

Wolfram Kinzig | Julia Winnebeck (Hrsg./Eds.)

# Glaube und Theologie

Reformatorsche Grundeinsichten  
in der ökumenischen Diskussion

# Faith and Theology

Basic Insights of the Reformation in Ecumenical Debate



VERÖFFENTLICHUNGEN DER  
WISSENSCHAFTLICHEN GESELLSCHAFT FÜR THEOLOGIE



GLAUBE UND THEOLOGIE | FAITH AND THEOLOGY

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# PREFACE

Every conference has its history. The history of this conference began in Heidelberg in 2013 when, at its annual meeting, the Evangelisch-theologischer Fakultätentag (the Association of Faculties and Institutes of Protestant Theology in Germany) decided to organize a conference on the occasion of the four-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation. The idea was to analyze the achievement, the impact, and the shortcomings of Protestant theology, as it is taught in Germany today. For that purpose, it was envisaged to invite leading scholars both from Germany and from abroad to the cradle of the Reformation in Wittenberg in order jointly to discuss the theme of the conference.

It quickly became clear that, because of limited resources, the chairmen of the Association (2013-2015: Prof. Dr. Michael Moxter, Hamburg, and Prof. Dr. Wolfram Kinzig; 2015-2017: Prof. Dr. Wolfram Kinzig and Prof. Dr. Bernd Schröder, Göttingen) would be unable to organize such a meeting without support from other organisations. At this point we approached the *Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft für Theologie*, the largest association of scholars in Protestant theology in Europe, and the *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD)* in order to seek their help. In addition, we asked the member faculties of the *Fakultätentag* to send us suggestions for speakers from abroad and, in addition, to sponsor the speakers they had suggested. Numerous suggestions and offers of support were received by the chairmen such that, in the end, the conference was jointly funded and organized by the *Fakultätentag*, the *Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft*, and the *EKD*. A committee was set up which met regularly over a period of more than three years to agree on the precise wording of the conference theme and to finalize the details of the programme. We are particularly grateful to the members of this committee: the former chairman of the *Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft*, Prof. Dr. h.c. Michael Meyer-Blanck (Bonn), Vizepräsident Dr. Thies Gundlach, the Oberkirchenrätinnen Dr. Birgit Sandler-Koschel, Prof. Dr. Hiltrun Keßler and her successor Dr. Christiane de Vos (all at the *EKD*), Dr. Dietrich Werner (*Brot für die Welt*), and, finally, Dr. Michael Biehl (*Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland*). In addition, we received logistical support from the Faculty of Theology at the Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg (Prof. Dr. Jörg Dierken, Prof. Dr. Dirk Evers, Prof. Dr. Ernst-Joachim Waschke, PD Dr. Christian Senkel, and Dr. Hagen Findeis).

All scholars accepted their invitations at once and all but one, graciously sent us their contributions immediately after the conference. In addition, we are

grateful to the numerous chairpersons of the individual sessions of the conference and to the officiants at morning prayer in the Schlosskirche, Dr. Hanna Kasparick and PD Dr. Johannes Block.

The *Evangelische Landeskirche in Mitteldeutschland*, on whose territory Wittenberg is situated, kindly hosted a lavish reception for which we are indebted, in particular, to its bishop, Ilse Junkermann, who also addressed the conference.

The best location in Wittenberg to house such a large gathering is the LEUCOREA Foundation with its splendid setting in the *Fridericianum*, the buildings of the former university. We are grateful to Dr. Marianne Schröter and her team for making us feel welcome and providing us with not only spiritual but also material nourishment.

The work was co-ordinated by a team at the Chair of Church History (Patristics) at the Evangelisch-theologische Fakultät, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, Bonn: Christiane Edelmann was responsible for the overall organization of the conference. She was assisted by Anke Grimm, Dr. Claudia Kampmann, Dr. Vera von der Osten-Sacken, and Charlotte Loesch. Dr. Matthew Robinson kindly revised all English texts by non-native speakers. Finally, in the preparation of this conference volume, we received considerable help from Nathalie Thies (Bonn) and the production team at the Evangelische Verlagsanstalt in Leipzig, headed by Dr. Annette Weidhas.

All bibliographical abbreviations according to SIEGFRIED SCHWERTNER: *IATG<sup>3</sup>-Internationales Abkürzungsverzeichnis für Theologie und Grenzgebiete/International Glossary of Abbreviations for Theology and Related Subjects*, Berlin/Boston 2014.

Bonn, September 2018

Wolfram Kinzig  
Julia Winnebeck

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Evangelisch-Theologischer Fakultätentag,  
Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft für Theologie  
und  
Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland

**Glaube und Theologie. | Faith and Theology:  
Reformatatorische | Basic Insights  
Grundeinsichten in der | of the Reformation  
ökumenischen | in Ecumenical  
Diskussion | Debate**

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**Konferenz | Conference  
im Rahmen des | on the occasion of the  
Reformationsjubiläums | 2017 Reformation Anniversary  
vom 10. bis 12. Oktober 2017 | October 10-12, 2017  
in Lutherstadt Wittenberg | Lutherstadt Wittenberg**

**Dienstag** | **Tuesday**  
**10. Oktober 2017** | **October 10, 2017**

**Begrüßung** | **Welcome**  
14:00 - 14:30 Uhr | 2.00 - 2.30 p.m.

Prof. Dr. Wolfram Kinzig (Bonn)  
Vorsitzender | Chairman  
Evangelisch-Theologischer Fakultätentag

Prof. Dr. Michael Meyer-Blanck (Bonn)  
Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft für Theologie

Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Gräß-Schmidt (Tübingen)  
Mitglied des Rates der EKD |  
Member of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany

Prof. Dr. Ernst-Joachim Waschke (Wittenberg)  
Vorsitzender | Chairman  
Stiftung Leucorea

**Vorträge** | **Lectures**  
14:30 - 16:00 Uhr | 2.30 - 4.00 p.m.

**Glaube ohne Theologie –  
Theologie ohne Glaube?**

**Reformatorsche Erkundungen im  
ökumenischen Horizont**

**Faith without Theology –  
Theology without Faith?**

**Exploring the Reformation in  
Ecumenical Context**

14:30 - 15:15 Uhr | 2.30 - 3.15 p.m.  
Prof. Dr. Ingolf Dalferth (Claremont):  
Die Freiheit des Glaubens im Denken der Theologie

15:15 - 16:00 Uhr | 3.15 - 4.00 p.m.  
Prof. Dr. Christine Helmer (Evanston):  
Verkörperter Glaube

Moderation | Chair: Prof. Dr. Wolfram Kinzig (Bonn)

*Kaffeepause | Coffee break*

**Dienstag** | **Tuesday**  
**10. Oktober 2017** | **October 10, 2017**

**Sektionsvorträge**

16:30 - 18:00 Uhr

**Group Sessions**

4.30 - 6.00 p.m.

**Glaube und Theologie im Kontext****Contextualizing Faith and Theology**

## Gruppe 1 | Group 1

Indien | India: Prof. Dr. Johnson Thomaskutty (Pune)

Kolumbien | Colombia: Prof. Dr. Christopher Hays (Medellín)

Moderation | Chair: Prof. Dr. Ulrich Volp (Mainz)

## Gruppe 2 | Group 2

Brasilien | Brazil: Prof. Dr. Luís Dreher (Juiz de Fora)

Australien | Australia: Prof. Dr. Monica J. Melanchthon (Melbourne)

Moderation | Chair: Prof. Dr. Daniel Cyranka (Halle)

## Gruppe 3 | Group 3

Finnland | Finland: Prof. Dr. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (Helsinki / Los Angeles)

Polen | Poland: Prof. Dr. Bogusław Milerski (Warschau | Warsaw)

Moderation | Chair: Prof. Dr. Barbara Müller (Hamburg)

## Gruppe 4 | Group 4

Ghana | Ghana: Dr. Setri Nyomi (Accra)

USA | USA: Prof. Dr. Robert Kolb (St. Louis)

Moderation | Chair: Prof. Dr. Christoph Strohm (Heidelberg)

## Gruppe 5 | Group 5

Ungarn | Hungary: Prof. Dr. Sándor Fazakas (Debrecen)

Indonesien | Indonesia: Dr. Henriette Hutabarat-Lebang (Jakarta)

Moderation | Chair: Prof. Dr. Ute Gause (Bochum)

## Gruppe 6 | Group 6

Kanada | Canada: Prof. Dr. Douglas Shantz (Calgary)

Italien | Italy: Prof. Dr. Lothar Vogel (Rom | Rome)

Moderation | Chair: Prof. Dr. Konrad Schmid (Zürich | Zurich)

**Empfang der | Reception hosted by**  
**Evangelischen Landeskirche in Mitteldeutschland**

18:30 Uhr | 6.30 p.m.

Best Western Hotel Lutherstadt Wittenberg

**Mittwoch** | **Wednesday**  
**11. Oktober 2017** | **October 11, 2017**

**Andacht** | **Morning Prayer**  
08:30 Uhr | 8:30 a.m.

Schlosskirche Wittenberg

Liturgin | Officiant

**Dr. Hanna Kasparick**

Direktorin des | Head of the  
Ev. Predigerseminars Wittenberg | Preachers' Seminary Wittenberg

**Vorträge** | **Lectures**

09:15 - 12:30 Uhr | 9.15 a.m. - 12.30 p.m.

**Glaube, Theologie** | **Faith, Theology,**  
**und Schriftauslegung** | **and Exegesis of Scripture**

09:15 - 10:00 Uhr | 9.15 - 10.00 a.m.

Prof. Dr. Konrad Schmid (Zürich | Zurich):

Wieviel Bibelkritik braucht der Protestantismus?

Eine Bilanz und ein Ausblick nach 500 Jahren Reformation  
und nach 250 Jahren historisch-kritischer Exegese

10:00 - 10:45 Uhr | 10.00 - 10.45 a.m.

Prof. Dr. Gert J. Steyn (Ewersbach / Pretoria)

Faith and Perseverance: The Cyclical Nature of Hebrews 11

*Kaffeepause | Coffee break*

11:15 - 12:00 Uhr | 11.15 a.m. - 12.00 p.m.

Prof. Dr. Mark W. Elliott (St. Andrews):

Confessional Exegesis: Widening and Deepening  
the Approach to Biblical Texts

12:00 - 12:30 Uhr | 12.00 p.m. - 12.30 p.m.

Diskussion | Discussion

Moderation | Chair: OKRin Dr. Christiane de Vos (EKD)

*Mittagessen | Lunch*

<b>Mittwoch</b> 11. Oktober 2017	<b>Wednesday</b> October 11, 2017
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<b>Vorträge</b> 14:15 - 16:00 Uhr <b>Glaube, Theologie und menschliches Handeln</b>	<b>Lectures</b> 2.15 - 4.00 p.m. <b>Faith, Theology, and Human Action</b>
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14:15 - 15:00 Uhr | 2.15 - 3.00 p.m.

Prof. Dr. Irene Dingel (Mainz):

„Gute Ordnung“ – Ordnungsmodelle der Reformation und ihre Wirkung

15:00 - 15:45 Uhr | 3.00 - 3.45 p.m.

Prof. Dr. Isolde Karle (Bochum):

Vom Himmel auf die Erde – Glaube als Weltbejahung

15:45 - 16:00 Uhr | 3.45- 4.00 p.m.

Diskussion | Discussion

Moderation | Chair: Prof. Dr. Michael Meyer-Blanck (Bonn)

*Kaffeepause | Coffee break*

<b>Besichtigungsprogramm</b> 16:30 - 18:00 Uhr	<b>Guided Tours</b> 4.30 - 6.00 p.m.
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<b>Empfang und festliches Abendessen</b> 19:00 Uhr Stadthaus Wittenberg	<b>Reception and Dinner</b> 7.00 p.m.
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Tischrede | After-dinner speech

**Prof. Dr. Markus Gabriel (Bonn)**

Lehrstuhl für Erkenntnistheorie, Philosophie der Neuzeit und Gegenwart	Chair in Epistemology, Modern and Contemporary Philosophy
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Moderation | Chair: Prof. Dr. Bernd Schröder (Göttingen)

**Donnerstag** | **Thursday**  
**12. Oktober 2017** | **October 12, 2017**

**Andacht** | **Morning Prayer**  
08:30 Uhr | 8:30 a.m.

Schlosskirche Wittenberg

Liturg | Officiant

**PD Dr. Johannes Block**

Stadtpfarrer der | City Pastor  
Stadtkirche Wittenberg | of Wittenberg

**Vorträge** | **Lectures**

09:15 - 12:30 Uhr | 9.15 a.m. - 12.30 p.m.

**Glaube, Theologie und Kirche –** | **Faith, Theology, and the Church –**  
**Anfragen aus der Ökumene** | **Ecumenical Perspectives**

09:15 - 10:00 Uhr | 9.15 - 10.00 a.m.

Prof. Dr. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm

Landesbischof von Bayern und Vorsitzender des Rates der EKD |

Bishop of the Evangelical Church of Bavaria and Chairman of the EKD

10:00 - 10:45 Uhr | 10.00 - 10.45 a.m.

Dr. Heiner Koch

Erzbischof von Berlin | Archbishop of Berlin

*Kaffeepause* | *Coffee break*

11:15 - 12:00 Uhr | 11.15 a.m. - 12.00 p.m.

Nicholas Baines

Bischof von Leeds | Bishop of Leeds

Moderation | Chair: Prof. Dr. Michael Meyer-Blanck (Bonn)

**Schlussdiskussion** | **Panel Discussion**  
**mit den Referenten** | **with the speakers**

12:00 - 12:30 Uhr | 12.00 p.m. - 12.30 p.m.

Moderation | Chair: Prof. Dr. Wolfram Kinzig (Bonn), Prof. Dr. Michael Meyer-Blanck (Bonn)

*Mittagessen* | *Lunch*

# INTRODUCTION

## I. THE THEME OF THE CONFERENCE: INTRODUCTORY REFLECTIONS<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1. *Faith and theology*

*Sola fide* is arguably one of the most important tenets of the Reformation. ‘Through faith alone’ means, first of all, that humans obtain divine justice and salvation only by believing in that reconciliation which God has offered us in Christ. As such *sola fide* was also a battle-cry describing what, in the eyes of the Reformers, Christianity was not. In their view, Christianity was *not* about obtaining divine justice by performing good works. Furthermore, Christianity was *not* a system of morality based on a traditional theology according to which good works could, as it were, be traded like economic goods and wares. Thus, the Church could *not*, as medieval theology had taught, draw on a treasury of merit, which had been accumulated by Christ and the saints, and sell indulgences which served to reduce the amount of punishment sinners had to endure.

However, although the Reformers were critical of traditional theology, *sola fide* was itself not a catchphrase which was intended to dispense with theology altogether. On the contrary, it was a result of intense theological reflection. In fact, the theology of the early Reformers initiated a fundamental change in the way theology was taught at universities.<sup>2</sup> It led to the development of a new Scripture-based academic theology and drew particular attention to the relationship between faith and theology, with theology being the systematic reflection of the nature of faith, its basis, and its consequences. The new theology suggested new answers to old problems and in so doing has influenced the formation of modern culture and society in many ways. On the occasion of the anniversary of the Reformation, the organizers of the conference thought it fitting, above all, to acknowledge the achievements of academic theology in the Reformers’ tradition.

In order to understand the particular situation of Protestant theology in Germany today better, it might be helpful to outline its present institutional

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<sup>1</sup> Some sections of this paper are based on the letter of invitation to the conference which was revised several times by members of the preparatory group (see Preface). Michael Meyer-Blanck suggested that the conference concentrate on the relationship between theology and faith.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. also KAUFMANN 2017.

setup, because it is a direct result of Reformation impulses and, at the same time, differs from many other countries.

### 1.2. *Theology and its institutions in German academe*

In Germany, academic theology is predominantly taught at state universities.<sup>3</sup> As such it operates under the same conditions as all other academic disciplines (including the participation in university administration, the acquisition of outside funding etc.). In the framework of German university law, this also means that professors of theology are civil servants who are, by and large, employed by the respective *Land*, or state. A professor of theology, just like any other professor, is usually tenured and cannot simply be dismissed. (In return, he is not allowed to go on strike.) He or she is expected to do research and to teach a certain number of hours per week. Therefore, the German taxpayers, both Christian and non-Christian, finance university education of students of theology, who then usually go on either to train for the ministry or the priesthood or for teaching religious education at school. This is based on the dominant view that 'religious communities' (*Religionsgesellschaften*, as they are called in the German constitution, the *Grundgesetz* or 'Basic Law') form an integral part of the German state and of German society and culture and as such make substantial contributions to their functioning and welfare. Also for this reason, the religious communities of Germany receive public funding in various ways. In comparison to other countries which are marked by a strict separation of state and Church and in which research and teaching of academic theology is confined to ecclesial or private institutions, theology in Germany is, no doubt, in a privileged position.

Furthermore, it is organized according to denominational affiliation. In Germany one finds separate faculties and institutes of Protestant and of Roman-Catholic theology and also departments of Old Catholic and of Orthodox theology, respectively. As regards *Protestant* theology, 'denominational' means that its teaching staff is, by and large, Protestant and that its 'denominational point of reference', so to speak, is the *Landeskirche* (regional church) on whose territory the respective faculty or institute is located—this is, again, a feature of Christianity peculiar to Germany which, ultimately, derives from the complex structure of the Holy Roman Empire and the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* of the Peace of Augsburg of 1555. In legal terms this means that the respective *Landeskirche* has to give its consent to any appointment to a professorship in theology and that, conversely, the appointees also act as examiners in the final examinations in theology for prospective pastors which are organized by the *Landeskirchen*. It is important to remember that for this reason the 'denominational point of reference' of most Protestant theologians in Germany does not include those groups which must also be called Protestant but which are not organized in *Landeskirchen*, i.e. the so-called 'free churches' such as Mennon-

<sup>3</sup> In addition, there are two ecclesiastical colleges (*Kirchliche Hochschulen* Wuppertal/Bethel and Neuendettelsau) and a small number of Evangelical seminaries.

ites, Baptists, Methodists, Pentecostals, and others. As a result, academic theology in Germany finds it often difficult to cover the entire spectrum of Protestant communities in its teaching and research.

Given this particular structure, the relationship of academic theology to the *Landeskirchen* is characterized by a number of opportunities and challenges. As I said, by comparison German Protestant theology is, by and large, in a comfortable position, not only with regard to the number of academic staff, but also with regard to the financial situation of its home institutions. In Europe alone there are numerous countries in which the situation is quite different. Another favourable circumstance is the fact that, institutionally speaking, Protestant theology in Germany depends to a much lesser degree on the churches than elsewhere and can, therefore, speak and act much more independently from outside interference. In their capacity as university teachers, professors of theology are covered by article 5, paragraph 3 of the German Basic Law which guarantees the freedom of research and teaching. In the case of theology, this freedom is, in principle, limited by the right of the religious communities to regulate their own affairs, but in practice, a university theologian would have to be consistently engaged in research and teaching deemed to be majorly problematic before the churches would take any kind of action. (This is different in the faculties of Catholic theology where, over the last decades, Rome has repeatedly intervened as in the famous cases of Hans Küng and Eugen Drewermann.)

As a result, Protestant theology in Germany is in a strangely ambivalent position: it serves the Church, but may also act as its critical corrective. To the extent that university professors in theology are, in their majority, civil servants, they are not subject to directives by the churches. However, this also constitutes a particular intellectual challenge: in Germany, theology constantly engages in critical discourse with the other academic disciplines, not least in order to prove that it is still entitled to its place in academe. It is a positive result of this specific situation that German theology is, by and large, non-sectarian, and its representatives are marked by a particular ethos: they see themselves as ‘academics’, on a par with scholars in literary studies or genetics. Therefore, they quite often express themselves with surprising frankness vis-à-vis statements published or measures taken by the churches, as could again be seen in the context of the Reformation Anniversary in 2017.<sup>4</sup>

But this is only one side of the coin. In addition to the constitution, the relationship between state and church is regulated by particular treaties which also cover university theology and indeed guarantee their very existence.<sup>5</sup> Without the churches which, time and again, remind the state of its duties as laid down in these documents there would be much less and in many places perhaps even no academic theology. Therefore, theology must take care that it preserves a productive relationship with the churches.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. e.g. KAMANN 2017.

<sup>5</sup> For further details cf. KINZIG 2009.

Furthermore, academic theology depends on the churches also with regard to its core business, i.e. theology itself, if it is true that here on earth the invisible Church is hidden in the visible churches. The communion of saints is constituted and nourished by the proclamation of the Gospel and the distribution of the sacraments which, in turn, requires an ecclesial organization. Theology exists only because there is a Church. Thus, the Church and its existence are an indispensable theme of theology. Conversely, the *Landeskirchen* need academic theology, not only in order to train their pastors, but also, as Schleiermacher rightly saw two centuries ago, because governance of the church without theology is impossible.

Hence the relationship between the German Protestant churches and academic theology is marked both by mutual support and by critical opposition. It is, therefore, sometimes difficult on both sides to find the right balance between consensus and criticism in such a way that there is mutual intellectual and spiritual stimulation. To put it rather bluntly: too much harmony and affirmation in dealing with each other may lead to complacency and rigidity, while too much criticism and dispute may cause mutual alienation and a weakening of both intellect and institution. In order to keep the right balance theologians and church officials tend to invest a considerable amount of energy in discussing matters of mutual concern in a great variety of assemblies and committees. For all involved this is rather time-consuming and not particularly exciting. Yet it is, ultimately, necessary because these long debates help to avoid misunderstandings and to find joint solutions for challenges they are facing.

### 1.3. *New challenges*<sup>6</sup>

Over the past decades, these challenges have markedly increased. Academic theology and the established churches have come under considerable pressure. As in much of Europe and North America, the German churches have lost many members in recent years. At the end of 2017, 57.3 percent of Germans belonged to one of the Protestant *Landeskirchen* (26.1 percent) or to the Roman Catholic Church (28.3 percent; 2.9 percent others).<sup>7</sup> By comparison, in 1990, right after reunification, the figure was 72.3 percent.<sup>8</sup> Much of this loss is due to demographic changes; in addition, church membership is very unevenly distributed within Germany, former East Germany being one of the most secular regions in Europe.

<sup>6</sup> For what follows cf. also KINZIG 2017/KINZIG 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (ed.), *Gezählt 2018: Zahlen und Fakten zum kirchlichen Leben*, Hannover 2018, 4; URL <[https://archiv.ekd.de/download/broschuere\\_2018\\_internet.pdf](https://archiv.ekd.de/download/broschuere_2018_internet.pdf)> (17/08/2018).

<sup>8</sup> Joachim Eicken/Ansgar Schmitz-Veltin, 'Die Entwicklung der Kirchenmitglieder in Deutschland: Statistische Anmerkungen zu Umfang und Ursachen des Mitgliederrückgangs in den beiden christlichen Volkskirchen', *Wirtschaft und Statistik* 2010/6, 576-589, 589; URL <<https://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/WirtschaftStatistik/Gastbeitraege/EntwicklungKirchenmitglieder.pdf>> (abgerufen 17/08/2018).

While this phenomenon is extremely complex and by no means new, its consequences are serious. They are not just financial: in much of Europe and North America, the process of secularization has led to a massive decline in religious education and knowledge and—in part as a reaction to this—to a trivialization of theology in the churches and in public life. In intellectual circles both inside and outside the church, it has become fashionable to denounce academic theology as dogmatism and even obscurantism.

At the same time, one can observe a global proliferation of Evangelical and Pentecostal groups. These groups sometimes display a certain indifference towards academic theological training or even reject it altogether. This can be seen most clearly in their approach to the Bible. One of the most prominent characteristics of modern Evangelicalism is its biblicism. Many Evangelicals interpret the inspiration and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures as faithfulness to a ‘simple’ faith which seeks to take the Bible ‘literally’, searching it for directives for everyday problems. A famous example of this approach is the highly influential *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* of 1978 which insisted on the infallibility of the Holy Scriptures and, by and large, rejected modern historical-critical exegesis.<sup>9</sup>

This kind of biblicist hermeneutic is often linked with far-reaching ethical demands and obligations. Faith is, primarily, a belief in Jesus as one’s personal Lord and saviour and as such is the result of an experience of personal conversion. It manifests itself in acts of charity, above all in the support of one’s own Christian community. As a result, these groups often form close-knit communities of believers who are mutually supportive. Because of their tight social cohesion, they are able to withstand the trend towards secularization which has become characteristic of large sections of western societies.

By contrast, most traditional Reformation churches which, under the influence of the Enlightenment, were inspired by an educational optimism have hitherto favoured the autonomy of the religious individual. They have, therefore, by and large advocated a liberal Christian ethics based on individual rational choices within a wider spectrum of permissible moral options. At the same time, faith was seen both as an individual act of liberation from religious and social constraints and of trust in divine salvation. As such, religion increasingly came to be a private matter. In public, faith was displayed in the liturgical recitation of the creed, but it was not expressed in a personal manner, except, perhaps, by wearing a little cross around one’s neck. These Reformation churches are now struggling with loss of membership and the erosion of ecclesial institutions. They must, therefore, ask themselves to what extent the relationship between faith and theology as defined in the wake of the Reformation and the Enlightenment will in future continue to be religiously productive and may thus serve the churches and their congregations. At this conference, we sought to address these questions in greater detail.

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. URL <[https://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI\\_1.pdf](https://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI_1.pdf)> (14/08/2018).

#### 1.4. *Faith and theology in ecumenical dialogue*

Finally, the term ‘ecumenical’ in the conference title requires some elucidation. It is general knowledge that the Reformation has not led to a renewal of the Catholic Church along the lines which the Reformers had envisaged. It did not even produce one single Protestant Church. Instead by the end of the sixteenth century there were at least three large strands of Protestant churches (Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anglican) plus a variety of smaller ones which are often and, I believe, erroneously termed ‘radicals’. Over the next centuries it was to become ever more confusing. Preachers of Protestant extraction set out from Europe to convert the World. At the same time, persecuted Protestants emigrated to the New World and planted a colourful variety of churches which, in turn, produced ever more blossoms. According to a count of the *World Christian Encyclopedia* in 2000, there were at that time almost 9,000 Protestant denominations.<sup>10</sup> In other words, what nowadays is called by the single term ‘Protestantism’ is, in fact, a wide variety of all sorts of Christian congregations.<sup>11</sup> Some of these are in direct line with the Reformation whereas others are Protestant only in the sense that they champion an ‘evangelical’ interpretation of the Bible which neither historically nor in terms of its theological method can be seen as evolving from the Reformation.

Given the existing custom by which all of these groups are termed Protestant while, at the same time, in doctrinal matters they differ widely from each other, it might be appropriate and indeed necessary to ask whether it makes sense to speak of *Protestant* ecumenism and if so, what it is that Protestants share and other denominations do not. One common characteristic is the paramount importance of faith in all these groups: it is claimed that all believers have access to salvation through faith alone and, therefore, need no priestly mediation of any kind other than that of Christ himself.

However, in the present day it would be foolish to discuss Protestant ecumenism in isolation. The patient ecumenical dialogue over the past hundred years has shown that what binds Christians of all denominations together is far more important than what keeps them apart. As a consequence, in their commemoration of the Reformation, the *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland* has laid a particular emphasis upon including our Catholic brothers and sisters in the festivities. It has celebrated this anniversary not as an act of redrawing confessional boundaries but as an act of mutual reconciliation. During our conference, we followed this lead by considering the challenges which all Christian churches face in the modern world, regardless of their denominational background.

#### 1.5. *Three hermeneutical steps*

These considerations led us to propose that we proceed in three hermeneutical steps:

<sup>10</sup> BARRETT/KURIAN/JOHNSON 2001, vol. I, 16.

<sup>11</sup> For the problem of definition cf. e.g. MELTON 2005.

The conference aimed, first, to take stock of the world-wide impact of Protestant theology—its contents, standards, and methods—in various political, social, and religious contexts.

The conference called, secondly, to consider the legacy of the Reformation and its international reception with regard to the relationship between faith and theology. In particular, we looked at two fields which are central to the Protestant understanding of the basis and the effect of Christian faith: biblical hermeneutics and human action.

The conference discussed, thirdly, how today's Protestant theology should deal with the challenge of defending a rational reflection on faith in such a way that it can serve as a critical guide to modern devotional practice in the context of a complex society. This question was addressed in a number of papers. In addition, we set aside an entire morning to the issue of faith, theology, and the Church in the modern world by discussing it with three prominent Church leaders.

## 2. RESULTS OF THE CONFERENCE

A conference such as this, of course, never produces clear-cut results. At best, it stimulates fresh insights which nevertheless vary from listener to listener. In what follows, I would like to list some such insights from having heard and studied all papers, although not necessarily in the order they were delivered at the conference. My list is, of course, highly subjective and, therefore, in itself open to discussion.

### 2.1. *Faith without theology – theology without faith? Exploring the Reformation in ecumenical context*

The answers to our initial question as regards the present-day relationship between theology and faith were diverse. INGOLF U. DALFERTH defended a modern academic theology which meets the rational criteria and standards drawn from the Enlightenment. As such, theology and faith are not identical—rather, theology is a process of critical analysis and interpretation of a great variety of testimonies of faith. Faith is a divine gift, theology is a tough and strenuous intellectual endeavour. It draws upon a set of methods which is also used in other disciplines and which can be learned. The goal is not just to collect and to archive such testimonies of faith or, conversely, to criticize faith (although theology is also critical), but these methods serve to judge the present practice of faith by the faith proclaimed in the Gospel and thus prevent it from going astray. Conversely, Protestant theology determines what faith is as opposed to non-faith and superstition, and, for this purpose, takes recourse to the Bible.

One of the central tenets of faith as described by the Reformers is its freedom: faith is a free gift from God which is granted us without any merits on our part. As such it enables us to perform acts of charity towards our neighbours. Faith in this sense helps us to see that all phenomena of life are, in some way,

related to the presence of God. Faith is a particular mode in which we see the world. This is why *solus Deus* is at the heart of the theological endeavour. Theology is not an analysis of *religion* or of a certain religious culture, because it does not focus on the phenomena of creation. Instead it takes into account the fundamental difference between creator and creation and thus reflects upon God and the world in its entirety. As such Reformation theology is highly adaptive to all kinds of intellectual and cultural contexts. Yet in this process of adaptation it also permanently runs the risk of forgetting its fundamental principles as formulated by the Reformers. Dalferth insisted that theology must constantly refer back to these principles by deriving from the difference between creator and creation a set of distinctions that may prevent its indiscriminate amalgamation with the contexts in which it operates.

Dalferth called the most important types of theology ‘ecclesial’ (*kirchlich*), ‘academic’, and ‘societal’ (*gesellschaftsbezogen*). ‘Ecclesial’ theology needs to be practiced in a truly ecumenical framework. It must bridge frontiers without blurring ‘defensible differences’ that are theologically relevant. ‘Academic’ theology increasingly operates in an environment in which research is geared towards practical application and professional formation rather than the development of theoretical knowledge and reflection. Theology, however, insists on the exploration of the differences between conjecture, belief, and knowledge as academe’s core business. Finally, ‘societal’ theology may help to prevent the churches from simply turning into NGOs for curing the world’s ecological, economic, and social ills. For this purpose, Reformation theology in the modern world must focus on God alone by expressing the hope which informs Christian faith and life.

Whereas Dalferth insisted on the *distinction* of faith and theology and called upon theology to develop a hermeneutic of differences, CHRISTINE HELMER emphasized the conjunction ‘and’ in the conference title *Faith and Theology*. She pointed out that since the Middle Ages theology has focused on *relations*. Therefore, it was able to uncover the correspondence between logic and reality. In this vein, Luther described the causal logic of faith which represents God’s activity: it is God who, through faith, gives life to humans who were dead. However, as a result of a complex history of theology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries faith is no longer, as in Luther, primarily understood as personal trust in God, but as something which defines humans in their totality while, at the same time, remaining hidden from them. The experience of justification is hidden from those that are justified and removed from their actual experience. Helmer called upon theologians to abandon this modern notion of faith which, in her view, overrates its importance. Instead faith needs to be reconnected with the other theological virtues love and hope. She suggested that theology develop a new notion of Christian life based on these theological virtues. Faith may then become ‘embodied faith’.

Although at first it may appear that Dalferth’s and Helmer’s approaches are fundamentally different from each other, I wonder to what extent there is indeed

a tension between their descriptions of the relationship between theology and faith. I suspect that Dalferth would not contradict Helmer's attempt to reclaim the Paulinian triad of faith, love, and hope, but that he would insist that, in this case, that triad remains the object of theological analysis, both as a unity and as a triad. Dalferth sees theology as an analytical enterprise, while Helmer, although by no means dispensing with analysis, appears to advocate a view of theology as a programme for academic action. In concentrating on and, to a certain extent, identifying with, the practice of faith, theology itself becomes practical in a way which Dalferth appears to reject.

## 2.2. *Faith, theology, and exegesis of Scripture*

Because the authority and the interpretation of the Bible feature prominently in Protestant theology, another section of the conference concentrated on 'Faith, Theology, and Exegesis of Scripture'. KONRAD SCHMID discussed the importance of biblical criticism for the Reformation and for today. Until recently, the historical-critical approach to the Bible, which is a long-term result of the changes brought about by the Reformation, seemed to be well established in academic theology. However, it has meanwhile come under attack, because to many outsiders it appears as being too specialized and as producing results that are irrelevant to the other theological disciplines, to the churches, and to the world at large. In many churches, biblical exegesis plays only a marginal role in preaching and teaching. Schmid reminded his listeners of the achievements of biblical criticism in the context of modern theology: a critical interpretation of the biblical account of Genesis has enabled and even stimulated scientific research into the origins of the earth; new methods have uncovered the patriarchalism, nationalism, and chauvinism that underlie many ethical teachings in Scripture. The Reformation churches have based their identity on the authority of the Bible; they continue to depend on critical exegesis as a vital tool in defining that authority lest they slip into some form of fundamentalism. Yet biblical exegesis cannot simply be used to reconstruct the doctrine of the Reformation, as was done five centuries ago. This is particularly obvious in the interpretation of the Old Testament, where modern scholars no longer follow Luther's christological approach to this part of the Bible.

Nevertheless, traces of his *sensus literalis propheticus* (which points to Christ) can still be detected in the highlighting of certain 'core verses' and in the titles of pericopes in modern revisions of the Luther Bible in general and of its Old Testament in particular. Here it seems more important to preserve traditional elements of doctrine instead of adopting the insights of modern exegesis. This traditionalism is oblivious of the fact (a) that Reformation doctrine is itself a product of history, (b) that the Reformers themselves insisted on the relativity of their doctrine, and (c) that any reading of the Bible will uncover multiple meanings, and that there is, therefore, no direct line between exegesis and dogmatics. It is legitimate for Protestants to insist on their reading of the Bible as long as this reading is considered as historically contingent and open to revi-

sion. In this respect, Schmid cautioned against certain tendencies in the U.S. of introducing a form of 'theological' exegesis alongside the historical-critical method of the past. Instead, he argued for an integrative approach: exegetes must ask whether a given text 'makes sense' not just on a historical or literary, but also on a theological level.

I wonder whether Schmid, in his final paragraphs, had in mind just what GERT J. STEYN spelt out in his paper in some detail. Steyn retraced the meaning of 'faith' in the *Letter to the Hebrews*, one of the New Testament writings which, in his view, has largely been neglected in the Reformed tradition. Hebrews does not propagate the Pauline notion of 'faith without works' but instead a concept of 'enduring faith'. In the light of this, Steyn called for a redefinition of the principle of *sola fide*. Even in key passages such as Rom 3:28 and Gal 3:24 one must not overstate the importance of Luther's addition of the adverb 'only'. Instead, if one takes into account the whole evidence of the New Testament, faith must be seen as a *process* which may carry through the trials and tribulations of everyday life and thus entails growth and sanctification.

From another angle, MARK W. ELLIOTT seemed to advocate a similar agenda. He saw no fundamental contradiction between denominational and ecumenical approaches to the Bible. Rather, he defended the legitimacy of 'confessional' exegesis in order to reach inter-confessional agreement: awareness of one's own theological tradition in the daily business of exegesis leads to an awareness of the differences of that tradition over against others. But exegetes should not stop there. Instead they should think through these differences with a view to overcoming them, wherever possible. What exegesis needs, therefore, is not less but more theology, and Elliott went to some length in reviewing modern exegesis to illustrate his point.

In a way, then, there appeared to be a great sense of optimism among these three exegetes, coming, as they do, from very different academic backgrounds, as to what Protestant exegesis, if done properly, may still achieve. In addition, there was a surprising overlap in their call for awareness for the needs of theology. I suspect, however, that such an awareness would not necessarily lead to greater unanimity, because exegesis, whether or not it has a theological dimension, is guided by *specific* (theological, historical, or literary) premises which depend on (academic, denominational, or theological) tradition and even individual intellectual mindset. It is, therefore, perhaps, not enough to call for more theology in exegesis, but for agreement on these first principles. In other words, it makes a difference whether I look at Hebrews from the Pauline letters or vice versa, and it makes another difference whether I think that the idea of 'faith' in Hebrews continues to be normative for our everyday lives or whether I prefer to think of the New Testament as just one (albeit important) interpretation of God's revelation which is, in principle, as 'correct' as others. These hermeneutical decisions are probably made regardless of the texts we are actually facing.

By comparison with these professional exegetes and Christian theologians, an entirely different approach was taken by MARKUS GABRIEL, who holds the

Chair in Epistemology, Modern, and Contemporary Philosophy at the University of Bonn. In a refreshing ‘table talk’ after the conference dinner, he suggested a philosophical reading of the prologue to the Gospel of John. In particular, he dealt with the relationship between the Incarnation and the knowledge of truth as an epistemological problem within the wider framework of a ‘New’ or ‘Neutral Realism’ which he has advocated in a series of publications. According to Gabriel, the author of the Gospel of John is committed to a form of theological Realism in that God/the Logos is reflected in the text as the origin of the cosmic order while, at the same time, remaining distinct from the text. In particular, Gabriel presented the introduction to the gospel as a prime witness in his philosophical rejection of naturalist interpretations of reality. The philosophical self-investigation of the human spirit describes the divine as an eternal structure of facts which, on principle, cannot be explained in naturalist terms. At the same time, philosophers are unable to say whether there is something or someone ‘beyond’ these boundaries of philosophical knowledge, which is why faith remains necessarily part and parcel of (a possibly apophatic) theology.

### 2.3. *Faith, theology, and human action*

In this section of the conference it became clear that the historical legacy of the Reformation goes far beyond the development of modern biblical criticism and has led, in many respects, to a transformation of modern society. ISOLDE KARLE identified four such areas. First, Luther developed a view of Christian ethics which focused on the liberating aspects of Christian life. Faith leads to a positive, affirmative view of the world and invests believers with confidence in facing their daily challenges. Secondly, he abolished the Catholic idea of priesthood and replaced it with a concept of ministry which was no longer based on sacred law but on a particular view of qualification and professionalization. Thirdly, Luther developed a new sense of sexuality, matrimony, and family. Instead of chastity he advocated a form of responsibly exercised sexuality, thus propagating a new kind of sensuality of faith: instead of the monastery, matrimony is from now on the arena in which faith is practiced. Finally, in the context of the Reformation a new concept of school and university education emerged which not only led to the establishment of new institutions and curricula, but even included the composition of primers and textbooks on a variety of subjects. According to both Luther and Melanchthon, a good education not only benefits the Church but also contributes to the welfare of society at large.

IRENE DINGEL highlighted one particular aspect of the ‘worldliness’ of the Reformation. The changes which the Reformers initiated aimed at abolishing structures of order which were seen as obsolete and at replacing them by new models that were then often termed as ‘good order’ (*gute Ordnung*). A ‘good order’ is a structure in which there is a harmony between the order of creation as gleaned from Holy Scripture and the secular order which structures our daily lives. As a result, a variety of new orders emerged which regulated not only the churches, but also the state, the court, private life, and even the way people

dressed. In particular, Dingel highlighted three areas in which these new structures had a considerable impact. First, with regard to theology one such model of order was the Confession: documents of theological consensus now took on an immense significance (both theological and political) in regulating doctrine and ecclesial life. Secondly, in education new structures were established through the composition of new school orders and university regulations. The result of education, ‘piety’ (*pietas*), became a Christian virtue which was to guide everyone’s lives not only in Church but also in society. Contrary to what it might suggest at first glance, this ideal of learned godliness was directed against all forms of anti-intellectualism. In the view of the Reformers, the renewal of both the methods and the contents of education through, for example, the teaching of languages, mathematics, and history helped to stop the ruin of the Church. Education now became available to all members of society, as all members had to fulfil their divinely appointed role in the estate in which they had been placed by God. Thirdly, the Reformers also produced new peace orders by developing regulatory models designed to overcome theological and political divisions. The Religious Peace of Augsburg (1555), the Edict of Nantes (1598), and the Peace of Westphalia (1648) are results of this process which began already in the 1530s.

Finally, Dingel outlined some areas where impulses from the Reformation may help to cope with today’s challenges. She mentioned the lack of acceptance of faith and theology in society and politics and the problematic influence of, on the one hand, certain methods of exegesis and, on the other hand, biblical fundamentalism. The search for theological consensus and the creation of peace processes helped to bring about modern notions of peaceful coexistence and tolerance and may continue to be fruitful in ecumenical dialogue and political diplomacy.

It would be exciting to continue both Karle’s and Dingel’s reflections: what does it mean that Luther’s suggestions for a reform of Christian life and of society and the ‘new order’ which the Reformation brought about are meanwhile either obsolete or facing stiff competition? Could and should Luther’s appreciation of the ‘sensuality’ of Christian life be extended to include same-sex marriages, or are his views simply obsolete and need to be replaced by different forms of sexual ethics? What to do with the Reformers’ sense of order in a world which is regulated and monitored to an extent which would have been unthinkable in the sixteenth century? May a Protestant ‘sense of order’, perhaps, ultimately also call for an *abolishment* of regulations?

#### 2.4. *Contextualizing faith and theology*

As I mentioned above, it was a paramount concern of the organizing committee to be able to gather as many views as possible as regards the conference theme from eminent Protestant theologians from all over the world. The only way this could be achieved was through the organization of a number of simultaneous group sessions. All speakers graciously accepted the diminution of their audience which this procedure inevitably entailed.

In order to facilitate discussion, we drew up a set of guiding questions which were sent to the speakers beforehand. We asked them kindly to address some or all of these questions with regard to their academic and national or regional situation.

1. How do you see the relationship between theology and faith in the ecclesial and political context of your country or region? Is it possible to describe clearly the relationship between theological reflection and 'living' devotion?
2. How would you combine a critical approach and high academic standards in theology with the teaching of the contents of faith? Are they mutually compatible, or do you see a contradiction between these endeavours?
3. Which dogmatic tenets/theological core themes are most problematic/controversial in your context?
4. Does theology form part of a wider academic discourse? Are there themes which are discussed with other disciplines? Which theological positions are prominent in this discussion?
5. Which role, if any, does theology play in the wider public arena (e.g. in the newspapers or in the arts)?
6. How significant is the Reformation in your country/region? To what extent does it continue to influence academia/the sciences, the churches, and the general public?

Depending on their denominational and academic backgrounds, the speakers chose a variety of approaches in answering these questions.

Several contributors insisted, from their national perspective, that theology reflect the cultural, social, and religious context in which it operates. HENRIETTE HUTABARAT LEBANG described the situation in Indonesia where Christianity is a minority religion. Here the impact of homegrown theology is not limited to seminaries and theological schools, but is also felt in the churches which were thus able to free themselves from what was and is seen as a hegemony of western models. Contextual theology seeks to discover the Gospel within the local culture. As such it is also important to ecumenical dialogue: operating in a non-Christian environment, those Indonesian churches which are members of the *Communion of Churches in Indonesia (CCI)* have, regardless of their respective denominational background, developed a common view of forming one body of Christ which defines their role in Indonesian society. Hutabarat Lebang emphasized that in the development of this shared vision fundamental insights of the Reformation, such as *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia*, and *sola fide*, have had a major impact.

From an African perspective, SETRI NYOMI described the task of theology as two-fold: theology is an area of dispassionate academic reflection, but it must also describe Christ as a figure of identification in an African context. Here the implementation of rigorous standards in academic theology has led to a strengthening of faith in many students, which Nyomi saw as one of the most important legacies of the Reformation. He gave four examples where the Refor-

mation has had a particular impact in Africa in general and in Ghana in particular: First, Luther's example has encouraged the translation of the Bible into the vernacular and the development of a theology which is in dialogue with African indigenous cultures. Secondly, the doctrine of justification by faith has informed much of African Protestant theology. Thirdly, the close relationship between justification and sanctification as described by Calvin has encouraged theologians to express their views in the public arena on a variety of issues. Theological discourse lays bare that the forces of death (apartheid, economic injustice, etc.) in African societies do not have the upper hand and offers life-enhancing alternatives. Finally, African Protestant theology has been successful in reflecting upon the importance of family and community.

LUÍS H. DREHER focused on the role of Protestants in Brazil, a country that is predominantly catholic and has, in recent years, experienced severe political and social crises. He saw one of the most important missions of Protestantism in the safeguarding of the rights of the individual in a culture that conceives itself mainly in collective terms and continues to struggle with the simplistic promises of political populists. In a similar vein to Dalferth's approach, Dreher advocated a Lutheran 'hermeneutic of difference', thus warning against a hasty synthesis of theology and society as favoured, for example, by representatives of a theology of liberation. In his view, such a hermeneutic could lead to the establishment of an ethos that combines the achievements of a modern liberal and democratic state and a true, that is, critical, support by the Christian churches.

ROBERT KOLB saw contextuality also as a hallmark of theology and ecclesiastical life in the U.S. and, indeed, of Christian faith in general. In the U.S. this contextuality includes the Puritans' emphasis on personal calling and responsibility for service to God and others and a strong sense of individual responsibility and freedom. More recently, the rising influence of non-Christian religions has posed a new challenge which Christians had to grapple with. At the same time, the mainline churches have suffered considerable losses in membership, whereas Evangelicals have grown enormously and now form the largest religious group. This also entailed a decline of the influence of European theology in U.S. churches. In particular, it no longer defines denominational affiliations as it used to do fifty years ago. There is nowadays no firm correlation between theological orientation and denominational affiliation. Accordingly, the historical achievements and the theological legacy of the Reformation are no longer appreciated as they used to be. By contrast, the influence of Evangelical theologians has increased, while at the same time, traditions which had long been buried, such as patristic exegesis, are being rediscovered. In the public arena, the influence of modern theologians no longer matches the respect which Billy Graham commanded. The media have little need for theological assessments or opinions. One finds no more intellectuals that associate themselves with Christianity. Yet this is not to say that eminent theologians no longer exist, and Kolb goes on to identify a number of them.

An ambivalent picture emerged from DOUGLAS H. SHANTZ' account of the situation in Canada. According to Shantz, the influence of Luther and the Lutherans on Canadian culture, although initially quite marked, has clearly diminished in recent years, as in the U.S. Yet as far as academic theology is concerned, Luther continues to play a considerable role, as can be seen, for example, from the work of distinguished theologian Douglas John Hall. Furthermore, a variety of important studies on the Reformation (including the 'radical' Reformers and also Erasmus) has been published by Canadian scholars.

Three speakers concentrated on the situation in Europe: VELI-MATTI KÄRK-KÄINEN described Finnish society as a complex 'post-world' which has left behind postmodernism and other 'post'-movements associated with it. This has led to a maximum of diversity and plurality. At the same time, however, a growth of religion is also noticeable. The secular and the sacred must, therefore, no longer be seen as mutually exclusive but may exist alongside each other. Finns are distancing themselves from the traditional churches (especially the Lutheran church), but they do not necessarily turn away from Christianity, as can be seen from revival movements within and outside the traditional churches. Likewise, the study of academic theology, which in Finland is independent from the churches, continues to flourish, but it is difficult to estimate its impact on Finnish public life. Two issues that stand at the intersection between theology and society at large are discussions about same-sex marriage and the privileged status of the Lutheran church.

With regard to the Hungarian Reformed Church, SÁNDOR FAZAKAS described the tension between, on the one hand, the desire of church members for a popular piety which provides spiritual security and solace in all vicissitudes of life and, on the other hand, the efforts on the part of church leaders to seek the protection of the state and its bureaucracy. According to Fazakas, Hungarian churches are, by and large, unwilling to question social and political events. Conservative Christians even tend to champion an anti-rational and anti-liberal attitude which breeds a certain indifference towards anti-democratic forces.

The Reformed Church in Hungary is a minority denomination. By comparison, the Waldensian Evangelical Church in Italy is even smaller. LOTHAR VOGEL focused on the teaching of theology at the independent Waldensian Faculty in Rome. One of the major challenges for the teaching of academic theology here is the general decline of education in Italy and, in particular, of the knowledge of foreign languages. Small institutions such as the *Facoltà Valdese di Teologia* are only insufficiently equipped for offering compensatory language classes. There is also the danger of academic isolation: although the professors are individually well connected with colleagues from other disciplines, it is difficult to build formal co-operations with other institutions of higher education within Italy. This is, not least, due to the ambivalent status of theology in a country which is, on the one hand, deeply marked by Catholicism, and is, on the other hand, to a certain extent governed by the principles of *laïcité*.

Whereas all these authors took a more or less descriptive approach to the present-day situation of faith and theology in their respective countries or regions of origin, three speakers chose alternative routes. JOHNSON THOMASKUTTY asked, specifically, about the relationship between faith and theology in the Johannine literature and described the influence it had on the Reformation and on modern Indian Christianity. His presentation of the importance of faith in the Johannine community resembled, by and large, that which Steyn found in the *Letter to the Hebrews*. 'Faith' is an integrative term that includes seeing, working, knowing, and obeying. As such it not only describes a certain mode of Christian existence, but also forms both the basis and, to a large extent, the organizing principle of a wider theological discourse which also includes Christology, soteriology, and eschatology. Hence, in Thomaskutty's view faith and theology are closely inter-linked. In the work of the Reformers this link can be seen in their reflection upon faith in an academic context. Luther was a believer and as such a son of the Church, and he was, at the same time, a professor who systematized certain insights which he had gained from his exegesis into a coherent whole which gave him great freedom in dealing both with Scripture and the Church of his day. This innovative and critical approach is central to modern Indian theology, because it opens up the dialogue with other religions and academic disciplines and as such helps, on the one hand, to ward off an uncritical reading of Scripture and, on the other hand, to prevent theological isolationism.

Whereas Thomaskutty started from exegesis, two scholars chose approaches taken from social research. By means of an elaborate questionnaire, CHRISTOPHER M. HAYS asked Protestant theologians at six Christian seminaries and schools in Colombia about their views on the relationship of present-day theology with the insights of the Reformation. The results are far too numerous to be summarized here in a few sentences. No doubt, the Reformation looms large in these theologians' perception of their own tradition and of their teaching practice. But when one looks more closely, it turns out that an in-depth knowledge of the Reformation is often scarce. Theology here is largely seen as geared towards a particular church practice. The primary goal of theological training is to enable students to work in Church and mission without worrying too much about academic standards. On the contrary, although most interviewees underlined the importance of Scripture, historical-critical scholarship and the opening-up of theology to the methods and insights of other disciplines were often rejected. Hays, therefore, called for initiatives to bridge the gap in knowledge and mutual understanding between, on the one hand, U.S. and German scholars and, on the other, Latin American theologians.

Finally, BOGUSŁAW MILERSKI reported about a research project which he carried out in Poland. It focused on the relationship between religious education in school and the formation of the students' individual subjectivity. Religious education as an optional subject in state schools was reinstated in Poland in 1990, after the end of communism. Concomitantly, in the 1990s religious education (*Religionspädagogik*) as an academic discipline evolved in order to assist in the

development of curricula and the training of teachers and to initiate academic research. Milerski explained the results of his study in some detail; I pick out just some of them which in our context are particularly interesting. Students were asked *inter alia* why they attended classes in religion. Some argued from tradition, others suggested pragmatic reasons, a third group attended because their parents wanted it, a fourth group was curious to learn something new, and a final group wished to gain a better understanding of religion, the world, and themselves. A majority of students favoured a teaching which was not limited to their own respective denomination. In addition, a relative majority saw religious education not as a means of strengthening denominational ties, but as an area of integration of diverse religious traditions. Correspondingly, most interviewees preferred a curriculum which encouraged independent and critical thinking as opposed to imparting dogmatic content.

If one takes these results seriously (and I believe, one should), the development of subjectivity and faith requires a teaching of Christianity and, by implication, a theology which is knowledgeable, both critical and integrative, and—bold.

### 2.5. *Faith, theology, and the Church – ecumenical perspectives*

The conference was not confined to academic professionals. The final three papers addressed the role of theology and faith in a global society from the point of view of high-ranking church leaders. The Chairman of the Council of the *EKD*, HEINRICH BEDFORD-STROHM, highlighted the benefits of the close relationship between academic theology and the Protestant churches in Germany. Furthermore, he discussed various justifications for the continuous funding of faculties and institutes of theology at universities and, ultimately, advocated the German model of ‘public religion’. This model (which I outlined above) derives from the idea that the modern liberal state is, ultimately, unable to define a certain religious basis which could serve to establish a close bond between the state and its citizens. If it were, it would jeopardize precisely that freedom which it is supposed to defend. In Strohm’s view the state must, therefore, provide opportunities for the practice of religion which may, in turn, foster the citizens’ allegiance towards the liberal state. This model only works, however, if certain fundamental values are shared by all, regardless of their religion or denomination. Religious education in state schools and publicly funded faculties of theology provide a forum for learning and discussing these values. Furthermore, as a university discipline, theology benefits from the interaction with other disciplines in that the view from outside may help it to reconsider and redefine its core business.

Whereas Bedford-Strohm concentrated on the relationship between theology as an academic discipline and the churches, the (Roman Catholic) Archbishop of Berlin, HEINER KOCH, described the relationship between faith, theology, and global society. He called this relationship a *Mit-Sein* of God and humanity and detailed some of its aspects. (*Mit-Sein* is one of those German terms for which

there is simply no English equivalent; 'co-existence' is a somewhat prosaic approximation, for *Mit-Sein* also implies a notion of solidarity and care). First, theology analyzes and presents human creativity as a *locus theologicus* by discovering the traces of the creator God in these creative acts. Secondly, it detects in the altruistic behaviour of humans another such *locus*, because God has shown solidarity with all who seek freedom and redemption. Thirdly, the human desire for knowledge reflects God's revelation which is by no means opposed to reason. Theologians are, therefore, encouraged to seek the dialogue with representatives of other academic disciplines. Finally, the unknowability of the future which worries many people must be interpreted by theologians in the light of the Christian view that, ultimately, God will bring to perfection and fullness what he has created.

In all these aspects, then, theology moderates the dialogue between society and faith. According to the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* of Vatican II, theology scrutinizes the signs of the times and interprets them in the light of the Gospel. In a globalized world, this also means that theology has to promote the *Mit-Sein* of faith and a society that is multi- or even non-religious. It, therefore, needs to be strengthened in places where Christianity is a minority religion. In a global metropolis such as Berlin Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox theology should join forces in order to be heard as the intellectual voice of Christianity.

It almost seemed that, towards the end of two days of intense discussion, the conference was about to turn full circle: Koch described a hermeneutic of theological discernment which, if I understand him correctly, had been advocated by Dalferth in the beginning. However, considerable differences remained with regard to their views of the role of *Church* as a or the point of reference for theology.

Finally, the (Anglican) Bishop of Leeds, NICHOLAS BAINES, was concerned with theology as a 'public language' (my term). He emphasized that the modern Church and its members must be 'multilingual': they must be able to listen and to learn the language of 'the other' and to express themselves in such a way that they are being heard. There is, he said, an urgent need for communicators who are able to translate theological discourse into everyday language. Theologians must equally pay attention to the content of what they have to say and to the modes of its communication. Preachers must not eschew the problems which the Bible poses, but they must address them in such a way that worshippers understand why, and in what way, Scripture still matters. Finally, Baines asked which implications this has for today's ecumenical dialogue. He suggested that the biggest ecumenical challenge consists in strengthening the churches' unity in a world ridden by isolationism, separatism, and strife. True unity entails a prophetic self-understanding which offers to society ways of overcoming these divisions.

### 3. CONCLUSION: FAITH AND THEOLOGY IN THE TRADITION OF THE REFORMATION

At the end, it may be useful to summarize some strands which I think were running through many, if not all, of the papers at this conference.

(1) Theology is a reflexive form of faith. It is not simply identical with it. There can be theology without faith, but it would not be *Christian* theology. There can be faith without theology, but it always runs the risk of lapsing into uneducated and, therefore, irrational fundamentalism. Faith needs theology as a source of information but also as a guide to religious practice, because theology may explain what, in the light of Scripture and of the teaching and the experience of the Church, is appropriate and what is not. If this close bond between faith and theology is loosened, something may go seriously wrong on one side or the other.

(2) Theology in the tradition of the Reformation is both Bible-centred and open to the needs of society. Its fundamental axioms are contained in Scripture. It is the task of exegesis to identify these axioms, of historical theology to describe the way they have operated in the history of Christianity, and of systematic theology to think them through in a rationally controlled manner. Therefore, Protestant theology which wishes to lay claim to the heritage of the Reformation is never biblicist. It goes about its business of interpreting Scripture by using all tools for literary, historical, and philosophical analysis and interpretation that are available to it. The study of the Bible requires no *sacrificium intellectus*, but is, to the contrary, a *stimulus intellectus*. (It is not by coincidence that ever since the Enlightenment biblical interpretation has been at the forefront of literary studies.)

Furthermore, if it is the primary duty of Christians to love God with their whole heart and their neighbour as themselves (Mark 12:29-31 parr.), then the people around them and their vulnerability are also constantly in focus. This requires theoretical reflection about the way Christians have realized their love for their neighbours. Not all theology is ethics and practical theology, but a theology which does not, at some point, reflect about the contribution it is making to religious and social practice is simply bad theology.

In both these aspects theology differs from other academic disciplines: unlike biology or chemistry, its ultimate point of reference is not situated in this world, but beyond it. At the same time, unlike mathematics or astrophysics, theology is ever mindful of the needs of the Church and of society at large.

(3) Protestant theology is, then, neither isolationist nor ideological. Good theologians are ultimately unable to withdraw entirely into the academic ivory tower, but seek contact with other academic disciplines, because, academic curiosity notwithstanding, these disciplines may have something to offer which helps theologians better to reflect upon faith and to communicate these reflections to the world outside the academy.

At the same time, they know that this world is transitory and, ultimately, will be replaced by the kingdom of God. They are, therefore, not tempted to identify what is temporary with what is not. The kingdom of God is not of this world (John 18:36) which is why theologians in their call for social engagement may be driven by hope for God's kingdom but are also aware that, given the persistent power of sin, this engagement is always prone to failure: *simul iustus et peccator*.

(4) Protestant theology is ecumenical. As opposed to the Roman-Catholic Church in which the magisterium holds the final authority to adjudicate Christian dogma, there are few things Protestant theologians agree upon. This multiplicity of voices is inherent in Protestantism, because it is inherent in Scripture. God's revelation is not univocal, because it transcends human understanding. It grants certainty of faith, and it releases a multiplicity of possibilities of interpreting and describing that faith. Therefore, Protestant theology is a matter of permanent negotiation with views other than one's own. The *ecclesia semper reformanda* includes a *theologia semper reformanda*. Protestant theology which is conscious of its roots is aware of the preliminary nature of its business. Not everything is acceptable, but everything is debatable. In the end, it is a matter of convincing, not of coercing.

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