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TRAILER: ABSTRACT

For many Christians, watching films and religious identity are no longer two separate entities. Although watching films is growing in popularity among Christian film viewers in the Netherlands, little research has been done towards the functions of narrative films for religious identity construction. Knowing more about the appropriation of films by Christian viewers helps to understand how they negotiate between their different roles in life, society and church.

The present research is an empirical practical theological study that explores the appropriation of narrative films by orthodox Protestant film viewers and the relationship with their religious identity. The main research question in this study is: *How do orthodox Protestant film viewers in the Netherlands appropriate the meaning of narrative films and what is the relationship between this appropriation and their religious identity?*

Over the course of the study, thirty participants watched three films over a period of three months (*Mar Adentro*, *Des hommes et des Dieux* and *Blue like jazz*). At the beginning of the research all participants were interviewed on their religious identity. After each film screening, respondents participated in either a group interview or a personal interview. Every participant thus had three personal interviews and one group interview. The interview data was enriched by a survey about their background and film viewing habits; a short survey on their first reaction after each film and a survey about their research experiences.

The results show that the function of film is especially strong in participants in the status of religious identity moratorium (RIM) and religious identity integration (RII). For those in religious identity foreclosure (RIF), the function of film is less powerful. The findings regarding the appropriation of films follows the pro-filmic theory of Martin Barker remarkably well: viewers that are enthusiastic about the films are able to step into the role of the implied audience and succeed in relating the fictional universe to everyday life. They evaluate the films on a dogmatic, ethical and aesthetical level, thereby allowing the film to give narrative space to see how-it-could-be-otherwise. The main function can be summarised as film-as-parable.

The implications of the results are explored in a dramatic practical theology of the 21st century for the Christian church, a public theology and religious education. In this dramatic theology, film can take up its role as parable: a powerful source for theology and religious identity construction.