

How Theologians Can Address the Changing Cultural Landscape

Christians and, specifically, theologians are nowadays frequently considered irrelevant, unless they support a current secular mainstream. As public debates are often morally loaded, theologians are tempted to submit or self-surrender to secular and often quasi-religious claims. This session will examine the background of the current cultural landscape and the role theologians can play in bringing about a change that emphasizes the relevance of Christian faith. Changing the cultural landscape of whole nations and thus increasing the acceptance of Christian faith, requires intellectual, cultural, and social leadership rooted in biblical wisdom and courage.

Ralf Bergmann, born in 1962, is married and has three adult children, two children in-law and one grand child. He has a degree in physics and a doctorate from German universities and worked in the areas of semiconductors, photovoltaics and optics at several research institutions in Germany and Australia and in industrial research. Since 2008 he is a professor and head of a research institute working on optical technologies and optoelectronics. Beyond his research, he demonstrates the reasonability of Christian faith, especially at the intersection of physics, philosophy and theology as well as the relevance of Christian faith for modern western society. In 2019, he authored the book *Gott und die Erklärung der Welt* (God and the explanation of the world), see <https://erklaerung-der-welt.de/> and in 2021 *Die freie Gesellschaft und ihre Feinde* (The free society and its enemies), see <http://www.professorenforum.de/>. He is a member of the German Professorenforum, a gathering of Christian professors and a founding member of the “*Netzwerk Wissenschaftsfreiheit*” (Network for the Freedom of Science) with members in Germany, Austria and Switzerland and speaks at national and international occasions as well as in protestant churches.

- I. The modern Church and the post-post-modern society
 - A. Identity politics, wokeness and cancel culture – When madness becomes common sense.¹
 - B. The secular gospel of guilt and fear– No new heaven, no new earth!
 - C. Centered on the wellbeing of one’s own members or centered around mission?
 - D. The ground staff isn’t quite so bad!
- II. The Babylonian captivity of modern theology
 - A. Trapped in tradition and entangled in secular institutional structures

¹ Roger Scruton: *Fools, Frauds and Firebrands – Thinkers of the new left*. Bloomsbury (2015).

B. Trapped in yesterday's worldviews or chasing the mainstream

C. Trapped in one's own comfort zone

D. Trapped in reaction

III. Roots of misery

A. The deception from Schleiermacher to Bultmann and beyond

B. The deception of the irrelevance of truth

IV. From reaction to action – in need for proactive theology for today's fragmented society

A. Taking courage – the advice of Alvin Plantinga and Paul in Romans 12:2

B. What we have to expect – the warnings of Jesus in Luke 22:15 and John 8:44

C. Recognizing and overcoming deception – Christians between Romans 13 and Revelation 13

D. Think big: Make friends and change nations!