

# **Jesus Christ the Healer**

## **– Religion and Health in late modern Western societies**

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### **Introduction: Relation of this class to the “Enhancing Life Project”**

The class “Jesus Christ the Healer – Religion and Health in late modern Western societies” covers a vital part of the research which stands in the background of my contribution to the “Enhancing Life Project”. My contribution is entitled “Jesus Christ, life-enhancing Healer and Physician – towards and intercultural Christology of Health for technologically developed societies on the West”. My contribution enriches the “Enhancing Life Project” in that it explores one of the most pressing topics of Western societies – health.

During my research on the theme, two aspects became clear to me. First, health is a decisive goal and value in the life of many people in our contemporary societies. Accordingly, many people try to enhance their life by becoming healthier. Two, every understanding of health is to a large degree determined by the values and worldviews of those who hold it. Health is much less defined by biostatistical means than by a cultural-religious framework. Thus, our contemporary understanding of health which is of such decisive importance for many people is itself determined by the societies we live in. Accordingly, in our late-capitalistic, output-oriented societies, health is defined as bodily fitness, and people spend a lot of effort and money in order to improve their fitness. One of my contributions to the “Enhancing Life Project” consists in criticizing the totalizing tendencies of health as bodily fitness and to develop alternative understandings of health. In the Christian tradition and in the Bible especially, those are called healthy who are in the right relationship to God and to other human beings. The healings of Jesus Christ rather restore broken relationships than broken legs.

### **Structure of the class**

The class (which I teach in summer term 2016) is a compact course (Kompaktseminar). That is, we do not meet on a weekly basis, but twice for a day and a half. During the first part of the compact course it is the very aim to gain a deeper understanding of different definitions of health both from our contemporary understandings and from the Biblical literature. This prepares the students to attend the conference on “Jesus Christ, Healer and Savior: Areas of conflict in intercultural perspective”. The organization of the conference is part of my contribution to the Enhancing Life Project. After the conference and as a second part of the class, the students decided to concentrate on one dimension of health especially: mental health. For this they will read and discuss one of the most important theological texts on the theme, the book by John Swinton, *From bethlam to Shalom*.

## **I. First Part of the Class: Exploring different understandings of Health**

**03.06.2016, 4-6pm**

### **Introduction, and: What is Health I? Definitions and Models**

Almut Caspary, In Good Health. Philosophical-Theological Analysis of the Concept of Health in Contemporary Medical Ethics, Stuttgart 2010; S. 140-146 (Boorse: das biostatistische Modell); S. 146-152 (Engelhardt: Gesundheit und Kultur); S. 153-157 (Nordenfelt: Der Patient als Agent)

**04.06.2016**

### **In the morning:**

#### **9-10.30am: What is Health II?**

-Hans-Martin Rieger, Gesundheit. Erkundungen zu einem menschenangemessenen Konzept, Leipzig 2013, S. 147-160

-Caspary, In Good Health, S. 165-170 (Engelhardt: Spiritual Health)

-Michael Dörnemann, Christus medicus. Ein Christustitel in der frühen Kirche

#### **11h-12.30h am: Jesus, the foreign Healer**

Wolfgang Stegemann, Dekonstruktion des rationalistischen Wunderbegriffs. Plädoyer für eine kulturanthropologische Deutung der Wundergeschichten

### **In the afternoon:**

#### **2-3.30pm: God and sickness**

Günter Thomas: Krankheit im Horizont der Lebendigkeit Gottes, in: ders., Krankheitsdeutungen in der postsäkularen Gesellschaft, S. 503-525

#### **3.45-5.15pm: Healing as terror? Perspectives of human beings with disabilities.**

Susanne Krahe/Ulrike Metternich, Kraft oder Kränkung – Heilungsgeschichten im Neuen Testament kontrovers diskutiert, in: I. Falk (Hg.), So ist mein Leib. Alter, Krankheit, Behinderung – feministisch-theologische Anstöße, 2012, S. 25-44

## **II. Conference „Jesus Christ, Healer and Savior: Areas of Conflict in intercultural perspectives“ (24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of June)**

(The plan of the conference is attached as a separated file)

## **III. Second Part of the Class: Mental Health in a Christian Perspective: Jesus brings Shalomic Friendship**

**02.07.2016, 4-6pm and 03.07.2016, 10am-5pm:** Discussion of John Swinton, From Bethlam to Shalom. Towards a practical theology of human nature, interpersonal relationships, and mental health care, Boston 2000.