1. MAIN PAPER, scheduled for the first day of the conference:

**Celia Kourie (U.F.S.).**

**Celebrating Celia Kourie’s contribution to the study of spirituality: Perspectives offered by Pieter G.R. de Villiers (U.F.S.; chair), Kobus Kruger (U.F.S.), Sue Rakoczy (Kwa-Zulu/Natal), C. Lombaard (Unisa).**

**Weaving colourful threads: A tapestry of spirituality and mysticism.**

Given the plethora of research conducted in the field of spirituality and mysticism over the last 30 years, it is almost a superhuman feat to keep up with the explosion of information. Of necessity, in a limited article of this nature, it is possible to discuss only a few salient aspects of the spirituality and mysticism phenomenon and by so doing contribute to ongoing research in this important domain. Contemporary spiritualties encompass the whole range of human experience and new variants are emerging; for example, the relatively recent Contemplative Studies, a cognate and close companion to Spirituality. Crossing inter-religious boundaries enhances studies in Mysticism; natural mysticism is clearly in the foreground; and breaking research in neurotheology sheds light on the nature of the ‘mystical mind’. Discussion of the value or otherwise of techniques and methods of the mystical journey continues unabated. Of great value for today's frenetic, Internet-crazy world is the path of mystical silence. By contributing to a discussion of these issues, it is hoped that the threads of spirituality and mysticism will continue to share their colour in a world desperate for beauty and peace.

2. **Margaret A.L. Blackie (U.S.): Mysticism and spiritual formation**

From Teresa of Avila’s mansions through to the more contemporary stages described by Ken Wilber, there are now a plethora of frameworks describing spiritual development. There is also a burgeoning of spiritual formation programs available across the Christian spectrum to the ordinary person sitting in the pew. Some of the more popular authors such as Richard Rohr and Cynthia Bourgeault are placing emphasis on the idea of non-dual consciousness which is presented as something of a threshold.

Coming from a different angle, Rahner’s view of ordinary mysticism suggests that mysticism both infuses and transcends all stages and states of spiritual development. How does one hold these ideas together?

In this paper I suggest that a framework of spiritual development which allows for the emergence of authentic non-dual consciousness at higher levels held in creative tension with infused mysticism affords a robust scaffolding upon which to hang transformational spiritual formation programs. The concept of ordinary mysticism provides a lens for discernment of spirits which will ultimately shape the individual experience.

Ordinary mysticism requires that we allow for the action of the Spirit of God to be uniquely expressed and made manifest in the life of any person. Thus the stages of spiritual development too must be interpreted through the unique experience of the individual.

This paper develops these arguments and explores some of the practical implications for spiritual formation programs.

**3. Hazel O Ayanga (Moi University, Kenya).  Spirituality and Health in Kenya**

**Abstract**

Spirituality is a much talked about concept in current academic and social circles. In particular there is renewed interest in the possible role of spirituality in the provision and attainment of health.  In this regard we need to answer questions such as what is; are religion and spirituality the same or different ;does spirituality and its practice  enhance or hinder the achievement  of health ? In Kenya in particular and Africa in general, spirituality is difficult to comprehend outside of religion. This may not be the case in other parts of the world where religion is just one way among many others of expressing one’s spirituality. Thus apart from the general belief that human beings have a spiritual component in their nature, Africans generally believe that every aspect of nature and indeed the entire universe has a spiritual component that is intricately interrelated with the human being and human spirituality. This interconnectedness has an impact on every sphere of human life particularly health and wellbeing. It is in line with this understanding that the Department of Philosophy Religion and Theology at Moi University in collaboration with the Moi University College of Health Sciences in Eldoret Kenya have introduced a Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) Programme to train spiritual care givers expected to work within clinical settings. These care givers will offer spiritual care as an intervention after which a study will be conducted to ascertain: a) whether spiritual care has any impact on the health seeking behaviour, b) what are the indicators of this impact and c) whether the findings can be generalized thus necessitating the introduction of spiritual care givers in all clinical settings in the country. This paper therefore 1)  describes spirituality and health  from an African perspective; 2) describes the  CPE programme at Moi University and 3)presents expected results and future prospects of the programme.

**4. Catherine Mwihia (Ph.D). University of Kabianga,  Kericho, Kenya.**

**Health care provision in hospital: the role of mysticism in the seventh day missionary church in Kenya**

**Abstract**

Believers of the Seventh Day Missionary Church (SDMC) popularly known as the Akorino do not go to hospital to seek medical care. At times the church is in conflict with the government of Kenya for failing to respond to government’s call to eradicate some diseases affecting the people. An example is the call to eradicate Polio to all children below five years of age. However, the beliefs and practices of this church keep them from receiving the medical attention. The view of the ministry of health in liaison with the World Health Organization is to give medical care to all Kenyan citizens and especially to save the lives of children and their mothers during pregnancy and after birth. This paper seeks to theologically analyze the beliefs of the SDMC in relation to health issues. The researcher will interview church leaders both men and women. The research will be limited to the Polio vaccine which is meant to be administered to all children. It will also pay attention to the mother -child health care (MCHC). The findings of this research will be helpful to believers of the church for it calls them to go beyond faith to action. It will also help the policy makers to understand the spirituality of the community. Consequently practitioners will employ new strategies to reach the community and provide Health care services.

**5. Paul Faller (Catholic Institute of Education): Is Meditation a Thing for Children?**

Is meditation, here considered as a mantra-based way of silent prayer, a thing for children? Can they meditate? Should they meditate? In this paper I address these questions, first appealing to the longstanding Christian tradition, then considering what writers such as Sofia Cavalletti, Madeleine Simon and Laurence Freeman have to say about children’s spirituality, and finally drawing from the experience of schools and children today.

Some answer the questions above with a resounding ‘No!’ in the belief that teaching children such a practice is leading them down a New Age path to the occult and its associated dangers or to forms of Eastern religion. However, the fact of the matter, according to a number of writers and attested to by the personal experience of many educators, is that children have an innate capacity for meditation: they are born contemplative.

Given this inborn capacity, it follows that children have a readiness for meditation. Those who are working in school systems around the world find not only that children are ready for it but that they like to meditate, ask for it when the teacher may have forgotten it, and even “choose to meditate in their own time after they have got used to practising it in their school environment” (Laurence Freeman).

Encouragement to schools to introduce practices such as meditation comes from the 1996 Delors Report to UNESCO which recommends that education introduce or strengthen the dimension of ‘learning to be’ in the curriculum, and from church voices such as Pope John Paul II who poses the question: Why not start with pedagogical daring a specific education in silence within the coordinates of personal Christian experience?

**6. Tonie Rowland (**MARFAM)

*Amoris Laetitia* and a Spirituality of Family Life.The Catholic Church is possibly better known for its moral than for its pastoral theology, for teaching and upholding doctrine than developing a spirituality than incorporates doctrine and seeks to apply it to the daily life of its families.  *Amoris Laetitia i*sthe title of Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation on Family Life which was released on 8th April 2016.  It was produced as his response to the two important consultative Synods of Bishops on the Family in2014 and 2015. Interestingly it addresses itself in addition to pastors to Christian couples and everyone as it seeks to present a way forward to live according to God’s plan in the often difficult situations in which families of today find themselves.   But how does the document approach a spirituality of marriage and of other aspects of family life?  Do couples and family members in the various types of families that exist today live out a spirituality that speaks to them in their context or approaches them as individuals?  Is a spirituality of sexuality ,marriage over a lifetime, grieving and loss in widowhood, anger, resentment and guilt of divorce, the joys and pains of parent-child relationships from birth to adulthood relevant and valued by families in the secular world of today?  The paper will examine the concepts of spirituality and in particular marital and family spirituality. Toni Rowland seeks to explore these from the background of own earlier research, own experience and work of the last 35 years.

 7**.  Elmo Pienaar (N.W.U.). Making sense of the theory and practice of spirituality in the organisational context**

 The paper discusses the relevance and perceived limits and possibilities of the construct of spirituality in view of the organisational context. In doing so it goes into conversation with diverse disciplines and literature on workplace spirituality in relation to other constructs: on the one hand for example religion, theology, and faith, and on the other, organisational culture, character, and organisational health. Specific reflection is offered on the relationship between spirituality and religion as it is of particular concern for businesses. The paper accounts for both personal and corporate notions of spirituality while taking into account larger societal challenges in South Africa and Africa. The paper presents various organisational, leadership and management theories that seem to align or relate to notions of spirituality. Herein the author also refers to skilled helping modalities such as mentoring, coaching, counseling, and facilitation. The diversity that exists (beyond spiritual accompaniment - as a modality) is presented and it is considered in what ways and practical expressions they are either directly or indirectly related to spirituality. From the aforementioned the implications are discussed.

**8. Dirk van der Merwe (Unisa):  “Lived experiences” of the love of God according to 1 John 4: a spirituality of love**

**Abstract**

This article probes to enlighten this old truth of the revelation and experience of God’s love in a fresh and different way, from the perspective of early Christian spirituality. How did the early Christians possibly experience the presence of God through his love in their daily lives? This research will start to look briefly at how the author of 1 John understands the character of God. The research will continue to express how the “love” of God (according to 1 Jn), who “is light” (1:5), who is faithful and just (1:9), who “is righteous” (2:29), and who “is love” (4:8, 16), was experienced by the early Church through the following modes of experiences that emerged from reading the text: cognitive experience, relational experience, mystical experience, sensory experience and physical experience.

**9. C Lombaard (Unisa): Edward Bailey and the concept of Implicit Religion**

In this contribution, an analysis is provided of the concept of Implicit Religion as it was developed and employed in the work of Edward Bailey. Analyses using the concept of Implicit Religion is hardly possible without reference to Bailey, given his role in the naissance and the growing influence of this analytical tool. Therefore, Bailey’s contribution to the unfolding conceptualisation of Implicit Religion over recent decades will be outlined in this paper. The methodology will be characterised in some detail, also comparatively, namely with reference to standard methodologies in Theology and in the Social Sciences. In addition, some directions of influence will be indicated.

**10. Elmor van Staden (U.F.S.): Contemplation as the acme of spirituality in the thought of Thomas Merton.**

The paper discusses contemplation in the thought of Thomas Merton (1915-1968). The author starts off by offering succinct definitions for the terms *spirituality,* and *mysticism,* with mysticism as the acme of spirituality. It is against the backdrop of these definitions that the contemplative spirituality of Merton is discussed. For Merton to *be* was to be a contemplative. Merton’s life is marked by his monastic vocation; and contemplation is an integral part thereof. It was ultimately as a contemplative that he wrote on issues of social concern and, later in his life, engaged in interreligious dialogue. Any discussion on Merton therefore, should be approached on the basis of his vocation as a contemplative. The paper continues not only to define contemplation, but also discusses what contemplation is not. Furthermore the process of contemplation, as understood by Merton, is explained and the different types of contemplation are highlighted. The differences between contemplation and meditation are also highlighted. The author brings the discussion to a close by looking at the relevance contemplation has in the 21st century, and the value it holds for contemporary living.

**11. G.M.M. Loubser (U.P.):** Scientific Myth: Transdisciplinary Theology, Big History and Resuscitating Myth

One of the demarcating aspects between scientists and theologians is myth. However, some scientists have begun to shape a contemporary myth drawn from the sciences. Such myth-making is part of the post-secular reenchantment of the world. Yet, what does this hold for future conversations between scientists and theologians? In this paper we investigate this issue by engaging Big History. First, we describe myth as a technicity drawn upon to produce spiritualities. Scientific spirituality could evoke mystical awe; present a unified cosmology to validate and/or maintain a socio-economic system; and generate meaning for individuals. Second, we engage Big History as a contemporary myth spun-around an evolutionary narrative. This underlying narrative has the potential to further shape our economies, politics, ethics and ecological concerns. Lastly, we examine theological responses to Big History.