and sacrificial relations in defining the Ugandan body and milieu as hetero-normal and "anti-colonial" *despite* the histories of same-sex sexualities and ambivalent gender subjectivities in pre-colonial Buganda (Rodriguez, 2017). Thereby, Uganda's ethnicized ("Bantu","Acholi", etc.), classed, and gendered populations can be understood as subjects of sexual (ab)normalization that has both transcended and reinforced religious/pastoral divides, histories of Christian-Muslim, Catholic-Anglican, anti-Christian, or anti-indigenous violence, and mutually antagonistic proselytizing.

Namely, in spite of ethnoreligiously inflected struggles for population control in both colonial-era and independent Uganda, sexual (ab)normalization has helped suppress, appropriate, and integrate indigenous religious practices and pre-colonial kingdoms into the region's Abrahamic religions and colonial/independent state. In doing so, sexual (ab)normalization has fueled (post)colonial struggles to proselytize, convert populations, and grow Catholic/Anglican/Muslim/evangelical congregations in the region. This has, in turn, reinforced population-contingent land, tax, and self-governing privileges, donations, etc. Simultaneously, however, sexual (ab)normalization reinforces an

"Ugandan" anti-colonial subjectivity that mitigates these very ethno-religious divides. This makes the reproduction of (ab)normal GSS subjectivities doubly effective as a strategy of postcolonial differentiation, which helps explain the repeated attempts to recriminalize them.

4.3. Caveats around applications of the pastoral model

Finally, skepticism and pause are necessary when marginalized and non-Christian faith practices and postcolonial subalternity are studied through Eurocentric concepts (Barkawi & Laffey, 2006; Spivak, 1988) implicated in the colonial legacies of Christianizing missions. Foucault's silence on (post)colonialism precisely warrants subaltern skepticism (Legg, 2007). Moreover, sociologists and anthropologists of religion (Asad, 1993; Fitzgerald, 2000; King, 1999; Lloyd & Viefhues-Bailey, 2015) have similarly argued that "religion" as a social-scientific category is indebted to European Christendom and colonialism. Thus, Asad (1993, 1986) has argued that even when the notion of "religion" is intelligible across social spaces, its "signified" is not. So, does postcolonial critique obviate pastoral analysis, given its Eurocentricity? I address this question in three ways.

First, contemporary European societies experience racial, class, gender, and other inequalities produced by colonial conquests. Therefore, "Europe as such is postcolonial" (Balibar, 2004, p. 24). While the experiences of inequality differ across global Souths, Norths, Wests, Easts, cores, and peripheries, those gaps do not imply definitive breaks in the spatial operation of power – along binary (North/South) or more complex lines. Rather, this means that colonialisms, imperialisms, and capitalisms have divided and integrated the world in uneven and hierarchical ways. Therefore, while critical frameworks of ironically Eurocentric, androcentric, and middle-class genealogies (McLaren, 1997) – such as pastoral power – have no obvious relevance to the subaltern, whether and how such tools are employed is the very test of their utility. Legg embeds subaltern re-readings of Foucault in pursuits of "discourses and disciplines, that though complicit with colonial states in the past, preserve the potential to mobilize counter-discourses of modernity" (Legg, 2007, p. 268). Political geography should acknowledge that mobilizing European concepts, "indispensable and inadequate" as they are (Chakrabarty, 2000, p. 16), is therefore political. It is mediated by power and differential advantage in academia, including among critical/postcolonial academics (Griffiths, 2017). Thus, probing the contemporaneity of pastoral power entails critiquing pastoral hierarchies as transversal-postcolonial while situating critics themselves (Spivak, 1999, p. 168) in transnationally entwined (race, class, gender, etc.) inequalities.

Second, rethought as postcolonial, the pastoral model can pragmatically reframe sociological and anthropological debates over the Eurocentrism of "religion". Foucault avoided fixing the meaning of religion in studies of governmentality, ethics, prisons, and sexuality by focusing on what certain relations "do" (Jensen, 2021). Specifically, his focus on genealogical continuities and ruptures across Hebrew, Hellenistic-Roman ("pagan"), and early Christian relations of power and ethical (self)formation (Foucault, 1978b, 1990, 2009, 2014, 2021) undermined the methodological need for a universal definition of religion. The ontological rupture in divinities, ethics, and spiritual practices between ancient and medieval Europes did not prevent or invalidate Foucault's analysis of pastoral genealogies *across* them. If this methodological remark is of any broader value, then the utility of postcolonial-pastoral analysis lies in its critique of situational and everyday salvific truth-telling, reciprocal sacrifice, hierarchy, and resistance, all of which defy the spatial-temporal bounds of the Church (Foucault, 2009, p. 150; Stone, 2013, p. 355). Certainly, historical transformations across spaces and practices of believing constrain the analysis of salvific relations by reconfiguring their contexts. However, they do not foreclose research into salvific milieus that are both unequal (hierarchical) and reciprocal (mutually sacrificial) – when and if they are arguably at work. Understood as contingent and situated, pastoral struggles for souls can be explored as global or "transversal" (Foucault, 1982, p. 780) insofar as their effects implicate salvific and mutually sacrificial economies of fault and merit mediated by shepherd-flock dimorphisms (Foucault, 2009, p. 202). Therefore, Foucault's method – reworked through postcolonial critique – can capture historical transformations of salvific relations by advancing attitudes of genealogical and archeological "immanence" (Carrette, 2000, p. 5). That brings me to a third point.

Exploring the applicability of pastoral power transversally is hardly meaningful in the abstract. This question should be raised in lived spaces on a case-by-case basis. This article has identified some parameters of such inquiries by proposing four conditions for the concept's applicability – the pastoral's population focus, salvific logic, power hierarchies, and the imperative of reciprocal sacrifice. These conditions can be applied as analytical criteria in discourse analysis, documentary research, ethnographic methods, etc., aided by studies on grounded and everyday soteriologies, religious hierarchies, and sacrificial commitments in postcolonial Christian milieus outside the North Atlantic and Europe (Agensky, 2020; Christensen, 2013; Gutiérrez, 2019), by inquiries into pastoral strategies in Muslim spaces (Maritato, 2021a, 2021b), etc. However, to paraphrase Chakrabarty (2000, p. 16), such engagements are both *indispensable* and *inadequate* in testing out the meaningfulness of spiritual care, guidance, and control beyond European Christendom. Inadequate, because, as I have argued above, postcolonial inequalities are not always acknowledged in scholarly literature and because, in everyday life, there are no homogenous entities such as "Catholicism" or "Islam" that are reproduced with collective doctrinal consistency. This reinforces the need to study intersections of geopolitics and religion as "grounded theologies" or "immanent" practices of boundary, subjectivity, and place-making (Tse, 2014).

5. Conclusion

This article has issued a call to study "global struggles for souls" without centering Eurocentric faith spaces and without reflexively secularizing faith, whether through its normalization or abnormalization. To advance this research, I have highlighted the critical merits and limitations of Foucault's work on pastoral power. Critiquing Foucault's reductive – Eurocentric and ancient-medieval – spatialization of the pastorate resonates with the need for further postcolonial critique in political-geographic, IR, and geopolitics research on religion. Nonetheless, his genealogy of pastoral power offers strategies for analyzing contemporary geo-religious submission, care, control, othering, and resistance without their reflexive secularization. Moreover, if revisited through postcolonial/decolonial critiques, pastoral power can speak to geo-religious struggles meaningful to (non)believers *in Europe and beyond, Christian and those represented as Christianity's Other.* Such scholarly engagements can complement the use of more conventional (including critical) social-scientific frameworks in political and human geography, IR, and critical geopolitics.

Using Foucault's work on how pastoral rationalities bind and differentiate populations into geo-religious subjects requires an account of its parameters. Drawing on a close and concurrent reading of STP, HS1, HS4, Abnormal, GL, and DP, I have argued that testing out the contemporary relevance of pastoral power necessitates research into how specific doctrines frame the congregation in relation to territory, as well as how they understand salvation, hierarchy, and sacrifice. It is likewise necessary to learn how these themes play out in everyday spaces of (non)believers, faith ministers, and intellectuals and practitioners of statecraft. Nonetheless, a "global" or "transversal" rethinking of Foucault's pastorate can hardly end there.

Applying Foucault's framework to *other* geo-religious spaces without addressing the colonial genealogies of Christianity would not revisit the pastorate "from and for the margins" (Chakrabarty, 2000, p. 16). It would merely universalize its "bounded reflexivity" and silent mapping, and further suppress histories of precolonial and anticolonial (non) worship – even as it purported to overcome Foucault's (and broader disciplinary) Eurocentrism. Instead, (non)believers' spaces must be seen as microphysical, which entails studying them as perhaps coextensive with racial, gendered, sexual, classed, ableist, and other bodily colonial legacies. Foucault's conception of *space as milieu* – as population-specific, open-ended, and historically produced – provides a strategy for such microphysical rethinking. But "milieu" should not take pastoral power back to the conceptual "home" of Foucauldian autarky. Instead, it should help us examine how economies of faults and merits work when they are recognized as complicit in (post)colonial government.

Overall, Foucault's analysis of pastoral power offers ways to study religious (non)belonging as spatial: as submission to milieu-specific economies of salvation and protection, which, in turn, makes them contentious and worthy of struggle. In linking the pastorate to the corporal population – rather than territory – Foucault enabled research into geo-religious struggles through vocabularies lived by (non)believers. He also left his analysis open to critiques of Euro-, andro-, and Christian-centrism.

Declaration of competing interest

The author listed below certifies that he has no conflicts of interest to report. He has no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest (such as honoraria; educational grants; participation in speakers' bureaus; membership, employment, consultancies, stock ownership, or other equity interest; and expert testimony or patent-licensing arrangements), or non-financial interest (such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs) in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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