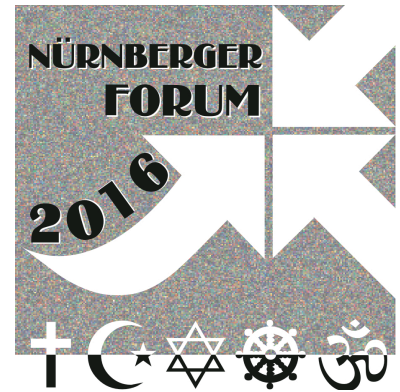


Thomas Schlag

Public Education and the Public Church



ABSTRACT

According to protestant theological self-understanding, faith and church shall contribute at large to society, the common good and the idea of the dignity of every human being. Right from its beginning in the 16th century the protagonists of the new faith construed and proclaimed – for example by the concept of divine justice – the idea of a common public realm and thus of a close cooperation of state and church. An important aspect of this protestant worldview was the idea of the prophetic office (prophetisches Wächteramt), by which the Church and every individual believer should be motivated to withstand unjust and inhuman political activities – and to raise conscientiously one’s own voice in the name of God’s will.

500 years after this protestant starting point and in the midst of severe societal challenges it shall be asked whether the theological concept of such a conscience-driven public articulation can still be a relevant proposition for the Church’s self-understanding within civil society and for civil society itself. Starting with some reflections on the current situation of the Protestant Churches in Germany and Switzerland it will be asked what religious education from such a theological perspective can contribute to the common good in the context of religious plurality. This will be concretized by developing core characteristics of a just, conscience-driven “education”, enabled and supported by a prophetic Public Church.

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