# P2: Eschatological Contents of Digital Mourning and Memorial Practices

The project investigates digital mourning and memorial practices from a theological perspective. It focuses on how death is construed within these practices and what imaginations of a potential afterlife can be traced therein. It then feeds back these implicit practical understandings of death and afterlife into the theological discourse of eschatology.
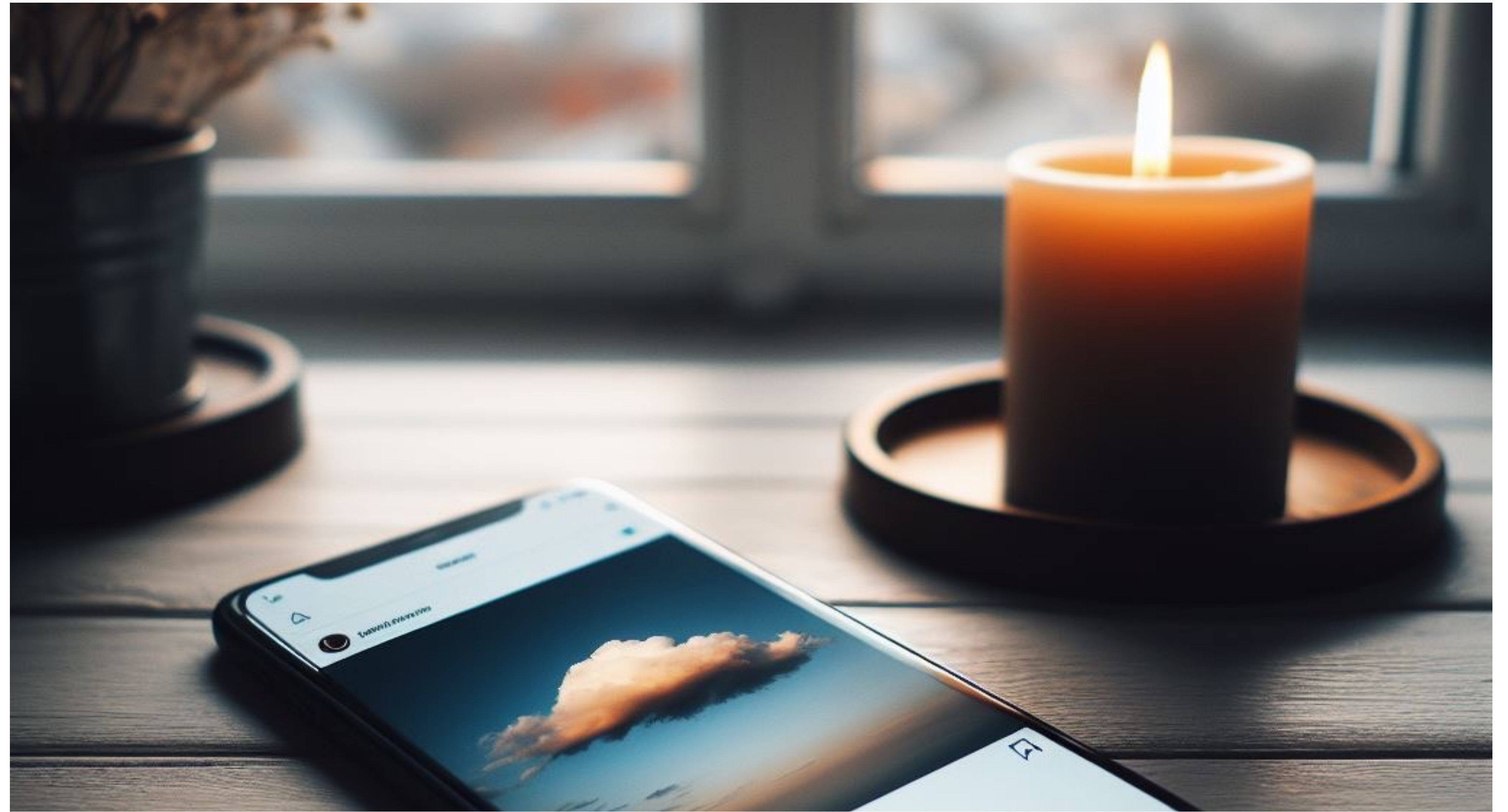
Pic. 1: AI generated with DALL·E

Objectives of Project

The objective of the project is to grasp the **ideas of death and a possible afterlife** implied in predominantly individual digital mourning and memorial practices. Also, the aim is to constructively integrate these implicit and practical concepts theologically within the framework of individual **eschatology**.

Methodological Approach

– mourning and memorial practices are analysed (both quantitatively and qualitatively) based on text and multimodal corpora collected with P1
– the implied understandings of death and afterlife are hermeneutically related to theological understandings of death and eternal life

liobelle
In Heaven

23 likes

liobelle Dear Grandpa, I can't believe you're gone. We'll meet each other again one day, for sure. 💗 We love you!

ickikatz 🥺❤️

5 DAYS AGO

Pic. 2: Generated Example of an Instagram Post / Codebeautify // Picture Kelly Sikkema / Unsplash

Main Findings

1) Many digital mourning and commemorative practices can be described as forms of continuously **relating to and communicating with the dead** (cf. Pic. 2 and 3).
2) Digital offerings that are specifically designed for mourning and commemorative purposes seem to be rather short-lived compared to the use of social media (cf. Fig. 1).
3) While these practices often draw on religiously impregnated patterns their religious status remains vague.
4) However, they do **challenge theological eschatology** in order to make previously unreflected concepts of continuity conceivable alongside a clear discontinuity between life and death as well as the living and the dead, which still dominates the German-speaking Protestant discourse.

ICH VERMISS DICH SO.
ICH VERMISS DICH SO.
ICH VERMISS DICH DOCH SO.

Pic. 3: Expression of Missing in an Instagram Post by the artist tschief

Interdisciplinary Cooperation

Close collaboration with P1 throughout the project (apart from joint data collection):
– organisation of a joint conference, of which we have just submitted the proceedings
– joint articles, blog, newspaper and podcast contributions
– organisation of a joint interdisciplinary workshop

Contribution to URPP Objectives

The project generates a more precise understanding of the often **religiously connotated aspects of digital mourning and memorial practices** against the backdrop of the Christian tradition.
In this respect, it contributes to analysing and better understanding the contributions of digital religious practice for individuals, communities, and society in the German-speaking context.
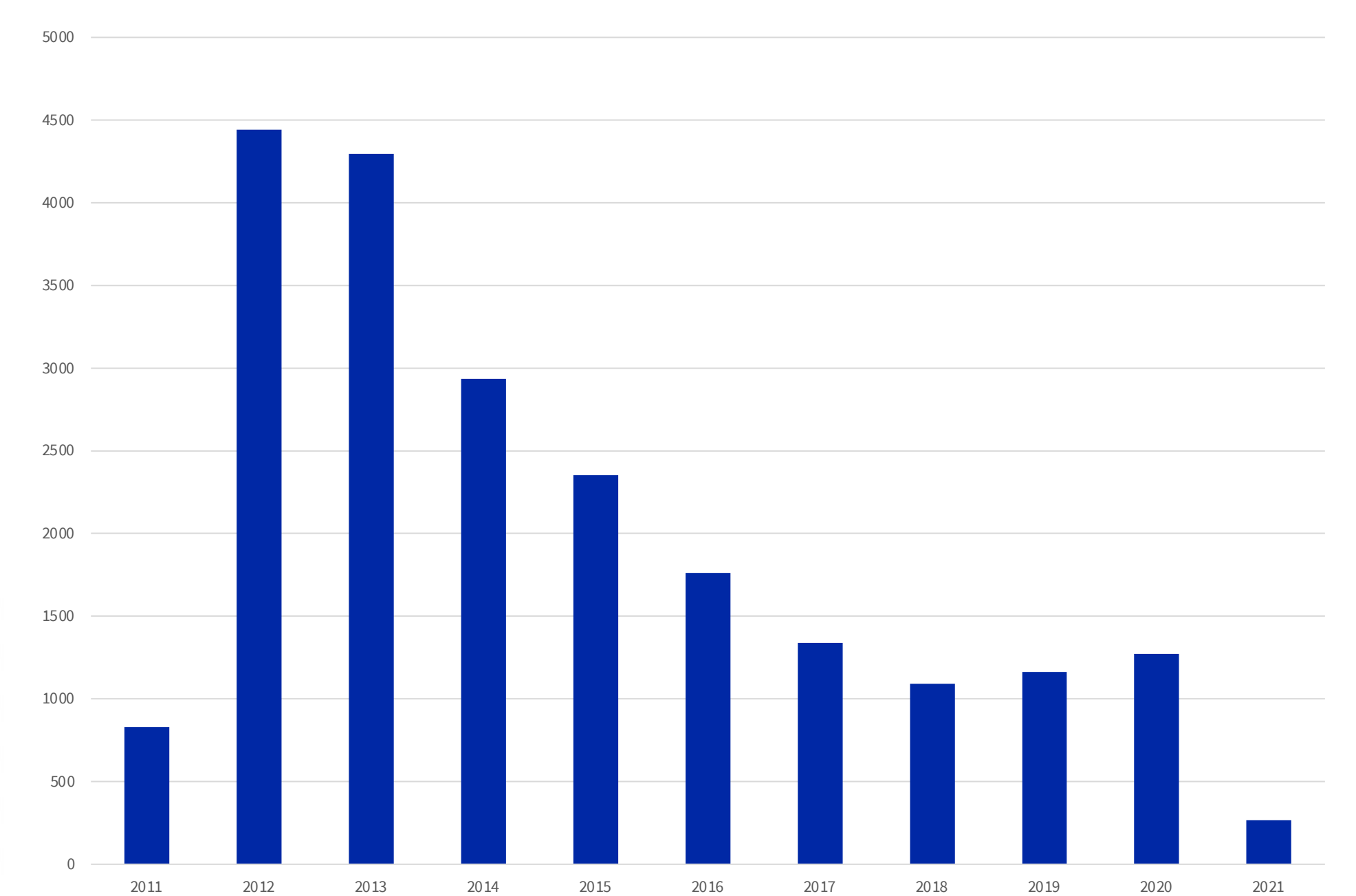

Fig. 1: Number of memorial pages by creation date

Outreach and Output

Lea Gröbel presented our preliminary findings in different conferences & in settings of public outreach (further blog, radio and podcast contributions).

Forthcoming publications (selection):

- Lea Gröbel, #trauer. Trauerpraktiken auf Instagram, religionsförmige Sprachgebrauchsmuster und eschatologische Nähen, in: Birgit Weyel/Lea Stolz (Eds.), Öffentlich Pfarrer:in sein. Mediale Formatierungen religiöser Kommunikation, 2024.
- Christa Dürscheid/Matthias D. Wüthrich, „Möge der Himmel die schönste deiner Wohnungen sein." Linguistische und theologische Betrachtungen zum Konzept *Himmel*, in: Karina Frick/Lea Gröbel/Christina Siever (Eds.), Tod und Trauer: digital – analog, 2024.

Further articles and books are in preparation.

Further information on our project:

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