

The Life Enhancing Mission of the Christian Churches

Günter Thomas / Ruhr-University Bochum / Faculty for Protestant Theology

(in cooperation with Heike Springhart and Markus Höfner)

Rationale of the Seminar

From early times, the Christian churches claimed to care for human life, even though there was a remarkably wide variety of emphases. Be it the ‘enhancement of life’ through access to an afterlife by faith, be it the withdrawal from environments considered to be destructive for life or be it the care for the sick and the imprisoned – the Christian faith encompasses a thick notion of life and its enhancement. Hopes for an afterlife, the nourishing of a personal and communal spiritual life, as well as the care for the bodily life through hospitals, not only address different dimensions of life, but also fields of enhancement.

This complex relation between the churches’ mission, their understanding of life and their imaginations of enhancement can be analyzed with different foci. One could concentrate on the understanding of the self and its transformation. In addition, the eschatological imaginations of the Christian traditions could be investigated with respect to the visions of a better and thoroughly transformed – eschatologically enhanced – life. What could be also the focus is the churches’ relation to other institutions and their attempts to enhance life, i.e. scientific progress or technological innovation. Vis-à-vis such approaches the seminar will focus on the specific understanding of enhancement which is embedded in the churches’ mission to the world. How did the Churches understand their place in the society and culture and how did they want to improve this life? What had been and what are still today guiding imaginaries of the relation between Church, world, and the betterment of the world?

Regardless of how we today evaluate and judge past and present understandings of the churches’ relation to their society and culture they live in – in order to understand the churches’ thinking and action one needs to see how they as citizens of the heavenly city claim to make this earth a better place to live. The theological strategies behind this claim to enhance life will be the object of analysis. The particular hermeneutical perspective of the Seminar will be primarily informed by Protestantism.

The course is designed as an advanced seminar. The amount of reading will be adjusted to the respective system of workload-creditpoints. It will address scholars in religious studies, sociology of religion, philosophy of religion, and theology.

1. Exegetical and Historical Orientations

- Hanson, Paul D. *The People Called. The Growth of Community in the Bible*. 1st ed. ed. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986.
- Roloff, Jürgen. *Die Kirche im Neuen Testament*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1993.

2. Crucial Decisions for the Western Churches

- Augustine, and Marcus Dods. *The City of God*. Hendrickson Publishers ed. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009.
- Dodaro, Robert. *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine*. Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Duchrow, Ulrich. *Christenheit Und Weltverantwortung*. Stuttgart,: E. Klett, 1970.

3. Justification and the Freedom to serve

- Luther, Martin. *The Freedom of a Christian. Translated and Introduced by Mark D. Tranvik*. Luther Study Edition. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008.
- Duchrow, Ulrich. *Christenheit Und Weltverantwortung*. Stuttgart,: E. Klett, 1970.
- Mantey, Volker. *Zwei Schwerter - Zwei Reiche. Martin Luthers Zwei-Reiche-Lehre Vor Ihrem Spätmittelalterlichen Hintergrund* [in ger]. Spätmittelalter Und Reformation. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005.
- Jüngel, Eberhard. "Zwei Schwerter - Zwei Reiche: Die Trennung Der Mächte in Der Reformation." *Theologie und Glaube* 90, no. 1 (2000): 146-66.
- Sauter, Gerhard, and Johannes Haun. *Zur Zwei-Reiche-Lehre Luthers*. Theologische Bücherei. München: Kaiser, 1973.

4. The Expansion of the Church in the Emerging Modernity

- Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *The Christian Faith*. Translated by James S. Stewart and H. R. Mackintosh. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999.
- Brandt, James M. *All Things New : Reform of Church and Society in Schleiermacher's Christian Ethics*. Columbia Series in Reformed Theology. 1st ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.
- Weirich, Adele. *Die Kirche in Der Glaubenslehre Friedrich Schleiermachers*. Europäische Hochschulschriften Reihe Xxiii, Theologie,. Frankfurt am Main ; New York: P. Lang, 1990.
- Werries, Holger. *Alles Handeln ein Handeln der Kirche : Schleiermachers Ekklesiologie als Christologie*. Marburger Theologische Studien. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2012.

5. Progress and Process of Culture and Religion

- Ritschl, Albrecht Benjamin. *Three Essays: Theology and Metaphysics - "Prolegomena" to the History of Pietism - Instruction in the Christian Religion*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972.
- Walther, Christian. *Typen Des Reich-Gottes-Verständnisses. Studien zur Eschatologie und Ethik im 19. Jahrhundert*. München: Kaiser, 1961.

Schäfer, Rolf. *Albrecht Ritschl : Vorlesung "Theologische Ethik"*. Arbeiten Zur Kirchengeschichte,. Berlin ; New York: De Gruyter, 2007.
———. *Ritschl. Grundlinien Eines fast verschollenen dogmatischen Systems*. Tübingen: Mohr, 1968. Habilitationsschrift.

6. Differentiation of Church, Sect and Mysticism

Troeltsch, Ernst. *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*. Library of Theological Ethics. 2 vols. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992.
Molendijk, Arie L. *Zwischen Theologie und Soziologie. Ernst Troeltschs Typen der christlichen Gemeinschaftsbildung: Kirche, Sekte, Mystik*. Troeltsch-Studien. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1996.

7. Christ in Society – and the Role of the Church

Barth, Karl. "Der Christ in Der Gesellschaft (1919)." In *Anfänge der Dialektischen Theologie. Teil 1*, edited by Jürgen Moltmann, 3-37. München: Kaiser, 1962.
Marquardt, Friedrich-Wilhelm. *Der Christ in der Gesellschaft, 1919-1979 : Geschichte, Analysen Und Aktuelle Bedeutung Von Karl Barths Tambacher Vortrag*. Theologische Existenz Heute. München: Kaiser, 1980.
Link, Christian. "Bleibende Einsichten Von Tambach." In *Karl Barth in Deutschland (1921-1935) : Aufbruch - Klärung - Widerstand* edited by Michael Trowitzsch, Christian Link and Michael Beintker, 333-46. Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2005.
Ragaz, Leonhard. *Eingriffe Ins Zeitgeschehen. Reich Gottes Und Politik. Texte von 1900-1945*. Luzern: Edition Exodus, 1995.

8. The Church confronting modern Society: “Church for the others”

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Ethics [in Translated from the German.]*. Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.
———. "Fanø Theses, Papers and Address. The Church and the People of the World." In *The Bonhoeffer Reader*, edited by Clifford J. Green and Michael P. Dejonge, 393-97. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013.
———. *Letters and Papers from Prison (Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works. Vol. 8)*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010.
Tietz, Christiane. "'The Church Is the Limit of Politics:' Bonhoeffer on the Political Task of the Church." *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 60, no. 1-2 (2006): 23-36.
Krötke, Wolf. "'Teilnehmen Am Leiden Gottes'. Zu Dietrich Bonhoeffers Verständnis Eines »Religionslosen Christentums«." In *Barmen - Barth - Bonhoeffer Beiträge Zu Einer Zeitgemäßen Christozentrischen Theologie*, 357-80. Bielefeld: Luther-Verl., 2009.

9. The Church as Messianic and Progressive Community

Moltmann, Jürgen. *The Church in the Power of the Spirit a Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993.
———. *Ethics of Hope [in Translated from the German.]*. 1st Fortress Press ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012.

- . *God for a Secular Society : The Public Relevance of Theology*. 1st Fortress Press ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999.
- . *Politische Theologie - Politische Ethik*. München / Mainz: Kaiser; Grünewald, 1984.
- Paeth, Scott. *Exodus Church and Civil Society : Public Theology and Social Theory in the Work of Jürgen Moltmann*. Ashgate New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology, and Biblical Studies. Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008.

10. Openess through Closure? Church and World in a communitarian Framework

- Hauerwas, Stanley, and William H. Willimon. *Resident Aliens. Life in the Christian Colony. A Provocative Christian Assessment of Culture and Ministry for the People Who Know That Something Is Wrong* [in eng]. 6. Aufl. ed. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991.
- Rasmusson, Arne. *The Church as Polis. From Political Theology to Theological Politics as Exemplified by Jürgen Moltmann and Stanley Hauerwas* [in eng]. Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Pr., 1995.

11. Diaconia as Ecclesial Presence in the Modern Society

- Schäfer, Gerhard Karl, and Theodor Strohm, eds. *Diakonie, Biblische Grundlagen und Orientierungen. Ein Arbeitsbuch zur Theologischen Verständigung über den diakonischen Auftrag*. Heidelberg: Heidelberger Verlagsanstalt, 1990.
- Wood, Richard L. "Taming Prophetic Religion? Faith-Based Activism and Welfare Provision." *International Journal of Public Theology* 3, no. 1 (2009): 78-95.
- Wuthnow, Robert. *Saving America? : Faith-Based Services and the Future of Civil Society*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Wuthnow, Robert, and John Hyde Evans. *The Quiet Hand of God : Faith-Based Activism and the Public Role of Mainline Protestantism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
- Bane, Mary Jo, Brent Coffin, and Ronald F. Thiemann. *Who Will Provide? : The Changing Role of Religion in American Social Welfare*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2000.
- Daly, Lew. *God's Economy : Faith-Based Initiatives and the Caring State*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

12. Public Theology or the Church as a Moral Agency?

- Volf, Miroslav. "Christliche Identität Und Differenz : Zur Eigenart Der Christlichen Präsenz in Den Modernen Gesellschaften." *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 92, no. 3 (1995): 357-75.
- Thomas, Günter. "Care, Stone, and Law as Three Forms of Non-Discursive Public Theology." In *Contextuality and Intercontextuality in Public Theology*, edited by Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, Floria Höhne and Tobias Reitmeier, 301-20. Zürich / Münster: LIT, 2013.
- Breitenberg, E. Harold, Jr. "What Is Public Theology?". In *Public Theology for a Global Society*, 3-17. Grand Rapids, Mich: William B Eerdmans, 2010.
- Browning, Don S., and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, eds. *Habermas, Modernity, and Public Theology*. New York: Crossroad, 1992.
- Joas, Hans. *Kirche Als Moralagentur?* München: Kösel, 2016.