

Public Protestantism and Mission in Germany's Thuringian States, 1871–1914

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BOURGEOIS Germans engaged with considerable urgency in religious debate in the public discourse of Imperial Germany. There were those who saw this religious conversation in a negative light. As socialist leader Wilhelm Liebknecht quipped, “Religious questions have been handled with greater fervor in no epoch of German history than in this moment. One feels oneself transported into the most befuddled times of the Reformation, so widespread is the incessant religious squabbling.”¹ Bourgeois Protestants, the primary interlocutors in religious discourse, viewed the growing religious discussion of the world’s problem more positively.

The focus of this essay is on this public Protestantism, and especially on Protestant mission, in the regional setting of the Thuringian states. Thuringian Protestants repeatedly pronounced their commitment to their religion, and expressed diverse ways religion mattered to them. Emil Polz—Weimar public school teacher, left liberal state parliament representative, and editor of *Lehrer-Zeitung für Thüringen und Mittel-Deutschland*²—suggested that teachers, as members of the universal clergy, had the calling to oversee religious instruction in schools and that the school system’s goal was to mold the character of its charges. Polz imagined the role of the public school as fundamentally religious and missionary: “The public school must and shall bring to the church individuals filled with moral-religious interest, [individuals] who will one day be active members of the Christian community.”³ Paul von Bojanowski, National Liberal politician and editor of the *Weimarische Zeitung* in the 1870s and 1880s, considered Protestantism a central element of the modern state and society: “The modern state is certainly

¹Wilhelm Liebknecht, “Wissen ist Macht—Macht ist Wissen (5 Febr. 1872),” cited in Olaf Blaschke and Frank-Michael Kuhlemann, “Religion in Geschichte und Gesellschaft. Sozialhistorische Perspektiven für die vergleichende Erforschung religiöser Mentalitäten und Milieus,” in *Religion im Kaiserreich: Milieus—Mentalitäten—Krisen*, ed. Blaschke and Kuhlemann (Gütersloh: Kaiser, Gütersloher Verl.-Haus, 1996), 7.

²Ulrich Hess, *Geschichte Thüringens 1866 bis 1914*, ed. Volker Wahl (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1991), 439.

³E. Polz, *Zur Reform des Religionsunterrichtes in der Volksschule* (Weimar: Borkmann, 1891), 10.

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non-confessional, but does not thereby stop being, in its essence, a Christian one. It is upon the exalted teachings of Christ that the entire modern world is built."⁴ Bojanowski, whose vision of Christ's teachings was thoroughly Protestant, embraced secularization but did not see that as indicating a reduction of religion in public life. Similarly, Pastor Buß, speaking at a public meeting in the hall of the Weimar marksmen's club, maintained that the culture of Europe "rested in its deepest moorings on the spirit of Christianity."⁵ And a commentator in the *Weimarer Zeitung* wrote that the motivation of "the greatest minds" derived a great deal from Christianity, from "intellectual-spiritual matters and eternal powers."⁶ Thuringians saw their Protestantism as a foundational frame for the state, modernity, and culture.

This article will analyze a Protestant and liberal cultural project set in the context of recent literature on religion and the cultural projects of liberalism in Imperial Germany. Literature on the history of religion has moved beyond simplistic models of secularization to examine changes in religious practice, modes of religiosity, and the continuing though perhaps changing influence of religion on political and social phenomena.⁷ Thomas Nipperdey offered a starting point in 1988 with his *Religion im Umbruch*, in which he wrote that religion was an autonomous force in the cultural world.⁸ Olaf Blaschke has gone so far as to suggest the nineteenth century might be described as a second confessional age.⁹ Helmut Smith and Chris Clark explain that the new literature shows "how widely and deeply religion was woven into the fabric of modern politics and society."¹⁰ There is nonetheless still much left to be done in a major reconsideration of religion in Germany, particularly with regard to Protestantism.

Recent literature on Imperial Germany's middle class has increasingly focused on its liberal civic engagement. There was a deeply moral aspect to this project. Jennifer Jenkins refers to the educational goals of liberal cultural reformers who sought to construct a "moral community of citizens."¹¹

⁴"Beim Jahreswechsel," *Weimarer Zeitung* (hereafter cited as WZ), 1 January 1874.

⁵"Die Kulturaufgabe der Christenheit gegenüber der Heidenwelt," WZ 8 February 1884.

⁶From Goethe's dialogue with Eckermann, "Himmelfahrt," WZ 7 May 1902.

⁷For example, see Lucian Hölscher, "Die Religion des Bürgers. Bürgerliche Frömmigkeit und Protestantische Kirche im 19. Jahrhundert," *Historische Zeitschrift* 250 (1990): 595–630; Martin Greschat, "Zur Verhältnisbestimmung von Christentum und Kultur im deutschen Protestantismus am Ausgang des 19. Jahrhunderts," in his *Protestanten in der Zeit. Kirche und Gesellschaft in Deutschland vom Kaiserreich bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1994); Jochen-Christoph Kaiser and Martin Greschat, eds., *Sozialer Protestantismus und Sozialstaat: Diakonie und Wohlfahrtspflege in Deutschland 1890 bis 1938* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1996).

⁸Thomas Nipperdey, *Religion im Umbruch: Deutschland 1870–1918* (Munich: Beck, 1988), 8.

⁹Olaf Blaschke, "Das 19. Jahrhundert: Ein Zweites Konfessionelles Zeitalter?" *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 26 (January–March 2000): 38–75.

¹⁰Smith and Clark, "The Fate of Nathan," in *Protestants, Catholics and Jews in Germany, 1800–1914*, ed. Smith (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 4, 5, 11.

¹¹Jennifer Jenkins, *Provincial Modernity: Local Culture & Liberal Politics in Fin-de-Siècle Hamburg* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003), 4.

Andrew Lees points out similarly that moral and social reform were often essentially one and the same.¹² These historians' work refutes an older historiographical idea of a bourgeois retreat from politics into culture.

But historians have discounted Protestantism as an important source of social and civic activism in Imperial Germany.¹³ Martin Greschat suggests that confessional and evangelical Lutherans focused their religious faith on inwardness and limited their religious interests to an internal space. Following from this, Wilfried Spohn suggests that, "Lutheranism assigned the social question to the state and left care for the inner spirit to the church." Spohn is typical in his reading of Lutheran theology, which he suggests did not advocate "a religiously motivated commitment to the world." Historians acknowledge that Lutheran social reform focused on efforts to influence state legislation. Organizations like the Protestant Social Congress and the Ecclesiastic Social Conference, as well as individual Protestants in government, lobbied the state to enact social legislation. Rüdiger vom Bruch argues that Protestant social reformers from Wichern to Naumann placed their hopes for social reform in the social obligation of a state grounded in Christian principles. According to vom Bruch's definition, social reform is "limited to *state* action in response to *faults* in the *distribution process*."¹⁴

A national focus can perceive only the national umbrella institutions' state-centered lobbying efforts, and it finds no significant mass engagement in faith-based social and civic activism. Protestant associations with a significant local base are too easily dismissed as part of an insignificant conservative and backward-looking fringe. What remains is an image of a Protestant bourgeoisie awaiting, or at best encouraging, state intervention in social issues. This has made invisible the social engagement of locally-oriented Protestant associations. An example from Thuringia is the compatibility and personnel overlap between the "National Liberal" Protestant League and the "conservative" Home Mission. Their common religious basis allowed their otherwise clashing politics to come together in Thuringia.

Protestant bourgeois public discourse established the importance of faith for bourgeois and national unity, and for the resolution of the "social question." This discourse produced an essential marker—being a Protestant—for establishing the superiority of the middle class over its others, most importantly the German working class, non-European foreigners, and Catholics. Mission

¹²Andrew Lees, *Cities, Sin, and Social Reform in Imperial Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 1.

¹³Greschat, "Zur Verhältnisbestimmung," 41; Wilfried Spohn, "Religion and Working-Class Formation in Imperial Germany 1871–1914," *Politics & Society* 19, no. 1 (1991): 115.

¹⁴Rüdiger vom Bruch, "*Weder Kommunismus noch Kapitalismus*": *Bürgerliche Sozialreform in Deutschland vom Vormärz bis zur Ära Adenauer* (Munich: Beck, 1985), 74, 65, 106. See also Spohn, "Religion and Working-Class Formation," 119.

discourse established a parallel between savages of the Foreign Mission field and socialist workers at home: both were comprised of people who were not (or “not really”) Christians. This discourse offered an important axis for bourgeois unity against the rising electoral tide of socialism. Protestant Christianity became an increasingly important rhetorical element of election politics across the bourgeois political spectrum.

Anti-Catholicism was an important element in the construction of the Christianity of the bourgeoisie. Anti-Catholicism served especially as a rallying point for Protestant identity and community. The danger of Catholicism demanded Protestant unity, and Protestant freedom and good works were set against Catholic conformity and contemplation. The experience of the *Kulturkampf* reinvigorated bourgeois Protestantism: it served as a reaffirmation of the Protestant character of the nation; it revived an urgency in efforts to unify Protestants; it emphasized a connection between Protestantism and modernity, progress, and liberalism; and it sparked bourgeois civic activism. The *Kulturkampf* was a coordinated attack by liberals and the state on Catholic influence in Germany that flared up in 1870. The state began to disengage from the struggle after 1878, leaving the issue of the Catholic threat to the public sphere. After the *Kulturkampf*, particularly because of the perceived failure of the state in this cultural struggle, liberals came to focus more on efforts to change culture.¹⁵

The conclusion of the *Kulturkampf* also coincided with rising perceptions of a serious danger from a degenerating working class. Bourgeois solutions to this problem were both material and moral. Protestant liberals thus pursued, within a cultural post-*Kulturkampf* national project, a mixture of continued anti-Catholicism, reinvigorated Protestantism, and an effort to educate, civilize, and police the masses. They aimed at national unification, national progress, and national Protestantism—the three were so intertwined that they can hardly be looked at independently. The parallel to Johann Hinrich Wichern’s Home Mission triad of religious renewal, social regeneration, and national unification is palpable. Wichern’s idea of Home Mission deeply influenced bourgeois religious activism in the half-century before 1914.

The Thuringian states offer to the historian a region of relative religious homogeneity in a small-city atmosphere that allows a clear view of a kind of bourgeois Protestantism. Thuringia housed an activist and vociferous Protestant bourgeoisie. The historian can see here religious connections between diverse conversations and activities. Part of the Protestant heartland in central Germany, over 95 percent of the population of the Thuringian states was Lutheran.¹⁶ Because the Thuringian bourgeoisie was so

¹⁵See Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866–1918* (Munich: Beck, 1992), 2:379.

¹⁶See Hess, *Geschichte Thüringens*, here particularly 288, 539.

homogeneously Lutheran, religion could serve to unify rather than divide as it often did elsewhere in Germany. Thuringia also held a central place in the nation, particularly in the Thuringians' perception of their regional and local identity and importance. The close relation of Protestant and cultural heritage is highlighted by School Inspector Konrad Weiß of Nürnberg, left-liberal candidate for both the National Liberal and the Progressive People's Parties for Weimar-Apolda, who said in 1907 that it was from Thuringia that were born "most of the powerful streams of spiritual and intellectual progress." He associated Luther in the Wartburg with Herder, Goethe, and Schiller in Weimar: each in his way had "worked towards national unity and rebirth."¹⁷ Celebration of the great men and events of Thuringian-German history were reminders to the bourgeois public of the region's importance, and simultaneously served to connect German culture and German Christianity. Thuringians thus perceived the nation through their understanding of their own local history.¹⁸

The diversity of Protestant activists in Thuringia is dizzying. The range of individuals drawn on in this essay will demonstrate the ubiquity of public Protestantism. Middle-class Thuringians typically spoke and acted in public as persons of faith; they espoused what they called an "idealistic" worldview, one that was strengthened by an attachment to the most non-materialist ideology—religion. They contrasted this religious idealism with the atheistic materialism of the Social Democrats, who, they explained, had no "ideal goals in the sense of our *Kulturwelt*."¹⁹ Thuringians saw in Protestantism the ideological roots of bourgeois and liberal society and the German nation, and the basis of morality in the modern world.

I. PUBLIC PROTESTANTISM

Over the course of the nineteenth century the heart of Protestantism shifted away from traditional practices confined to an institutional church space apart from civil society and toward practices within the public sphere. Nineteenth-century Protestant theology offered the German bourgeoisie a modern authority for faith-based activism and identity. Among the contributions of the Enlightenment to religion was a faith in the perfectibility of mankind and in an individual's boundless potential for spiritual progress.

¹⁷WZ 8 January 1907.

¹⁸On the local and the nation see Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); and Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871–1918* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

¹⁹WZ 12 June 1898.

As a consequence of Christian faith in progress and improvement, bourgeois Protestants felt called to engage in moral and social work in this world.²⁰ Schleiermacher saw Protestant faith as the basis of the modern individual and of modern community. And Jena theologian Karl von Hase argued that Christianity points toward the highest human development (*Bildung*).²¹ Albrecht Ritschl's theological ethics saw God's grace as the basis of Christian freedom. Ritschl pushed for an ethical, a moral, even a cultural concretization of faith. He argued against the idea of uniquely religious goals, as conceived by monks and pietists, of retreat from the world, of simple individualism of the soul, of clericalization. Practical moral community was what mattered, and religious action should be carried out through fulfillment of duty and loyalty to one's calling. A Christian emphasis on *Beruf* in the sense of a calling as encouragement to work for society within the bounds of one's proper place was a call to the middle class—in light of its understanding of its superior position—to come to the aid of the unfortunate and less capable.²² Bourgeois Protestants felt called to express their faith in the actions of their daily lives.²³

In Imperial Germany Protestantism was a part of civil society, and religious culture blossomed. Festival events included speeches and lectures, church services, plays, museum exhibits, mementos, incessant public singing, and grand parades. Thousands upon thousands attended a number of historical Luther plays and other theater pieces taking a lead from the Catholic counterpart, the Oberammergau Passion Play. The importance of public Protestantism was reflected in public discourse and in the reporting of news. What someone said in the sermon on Sunday morning was seldom newsworthy, whereas what was said at the meeting of the mission association was of great interest: newspapers like the *Weimarische Zeitung* gave a great deal of space to reporting on the activities and debates of the

²⁰Lucian Hölscher suggests this faith in progress and perfectibility was a degeneration “into a superficial religious optimism.” Hölscher, “Bürgerliche Religiosität im protestantischen Deutschland des 19. Jahrhunderts,” in *Religion und Gesellschaft im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Wolfgang Schieder (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1993), 210.

²¹Greschat, “Zur Verhältnisbestimmung,” 38, 40.

²²Thomas Nipperdey, *Religion im Umbruch*, 113–14, 67–70; Martin Greschat, “Zur Verhältnisbestimmung,” 42–44. On *Beruf*, see especially Max Weber's discussion in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London: Allen & Unwin, 1992), 79–92.

²³Young Sun Hong's description of association-driven Christian charity as “secularized yet confessional” points to this transformation of religion from the institutional churches to bourgeois-controlled associations in civil society. Young Sun Hong, “The Politics of Welfare Reform and the Dynamics of the Public Sphere: Church, Society, and the State in the Making of the Social-Welfare System in Germany, 1830–1930” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1989), 45–46. Hong's book, *Welfare, Modernity, and the Weimar State, 1919–1933* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), because it focuses on the problems of the Weimar Republic, largely drops the exploration in her dissertation of the Imperial period.

mission associations. The press went beyond reporting the facts in its commitment to religion. Long-time *Weimarische Zeitung* editor Paul von Bojanowski, for instance, insisted that while the paper “endeavored to judge the actions of the Catholics and the Protestants in the interest of confessional peace with impartiality,” it nonetheless never let “true Protestant interests fall into the background.”²⁴

But perhaps most importantly, Protestant associationalism enjoyed, alongside its secular counterpart, a remarkable expansion. In voluntary associations, bourgeois activists came together as Protestants to socialize, celebrate their religion, and work to improve society.²⁵ Perhaps church attendance and communion statistics were declining in Imperial Germany,²⁶ but the Protestant bourgeoisie found the popular religious services of the time in public Protestant rituals and the meetings of Protestant voluntary associations.

The mission associations sponsored meetings that brought together the bourgeois public in a religious context. These gatherings served to inform that public of the ongoing efforts of the associations and to educate them generally about the pertinent mission field. They were offered a sermon, heard a local chorus perform, and sang hymns together. They offered alms to the collection plate. Lectures, usually given by clergymen or teachers, most commonly reported on the activities of the missionary associations or covered church history or other issues of public interest. In addition to urging the audience to greater faith and participation, speakers related stories of the heroes of the Protestant faith: first and foremost Martin Luther, but also Philipp Melancthon, Duke Johann Friedrich the Magnanimous of Saxony, Swedish King Gustav Adolf, and many others.

The mission associations were deeply imbedded in community life. Religion commanded attention and respect in the various forums of the public sphere, including the press, published essays, speeches and sermons, and bourgeois election materials. It was a matter of course that newspapers would draw public attention to their activities, that the local singing club would perform at association gatherings, that schoolchildren accompanied by their teachers would decorate halls, sing hymns, read prayers at meetings, that city councils or local social associations would offer space for meetings.

²⁴This was a defense against an attack that argued the paper coddled Catholics while it was overly critical of Protestantism. See WZ 7 and 8 April 1893.

²⁵See Thomas Nipperdey, “Verein als soziale Struktur in Deutschland im späten 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert. Eine Fallstudie zur Modernisierung I,” in his *Gesellschaft, Kultur, Theorie. Gesammelte Aufsätze zur neueren Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), esp. 176.

²⁶A common measure of secularization. See for instance Helmut Walser Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict: Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870–1914* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 85–91.

Voluntary associations were a catalyst for middle class formation and a focus for localized bourgeois social power. One of the key ideas of the importance of associations for middle class formation is that they offered a space where individuals came together, at the local level, to pursue common missions.²⁷ Protestant associations were importantly different; the Christian context deeply imprinted the sense of community that was generated in them and the worldview and ideology that emanated from them. Protestant individuals, acting together in local and regional voluntary associations pursuing religious mission, increasingly came to establish moral values, to define religious reality, and to set the agenda for religious discussion. Protestant mission associations set the tone for public discussion of and popular involvement in religion. They thus controlled to a great degree the public representation of religion, of Lutheran tradition, of the nature of popular religiosity—in short, of Protestant identity.

Protestant associational life offered a space for the Protestant bourgeoisie to conduct religiously-based conversations about itself, its others, the problems it perceived in the world, and the projects it pursued. Christian mission provided an institution for bourgeois civic and social activism. Mission activists employed a moralizing, pedagogical discourse parallel to (and in Thuringia often indistinguishable from) that of bourgeois social reform. Medical professionals, for instance, developed a “discourse on disease, mortality and health” and thereby “established the authority of the bourgeois norms of domesticity, individualism and self-control.”²⁸ The “professionals” of Christian mission propagated a discourse on spiritual disease, mortality, and health—that is, immorality, Godlessness, and salvation. And the public expression of Protestant culture communicated *these* norms to *their* clients—“heathens” abroad or at home—via a similar pedagogical welfare.

Four areas of Protestant mission are of particular importance. Each was an important space for popular engagement in mission work and for expression of a Protestant discourse. The Foreign Mission sought to export a national Protestant culture to the “heathens” and “savages” abroad. The goals of this Protestant mission of cultural education, as expressed by the Thuringian Foreign

²⁷See David Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany, 1780–1918* (New York: Oxford, 1998), 278; Nipperdey, “Verein als soziale Struktur,” 176–78. See also Otto Dann, ed., *Vereinswesen und bürgerliche Gesellschaft in Deutschland* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1984). On the local nature of middle class construction and activism, see Thomas Mergel, *Zwischen Klasse und Konfession: Katholisches Bürgertum im Rheinland 1794–1914* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994); Rudy Koshar, *Social Life, Local Politics, and Nazism: Marburg, 1880–1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); and Jennifer Jenkins, *Provincial Modernity*. See also Dietmar von Reeken’s important regional study of Protestantism, *Kirchen im Umbruch zur Moderne: Milieubildungsprozesse im nordwestdeutschen Protestantismus 1849–1914* (Gütersloh: Kaiser, 1999).

²⁸See Hong, “Politics of Welfare Reform,” 34–37.

Mission Conference in 1903, included the “liberation of the primitive peoples from their weaknesses and bad habits,” as well as “their intellectual and moral improvement, the awakening of their slumbering good natures and powers, the development of an intellectual maturity and independence and spiritual growth.”²⁹ The Gustav Adolf Association defended the outposts of Protestant Germany—primarily against German-speaking Catholics. At the 1903 annual festival of the Saxe-Gotha Association Pastor Küttner explained that the Association’s mission—pursued “out of strong faith, and full of sincere love”—was “to champion our evangelical compatriots in the diaspora.”³⁰ The Home Mission and the Protestant League focused their energies largely on mission work at home in Germany. These last two will receive closer attention below.

II. POPULAR INVOLVEMENT IN MISSION WORK

The extensive bourgeois involvement in mission work demonstrates an important characteristic of Protestantism in bourgeois culture. Leadership of the mission associations was a veritable “who’s who” of bourgeois society. Many of the same names appear in the different branches of mission work. Leaders included politicians, government officials, judges, schoolteachers and administrators, university professors, bank officers, businessmen, and the publishers Hermann Böhlau, Gustav Fischer, and Andreas Perthes.³¹ Böhlau, a National Liberal and city council representative, served on the governing board of the Association for Home Mission in Thuringia. Fischer was a leader in planning the Jena Lutherfestspiel in 1883. Perthes served as an organizer of the local Home Mission, and joined Böhlau on the governing board of the Thuringian Home Mission. Leadership ranged the political spectrum from left liberals to National liberals and conservatives. The Gustav Adolf Association of Eisenach is emblematic of the political integration of Christian associationalism: local leaders included the National Liberal judge Julius Appelius, the conservative First Mayor Georg Eucken, and the left liberal chairman of the city council, Commercial Councilor Dittenberger.³² Appelius was mayor of Eisenach and state parliament

²⁹“Die Mission als Erzieherin der Völker in unseren Kolonien,” WZ 8 July 1903.

³⁰*Bericht über die am 30. Juni 1903 zu Körner abgehaltene 58. Hauptversammlung des Gothaischen Landesvereins der evangelischen Gustav-Adolf-Stiftung* (Gotha, 1903), 5.

³¹Thüringisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar (hereafter cited as ThHStAW) Kultus Allg. 349, Bl. 52, 54; Gitta Günther, Wolfram Huschke, and Walter Steiner, eds., *Weimar: Lexikon zur Stadtgeschichte* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1993), 48; Gustav Richter, *Das Jenaer Lutherfestspiel. Ein Rechenschaftsbericht im Auftrage des Vorstandes des Lutherspielvereins zu Jena* (Jena: Selbstverlag des Lutherfestspielvereins, 1889), 6–7, 9–13; *Jahresbericht der freien Vereinigung für Innere Mission im Herzogtum Gotha über das Jahr 1903 nebst Bericht über das 14. Jahresfest am 28. Oktober 1903 zu Gotha* (Gotha: Perthes, n.d.), 2.

representative from 1871 to 1897. Eucken served as state representative from 1894 to 1902. Dittenberger, a contributor to a publication of the Association for Social Policy (*Verein für Sozialpolitik*), was also active in various other religious associations and events. In Thuringia, however, liberals were particularly prominent. They were men like businessman and National Liberal leader Louis Döllstädt of Weimar, a guiding figure in the Home Mission's efforts to fight against begging and to establish hostels for itinerant workers, and District Administrator Karl Baumbach of Sonneberg, a leader of left liberalism in Thuringia and a board member of his local Home Mission.³³ Döllstädt was one of the leading men in the administration of the city of Weimar and served on the public school board. Baumbach organized the new Liberal Union in Thuringia in 1880 and acted as a driving force in the formation of the Thuringian branch of the German Freethinkers Party in 1884.

The clergy, too, was prominent in bourgeois associational life.³⁴ In Weimar, Bernhard Hesse—the Grand Duchy's highest-ranking clergyman and a religious and political liberal³⁵—was active in the leadership of Foreign Mission efforts in Weimar.³⁶ He served Weimar as a delegate to the national convention of the Gustav Adolf Foundation in 1883.³⁷ He chaired the Pauline Foundation, an association to support young women servants,³⁸ sponsored an association to aid paroled prisoners, and was a leader in the campaign in Weimar to establish a hostel for itinerant workers.³⁹ This latter effort was spearheaded by Weimar's Association to Uplift the Moral and Religious Life of the People,⁴⁰ founded by Bernhard Hesse, who also led the

³²See Hess, *Geschichte Thüringens*, 210; WZ 9 November 1883, 8 October 1889, 12 January 1890; ThHStAW Kultus Allg. 261, 262, 344, Ministerialnachlässe J 174; Dittenberger, "Die bauerlichen Verhältnisse des Eisenacher Unterlandes," in *Bäuerliche Zustände in Deutschland*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Erwin Nasse, 1883).

³³Hess, *Geschichte Thüringens*, 157–61, 382, 457–59; WZ 7 May 1884, 9 October 1884, 12 January 1887, 12 January 1890; Günther, et al, eds., *Weimar*, 92–93; Thüringisches Staatsarchiv Meiningen (hereafter cited as ThStAM), Staatsmin. Abt. für Kirchen- und Schulsachen, Vertrags-Archiv Landeskirchenrat Eisenach Allg. 32; Erhard Wörfel, "Liberalismus in den thüringischen Staaten im Kaiserreich," *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Thüringische Geschichte* 47 (1993): 130, 134.

³⁴On the involvement of the Protestant clergy in bourgeois public culture and associational life, see especially Frank-Michael Kuhlemann, *Bürgerlichkeit und Religion: Zur Sozial- und Mentalitätsgeschichte der evangelischen Pfarrer in Baden 1860–1914* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001).

³⁵See Rudolf Herrmann, *Thüringische Kirchengeschichte* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1947), 2:409–10.

³⁶WZ 28 May 1884, 7 June 1884.

³⁷WZ 4 September 1883.

³⁸WZ 29 May 1884.

³⁹Herrmann, *Thüringische Kirchengeschichte*, 2:409.

⁴⁰Bernhard Hesse stood apart from Lutheran confessionalism, the dominant theological position of the Home Mission in Thuringia. Thus, this association pursued the same work as the Home Mission without formally affiliating with it.

committee charged with planning Weimar's Luther festival in 1883.⁴¹ Prominent clergymen active in Gotha's Home Mission were General Superintendent Felix Kretschmar (the state's senior churchman, who founded and for many years led the Gotha Home Mission), Church Councilor Gustav Rudloff, and Superintendents Reinhard Müller and Hermann Müller.⁴² Rudloff, who served as secretary of the board of the Saxe-Gotha Protestant League, was also active in politics. He ran for the *Reichstag* in 1893 as a National Liberal. Kretschmar, too, was energetically engaged in the Protestant League.⁴³ Such dual membership signifies the overlap of the associations' religious goals. Deacon Winter joined school teachers and business and political elites in Sonneberg (Saxe-Meiningen) in running the local Home Mission.⁴⁴ Winter's engagement with the Sonneberg elite brought him into close working contact with leaders of one of the Empire's strongest bastions of left liberalism. All of this involvement evidences both the bourgeois public engagement of the clergy and the religious tone of bourgeois public discourse.

III. TWO MISSION ASSOCIATIONS

The Home Mission, whose focus was on solving moral and social problems at home, bound together diverse community efforts including the distribution of good literature, organization and administration of Raiffeisen savings and loan associations, tutelage of the maturing youth, and the housing and policing of itinerant workers and vagabonds.⁴⁵ Women's branches provided childcare for working mothers and care of the sick, invalids, and the poor (the three often grouped together as one area of welfare). Through the Home Mission, activists sought to uplift the lower classes and to construct or

⁴¹WZ 3 and 7 July 1883.

⁴²*Jahresbericht der freien Vereinigung für Innere Mission im Herzogtum Gotha über das Jahr 1903 nebst Bericht über das 14. Jahresfest am 28. Oktober 1903 zu Gotha.* (Gotha: Druck von Friedrich Andreas Perthes, Aktiengesellschaft, n.d.), 2, 9. On Kretschmar, see also Herrmann, *Thüringische Kirchengeschichte*, 416.

⁴³*Mitteilungen des S.-Gothaischen Hauptvereins des Evangelischen Bundes als Einladung zu der Hauptversammlung am 31. Oktober 1894 4 Uhr Nachmittags im großen Saale der "Herberge zur Heimat" zu Gotha.* (Gotha, 1894); Herrmann, *Thüringische Kirchengeschichte*, 2:503–4.

⁴⁴ThStAM, Staatsmin. Abt. für Kirchen- und Schulsachen, Vertrags-Archiv Landeskirchenrat Eisenach Allg. 32.

⁴⁵On the breadth of activity of the confessional associations, see Gerhard Kratzsch, "Vereine mit ideellen Zwecken im 19. Jahrhundert. Ein Beitrag zur Vereinsgeschichte der Provinz Westfalen," in *Weltpolitik Europagedanke Regionalismus*, ed. Heinz Dollinger, Horst Gründer, and Alwin Hanschmidt (Münster: Aschendorff, 1982), 209; Klaus Tenfelde, "Die Entfaltung des Vereinswesens während der Industriellen Revolution in Deutschland (1850–1873)," in *Vereinswesen*, 67–68; Christoph Sachße and Florian Tennstedt, *Geschichte der Armenfürsorge in Deutschland*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1998), 1:224–42.

re-construct a harmonious national community free from class or party strife. Thuringian Protestants saw this as a moral and a spiritual question. They intended the Home Mission to heal rifts in society by helping those who had lost their way to embrace appropriate values.

The Home Mission was decentralized and often quite informally perceived and organized. It was as much an idea of Christian social action, as it was an institution. Lists of Home Mission efforts regularly included groups and activities not formally associated with the institutional Home Mission. Efforts of the Home Mission included all works of Christian charity to which it gave the stimulus, or to whose advancement the Home Mission wished to draw its members' attention. In a clarification printed in the *Weimarische Zeitung* in 1884, a spokesman explained that if the Home Mission included in their annual reports efforts not flowing strictly from the association, it certainly did not seek to take credit for those works. Its goal was to make known the yearly growth of the scope of these works of "eminent practical importance." The Home Mission also sought to offer itself to these independent institutions as helper and as "representative of the thought behind them, helping charity in the spirit and with the power of evangelical Christianity." Religiously motivated charity at home was, by definition, home mission; consequently, social reform and efforts to build the Kingdom of God were inseparable.⁴⁶

A closer look at three fields of mission work—Raiffeisen savings and loan associations, the effort to fight vagabondage, and the mission to delinquent children—serves to reveal the nature of the Home Mission. Local clergymen working through the Home Mission were the driving force in the establishment of Raiffeisen savings and loan associations⁴⁷ in Thuringia, a movement that blossomed in the late 1880s.⁴⁸ Pastor Menzel of Haina stood at the lead of the Gotha union of Raiffeisen savings and loan associations that included 23 branch associations.⁴⁹ The chairman of the Jena district Raiffeisen organization was a town pastor.⁵⁰ Clergymen in Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt, too, founded Raiffeisen associations.⁵¹ A report from Meiningen

⁴⁶WZ 11 July 1884. This localized, decentralized, and informal nature may be one reason why the Home Mission has been largely overlooked by historians. A major exception is von Reeken, *Kirchen im Umbruch zur Moderne*.

⁴⁷On agricultural savings and loan associations, see Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte*, 1:202. Nipperdey does not mention any connection to Protestant clergy or the Home Mission.

⁴⁸Of forty-three such associations existent in Thuringia in 1889, four-fifths had been founded in the previous two years. WZ 23 February 1890.

⁴⁹*Jahresbericht der freien Vereinigung für Innere Mission im Herzogtum Gotha über das Jahr 1903 nebst Bericht über das 14. Jahresfest am 28. Oktober 1903 zu Gotha*, 17.

⁵⁰WZ 2 June 1898.

⁵¹Thüringisches Staatsarchiv Rudolstadt, Ministerium Rudolstadt. Vertrags-Archiv Landeskirchenrat Eisenach. Allg. 122, especially Ephorialjahresbericht über die Diözese Frankenhäusen am/Kyffh. pro 1898.

emphasized the institution's religious roots: "Since in our state the organization of the Raiffeisen savings and loan is a child of the Home Mission, it is to be greeted with special thanks that in great numbers the clergymen of the affected parishes have taken on the founding and leadership of these associations." The Meiningen Home Mission expressed the hope that those who drew benefit would remember the church roots of these organizations.⁵²

The activists of the Raiffeisen movement perceived in these institutions a religious and social institution to improve society and to generate community. Pastor August César of Wiesenthal, speaking on welfare in rural areas at the annual conference of the Saxe-Gotha Home Mission, called Raiffeisen associations an "educator to community spirit."⁵³ The Meiningen Home Mission agreed; the institution would positively affect community morality. Through them, resentment and hate—which endangered social peace, and gave advantage to the Social Democrats—would be avoided.⁵⁴ Here again a close connection between evangelization and social activism is evident in an institution that would otherwise not obviously come to be associated with religion.

Contemporaries understood vagabondage to be not simply a social but also a religious and a moral problem.⁵⁵ This is evidenced, for example, by a speech given by Church Councilor Förtsch of Buttstädt at the 1883 annual festival of the Association for Home Mission in Weimar. Förtsch explained that the association sought to care for the spiritual and moral well-being of the people, and that "the fight against vagabondage" was a part of that care.⁵⁶ The Weimar Area Home Mission Association thus described the system of support in kind, in connection with a network of hostels and a workers colony, as an institution of general benefit to the community, one that held great moral and social significance and that rested on a Christian foundation.⁵⁷

The religious nature of the anti-begging campaign is demonstrated by its close connection with the Home Mission. The mission field drew inspiration, support, and personnel from the Home Mission. Leaders of the Home Mission all over Thuringia and Germany either founded hostels and associations themselves or encouraged others in the community to do so. The Weimar Association for the Uplifting of the Moral-Religious Life of the

⁵²From *Vierte Vereinsschrift des S.-Meiningen'schen Landesvereins für Innere Mission, 1892 auf 1893*. Found in ThStAM, Staatsmin. Abt. für Kirchen- und Schulsachen, Vertrags-Archiv Landeskirchenrat Eisenach Allg. 32, Bl. 174.

⁵³*Jahresbericht der freien Vereinigung für Innere Mission im Herzogtum Gotha über das Jahr 1903 nebst Bericht über das 14. Jahresfest am 28. Oktober 1903 zu Gotha*, 4–6.

⁵⁴*Vierte Vereinsschrift des S.-Meiningen'schen Landesvereins für Innere Mission, 1892 auf 1893*.

⁵⁵See WZ 28 September 1881, 10 August 1884, 23 February 1890.

⁵⁶WZ 23 June 1883.

⁵⁷WZ 10 August 1884.

People (Home Mission), for instance, was the driving force in the establishment of the local hostel. The Home Mission in the Eisenach highland maintained hostels in a number of towns.⁵⁸ There was significant overlap in personnel on the boards of the Home Mission and the associations against vagabondage.⁵⁹ The Home Mission and the vagabond associations cooperated closely. The Weimar District Association for Home Mission gave active support to the local anti-vagabond association, especially through co-oversight of its hostels.⁶⁰ The Weimar Home Mission even distributed a circular to clergymen in towns with a hostel, urging them to cooperate in the supervision of the stations.⁶¹ The Home Mission in some towns, including Jena, sponsored journeymen's associations in connection with local hostels.⁶² Finally, many hostel house wardens received their training at Home Mission institutions like the Rauhes Haus in Hamburg.⁶³

The workers colonies, too, were presented as religious institutions, and the influence of the Home Mission is evident. It was, for instance, the Weimar District Association for Home Mission that urged the construction of a workers colony for Thuringia, "the crossroads land in the heart of Germany."⁶⁴ And it was school director Dr. Füllner of Gotha, member of the governing board of the Association for Home Mission in Thuringia, who, in November 1884 in Weimar, called the first meeting of the Central Committee for the Establishment of a Workers Colony for Thuringia.⁶⁵ The Association for German Workers Colonies, meeting in Berlin in early 1884, demonstrated this commitment at the national level when it resolved that hostels should stand under the oversight of men who would ensure that they exercise a "religious-moral influence" on their visitors. The assembly passed a resolution that urged both Protestant and Catholic Church governments to support workers' colonies and hostels.⁶⁶ This view drove the reporting of the opening of the workers colony at Geilsdorf, where the *Weimarische Zeitung* correspondent called the colony "an achievement of 'practical Christianity'"

⁵⁸WZ 23 February 1890.

⁵⁹As was the case in Weimar. While the Weimar Association against Vagabondage was institutionally independent of the Home Mission, its board was made up primarily of members of the Weimar association for Home Mission. See the 1883 annual report of the Association for Home Mission in the Weimar District, printed in WZ 15 July 1883.

⁶⁰From the 1883 annual report of the Association for Home Mission in the Weimar District, WZ 15 July 1883.

⁶¹From their annual report printed in WZ 27 July 1884.

⁶²WZ 3 August 1884.

⁶³As, for instance, in Weimar. WZ 3 July 1883.

⁶⁴WZ 10 August 1884.

⁶⁵WZ 9 September 1884.

⁶⁶WZ 16 February 1884.

and concluded his essay with the poem inscribed over the colony's entrance: "Bestow Your peace on this house / and on all who live within; / In faith unite them!"⁶⁷

Care for delinquent youth was the earliest work of the Home Mission.⁶⁸ Protestant youth care also perceived its mission field as a combination of social (poverty) and religious-moral (sin) issues. The motto of the Salzungen (Saxe-Meiningen) education association demonstrates this:

I am worried about the little ones,
How bitter is their crying!
The child's nakedness, hunger and anguish
Cuts deeply into our hearts
But when the child sins,
It charges us before God's throne.⁶⁹

The motto underlines the Christian duty placed at the heart of the youth salvation campaign. The problem of youth delinquency was clearly perceived as both social and moral—social deprivation compounded by moral delinquency. The solution to the social and moral ills of youth delinquency was both social and moral-religious. Through the efforts of these associations, delinquent children were to come "under the influence of a healthy Christian life."⁷⁰ The advocates of this effort looked back proudly on the pioneering work of Johannes Falk, who founded a home for boys in Weimar in 1813. These youth care associations organized, funded, and administered reform schools⁷¹ and placed less delinquent children with foster families, where they remained under the supervision of the associations. The effort experienced a surge of new activity beginning in the 1880s, parallel to the explosion of "secular" associations.⁷² As a report of the Education

⁶⁷"Eröffnung thüringischen Arbeiterkolonie," in WZ 31 July 1889.

⁶⁸On Wichern, the family, and the Home Mission, see Sachße and Tennstedt, *Geschichte der Armenfürsorge*, esp. 1:229–30.

⁶⁹*Bericht des Erziehungs-Vereins in Salzungen für das Jahre 1897*. Found in ThStAM, Inneres Neu 4896/1.

⁷⁰From "Erziehungs-Verein," offprint from *Salzunger Tageblatt* Nr. 64 und 65 1897. Found in ThStAM, Inneres Neu 4896/1.

⁷¹A number of reform schools (*Rettungshäuser*) were founded as institutions of the Home Mission in Thuringia after 1848: in Karolinenfeld in Reuß older line in 1850, in Hoheleuben (Reuß younger line) in 1855, and the "Georgen- und Marienhaus" near Meuselwitz (Saxe-Altenburg) in 1855. Others that followed included the *Fischhaus* near Hermannsfeld (Saxe-Meiningen) in 1860, Tiefenort in the Eisenach Highland in 1881 (Saxe-Weimar), the *Karl-Marienhaus* in Ebeleben (Schwarzburg-Sondershausen), and the *Wilhelmsstift* in Frankenhausen (Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt) in 1896. See Herrmann, *Thüringische Kirchengeschichte*, 2:555.

⁷²On the expansion of associational life at the end of the nineteenth century, see David Blackburn, "The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie: Reappraising German History in the Nineteenth Century," in Blackburn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University

Association in the Meiningen District, founded 1880, explained, “No other branch of the Home Mission in our land has developed so quickly and has found such general participation and approval.”⁷³ The youth care associations found a large, solid core of members, while “generous donations” flowed into their coffers.⁷⁴

The Home Mission understood care for delinquent youth to be part of its mission field; it thus urged the founding of youth-care associations, and offered them generous assistance.⁷⁵ Thus the impulse to found the Meiningen District Education Association came from the 1879 meeting of the Thuringian conference for Home Mission, held in Meiningen. So, as Major von Schweder—chairman of the Education Association and a board member of Saxe-Meiningen’s Home Mission⁷⁶—put it: “Our association is truly a child of the Home Mission, or, to speak plainly, of free Christian associationalism.”⁷⁷ The association recognized this connection explicitly in its appeal to the public in January 1880. Association leaders wanted thereby to emphasize the association’s Christian roots. This was further demonstrated in the expressed mission of foster parents, who were bound to hold the child true “to church, school, and fear of God.” Von Schweder believed that every association member without doubt shared this sentiment.⁷⁸

The Christian mission to save delinquent youth similarly combined a social and moral-religious objective in seeking to instill faith, character, and values. The Tiefenort reform school sought to educate delinquent children to a “living fear of God and Christian love” and to help them become “morally competent and socially useful people (*sittlich tüchtige und bürgerlich*

Press, 1984), 195; Blackbourn, “The German bourgeoisie: An Introduction,” in *The German Bourgeoisie*, ed. Blackbourn and Richard Evans (London: Routledge, 1991), 11–12; Kosher, *Social Life, Local Politics, and Nazism*, 4, 91–107; Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte*, 1:168.

⁷³*Jahres-Bericht des Erziehungs-Vereins im Kreise Meiningen für das Jahr 1891–1892*, 2. Found in ThStAM, Inneres Neu 4896/1.

⁷⁴From “Erziehungs-Verein,” *Salzunger Tageblatt* Nr. 64 und 65 1897. Local associations of the Home Mission provided funds to the reform schools. On funds for the reform school in Tiefenort, see for example the report on the Apolda association in WZ 19 September 1889. Dornburg’s diocese association also focused its efforts on Tiefenort as reported in WZ 21 September 1889. The Association for Home Mission in the Eisenach highland gave twenty Marks (of one hundred available Marks for donation) to the reform school at Tiefenort in 1889. WZ 27 September 1889.

⁷⁵The Weimar District Association for Home Mission, for instance, resolved in 1884 to assist wherever possible efforts to rehabilitate delinquent children. WZ 3 August 1884.

⁷⁶ThStAM, Staatsmin. Abt. für Kirchen- und Schulsachen, Vertrags-Archiv Landeskirchenrat Eisenach Allg. 32.

⁷⁷The Saalfeld area association too saw itself as part of free Christian associationalism (*freien christlichen Vereinsthätigkeit*). See *Jahres-Bericht des Erziehungs-Vereins im Kreise Meiningen für das Jahr 1882*, 3. Found in ThStAM, Inneres Neu 4896/1.

⁷⁸*Jahresbericht des Erziehungs-Vereins im Kreise Meiningen für das Jahr 1882*, 2.

brauchbare Menschen).⁷⁹ The objective was one of social reform: “Children from the neediest conditions, through upbringing and education, were led to a better path of life and a higher social position, and torn from hereditary poverty.”⁸⁰ Youth activists sought to teach children to be good Christians and to mold them to fit into bourgeois society.

The family offered a uniquely Christian pedagogical tool. Saxe-Meiningen’s Saalfeld area association, for instance—affirming its roots in the Home Mission—began its statutes with the statement: “The association has the goal to place children lost to delinquency in orderly families, in which prevails a Christian discipline (*Zucht*).”⁸¹ The Sonneberg association also placed endangered children only with good families that practiced Christian discipline.⁸² Similarly, reform schools, modeled after Johann Hinrich Wichern’s Rauhes Haus, were intended to be “communities with educational, religious, and economic functions, communities of families.” The reform school at Tiefenort, for instance, hoped to positively influence children through discipline and order, through moral habituation, and through the influence of an ordered intellectual and physical activity, but above all through “the development of the strength of character (*Gemüthskräfte*)” within the scheme of “a family life based in Protestant faith.”⁸³

Protestant youth-savers consequently sought to attach troubled youth to a “family.”⁸⁴ Activists here reemphasized the fundamentally Christian nature of the family. In foster homes children would gain a feeling for the blessings and the sanctity “of a good German home.” The Meiningen association held steadfastly to its basic precept that “the foundation of every healthy society” was “the morally ordered family, this humanity in miniature, this ‘church of God in miniature,’ as Luther called it.”⁸⁵ The Salzungen association expected that in their foster homes, children would come “under the influence of a healthy Christian life.”⁸⁶

The Protestant League has often been only partially understood. The League has received a good deal of attention from historians, who have focused on the anti-Catholic and nationalist aspects of the organization.⁸⁷ The League was

⁷⁹WZ 2 October 1881.

⁸⁰From “Erziehungs-Verein,” *Salzunger Tageblatt* Nr. 64 und 65 1897.

⁸¹*Jahresbericht des Erziehungs-Vereins im Kreise Meiningen für das Jahr 1882*, 3.

⁸²*Jahresbericht des Waisen- und Erziehungs-Vereins im Kreise Sonneberg auf die Zeit vom 20. Mai 1883 bis 31. März 1884*.

⁸³WZ 2 October 1881.

⁸⁴Sachße and Tennstedt, *Geschichte der Armenfürsorge*, 1:229.

⁸⁵*Jahres-Bericht des Erziehungs-Vereins im Kreise Meiningen für das Jahr 1887–1888*, 2–3. Found in ThStAM, Inneres Neu 4896/1.

⁸⁶From “Erziehungs-Verein,” *Salzunger Tageblatt* Nr. 64 und 65 1897.

⁸⁷For a history of the League, see Walter Fleischmann-Bisten and Heiner Grote, eds., *Protestanten auf dem Wege. Geschichte des Evangelischen Bundes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986).

founded as the *Kulturkampf* was being laid to rest by the German state. It became an organization that drew support from a large number of German liberals and nationalists who continued to see the Catholic Church as a danger to the unification of the German people.⁸⁸ In one sense, the Protestant League was an anti-Catholic institution, a continuation of the *Kulturkampf* by other means. Historians also recognize the League's support for the National Liberals after the turn of the century.⁸⁹ For most historians who have examined the League, its Protestantism took a distant second place to its anti-ultramontanism and its national focus.⁹⁰

Historians who have interpreted the Protestant League in this manner have failed to recognize the degree to which the League was also a religious institution. The League sought to reawaken Protestant faith, to reinvigorate a sense of Protestant community, and to unify the different branches of German Protestantism. German liberalism was thoroughly Protestant in its worldview, so League support for National Liberalism was consistent with religious engagement. And the *Kulturkampf* was always more than an attack on Catholicism; it was equally an effort by Protestant liberals and nationalists to modernize Germany. In a press release in early May 1887, League founders explained that they sought not only to defend Protestant interests in the fight with Rome, but also “in the face of the indifference and faithlessness of the times to strengthen Christian-Protestant community feeling, in the face of crippling party politics to nurture inner-Church peace, [and] against the state-church division of Protestant Germany to encourage and increase interrelations between the members of the individual state churches.”⁹¹ Part of the problem in the historiography of the Protestant League is that most studies have overlooked its local and regional vitality. Nationally, the league represented the Protestant middle ground theologically and church-politically, and was thus centered on political anti-Catholicism.⁹² At the national level the League may have had to try to appeal across the political and Protestant theological spectrum, and thus to simplify to the lowest common denominator. The League was, however, highly decentralized—as were other Protestant mission associations.

⁸⁸The Protestant League has rightly been described as an anti-Catholic institution, a continuation of the *Kulturkampf* by other means. It played an important part in nationalizing Protestantism. Helmut Smith has located in the Protestant League a rallying point for anti-Catholic sentiment that had profound impact on national politics. Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict*.

⁸⁹Thomas Nipperdey wrote that the League went from being an “anti-ultramontane propaganda exchange and pressure group” to essentially functioning as a campaign organization for the National Liberal Party, a sentiment seconded by Helmut Smith. Nipperdey, *Religion im Umbruch*, 81; Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict*, 130–38.

⁹⁰See especially Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict*.

⁹¹WZ 8 May 1887.

⁹²Nipperdey, *Religion im Umbruch*, 81.

At the local level, where religious community might be much more homogeneous, the League could and did hold a more positive religious vision. Such was the sentiment behind Saxe-Meiningen League's declaration that its purposes were not only to "defend Protestant interests in all respects against the growing power of Rome" but also to "strengthen Protestant community awareness."⁹³ Richard Lipsius addressed an assembly of the Preachers' Association in Weimar meeting to discuss the founding of a local branch of the Protestant League. After an attack on Catholicism, Lipsius lamented the fact that the Protestant Church suffered from divisions in state churches and theological parties, and from the "irresponsible laxness and indifference" of many of its members. The Protestant League, as an apolitical institution, would preserve and strengthen "awareness of the high value of Protestant faith."⁹⁴

These declarations of religious intent were born out by activities of the local and regional associations. The League organized popular public events that convened large numbers of people in a religious context and popularized the public preaching of the gospel. A main activity of the local Protestant League associations in Saxe-Gotha was the staging of public lectures. Church history predominated as topic without precluding the discussion of current events and the "Christian endeavors of the present." Occasions for celebration were also offered by the 400th birthdays of Philipp Melancthon (1897) and Katharina von Bora (1899) and the 350th anniversary of Luther's death (1896).⁹⁵ A public assembly in Jena in 1890 featured diatribes against the ultramontane threat, but it also provided a worshipful atmosphere.⁹⁶

Local associations of Saxe-Weimar's State Association of the League sponsored frequent public meetings and family evenings. Arch-Deacon Grimm, speaking on "Piety and Morality," preached "love, charity, and active works full of joy in accomplishment" toward all "God's children," who are through Him all brothers.⁹⁷ Privy Church Counselor Förtsch, speaking "to the heart," urged that "it is necessary, particularly in our times, for every Protestant to stand fast and resolutely to his Protestant faith and to recognize ever more clearly and feel ever more thankfully what rich blessing he receives from the Reformation."⁹⁸ Deacon Arper asked, "What do we have of our Protestant Church and what should she have of us?" His answer

⁹³ThStAM, Staatsmin. Abt. für Kirchen- und Schulsachen. Vertrags-Archiv Landeskirchenrat Eisenach Allg. 47.

⁹⁴WZ 8 May 1887.

⁹⁵[Albert von Bamberg], *Der Evangelische Bund und der Hauptverein S. Gotha 1894–1900* (Gotha, 1900).

⁹⁶WZ 21 February 1890.

⁹⁷WZ 20 March 1890.

⁹⁸WZ 26 March 1893.

was, “She is our mighty fortress and we should be her faithful and courageous citizens!”⁹⁹ Chairman Jacobi was proud of the Saxe-Weimar League’s progress. He said in 1909 that “In the communities of our state it seeks to awaken ever more interest and participation in its mission: the defense and care of Protestant life.”¹⁰⁰

The Weimar League sponsored annual celebrations on Luther’s Birthday. The celebration usually included sermons, lectures, and music. A report on a Luther evening in 1911 suggested the evening’s activities had dispelled the common perception that the League too often “wields the sword,” and “sees its mission only as the struggle against Rome.” The reporter explained that the League sought to bring to and uphold for the German people “the inexhaustible richness and the living power of Protestantism, the ever emerging treasures of Lutheranism.” In this, he continued, the League saw its highest calling and vowed that to fight for this the League would “shy away from no sacrifice.”¹⁰¹ At the local level in Thuringia the public presence of the Protestant League was marked more than anything else by this emphasis on community building and evangelization.

IV. THE PUBLIC DISCOURSE OF PROTESTANTISM

Concern appeared in the pages of the *Weimarische Zeitung* over the large sections of the nation that were falling away from the Christian religion, but the paper embraced a conviction that the majority had not and would never lose its faith.

Individuals may turn away from God, whole nations may for a time allow themselves to be diverted from Him, but it is unthinkable that humanity could distance itself for long from the divinely ordained direction of life, that the great pathfinder and leader to the heavenly *Heimat*, Jesus Christ, could ever lose his influence on humanity. As the compass needle . . . always points to the North, the flowers always turn towards heaven, it cannot be otherwise, the urge toward God is innate in [humanity].

In the idea of a “heavenly *Heimat*,” the Kingdom of God and a nineteenth-century idea of the German nation were fused. The *Weimarische Zeitung* saw such a spirit of faith as invaluable to the nation’s fortune: “Yes, if only this spirit of its heroes was ever alive in the German people!”¹⁰² The association of German-ness and Christianity emerged in a number of contexts. Voters

⁹⁹WZ 19 January 1907.

¹⁰⁰WZ 20 June 1909.

¹⁰¹WZ 15 November 1911.

¹⁰²“Himmelfahrt,” WZ 7 May 1902.

heard that a true German must naturally embrace Protestantism, and “a German-feeling man” must, as a matter of course, turn from socialist teachings of “the degradation of religion to a private enjoyment.”¹⁰³ And mission enthusiasts learned that they should emulate Paul Gerhardt—a composer of hymns—by being “truly German, deeply pious, true to the faith,” and by fighting “for right and truth.”¹⁰⁴

Bourgeois Protestants celebrated the role of mission work in creating community. Hugo Kieser explained that “the interest in mission can serve as the pulse of Christianity and give witness of the inner life of the congregation of the Lord.”¹⁰⁵ Engagement in the mission fields was an essential aspect of being part of a Christian community. As Pastor Leberl, speaking to a crowd gathered for the Tiefenort Foreign Mission festival in 1884, explained, “The Home Mission, which brings the gospel to the suffering and poor and those estranged from God, and the Foreign Mission, which proclaims the word of God to the heathens,” must be accompanied by “the most inner mission in one’s own heart, which asks: do you too have the proper living faith?”¹⁰⁶

Community through collective struggle was a common refrain from the Protestant League. At a meeting of the Thuringian Foreign Mission Conference in 1893, for instance, Jena theology professor Friedrich Nippold celebrated the unifying effect of mission work, which had brought together almost the entire theological spectrum in a common effort.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, one of the co-founders of Jena’s Protestant League, Professor von der Goltz, explained that the League sought both to fight Rome *and* to strengthen the Protestant church—the latter being the more important, and more difficult, task. As von der Goltz said, “The main issue remains the strengthening of Protestant identity. This will come of its own accord through the common struggle.”¹⁰⁸ Superintendent Niese, speaking before the 1910 Kaltennordheim diocese conference, explained that the League was part of the effort to create living congregations, “in which Protestant identity glows.” Niese encouraged all to become enthusiastic members.¹⁰⁹

One of the founding purposes of the Gustav Adolf Association was the effort to bring together Protestants of all theological and political leanings.¹¹⁰

¹⁰³ According to the correspondent covering a socialist election rally. WZ 14 February 1890.

¹⁰⁴ WZ 29 June 1884.

¹⁰⁵ WZ 10 December 1897.

¹⁰⁶ WZ 20 July 1884.

¹⁰⁷ WZ 2 July 1893.

¹⁰⁸ WZ 4 May 1887.

¹⁰⁹ ThHStAW Kultus Allg. 71.

¹¹⁰ Hans-Eckard Niermann, “Der Evangelische Verein der Gustav-Adolf-Stiftung 1832–1945. Ein Überblick,” *Monatshefte für Evangelische Kirchengeschichte des Rheinlandes* 40 (1991): 283–84.

Champions of the Gustav Adolf Association regularly attacked the evils of Catholicism or ultramontaniam. Support of the association in the face of “Catholic cravings for domination and violation” was “a holy duty, a duty of self-preservation for the Protestant church as well as for every individual parish.” On the other hand, it was more important that the community participate in the work of the association “for the love of a work that, as hardly any other, through its acts declares itself truly Evangelical-Protestant, born of true Luther-spirit.” One Gustav-Adolf activist concluded that “the noblest aim” of the association was to awaken and to build such feelings.¹¹¹ The struggle against Rome, as carried on by the Protestant League and the Gustav Adolf Association, was thus at least in part aimed at strengthening the German Protestant community at home. It should be noted that the kind of community building that was going on here has been recognized by historians as a key aspect of local politics.¹¹²

Public Protestant discourse encouraged a bourgeois religiosity focusing on the moral authority, capacity, and calling (*Beruf*) to improve the world. Protestant mission was modern, bourgeois, even liberal. As Thomas Nipperdey notes, “duty and service . . . and more generally: sacrifice and dedication to the whole” was very Protestant and, “to our amazement—also thoroughly the liberal ethos of the time.”¹¹³ Thuringians unselfconsciously entwined liberal ideology with Protestant theology. A member of the audience at a *Lutherfestspiel* wrote that:

I feel myself a living member transported into the Protestant national community. It was as if I fought alongside him for Protestant consciousness, as though I strove, I worked, I fought with him for the liberation of my soul from the enslaving yoke of the letter and of deception, as though I raised myself with him to the heights of a spiritually purified faith and to the enjoyment of heavenly peace on the basis of a conscience reconciled with God.¹¹⁴

Here we see an individual fighting in the service of national progress. This was action against superstition and foreign domination. The struggle to establish a relationship with God offered personal independence, intellectual-spiritual

¹¹¹From a report on the upcoming annual festival of Weimar’s branch association, WZ 28 June 1883.

¹¹²As Thomas Nipperdey has argued, “Communal politics . . . was tightly interwoven with the net of associations of a city—there was a basis of public recognition (*Geltung*) and activity.” Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte*, 1:169. Similarly, Rudy Koshar explains that in German small cities like Marburg, “unevenly organized bourgeois parties were nested in a wide field of clubs and associations.” Koshar, *Social Life, Local Politics, and Nazism*, 7.

¹¹³Nipperdey, *Religion im Umbruch*, 104.

¹¹⁴Richter, *Das Jenaer Lutherfestspiel*, 52.

freedom. This passage thus demonstrates an association of liberal and religious values: national and Protestant community, liberation, independence, faith, and engagement in the world. It is also an example of the kind of moral authority Protestantism offered liberal civic activism.

Social reform and evangelization were intimately entwined in the pronouncements of mission activists. In 1897 Senior Pastor Nagel of Lobeda (a suburb of Jena) connected social ills and religious errors of New Guinea, suggesting that the Foreign Mission had to address social as well as moral and religious problems.¹¹⁵ Similarly, the chairman of a Sonneberg association to combat youth delinquency, the Orphan and Education Association, explained in 1884 that the association had religious-ethical as well as practical motives in its approach to the “social question.” Speaking at the association’s first annual conference in 1884, he explained that “the grand theories for the disentangling of the ‘Gordian knot’ of the social question could be left to the philosophers and national economists; the new association would not decide whether and to what degree the state had a responsibility to solve the social question, and they would certainly not ‘hack through’ the social question with the ‘sword of social revolution (*Umwälzung*)’.”¹¹⁶ He had no patience for an extended debate about the causes and nature of the “social question,” and he stood staunchly opposed to socialism. He called instead for immediate, practical, Christian social engagement to improve the lives of the less fortunate.

V. MISSION VALUES

A sense of common values served to unify the bourgeoisie, and those values were closely associated with the Reformation and Protestantism. As Nipperdey points out, “obedience and faithfulness to duty, intelligence, objectivity, and tolerance,” which were “the elements of bourgeois-political morality,” were also “the subject of religious, of Protestant education.”¹¹⁷ Thuringian activists from across the mission fields elaborated such Christian bourgeois values. According to the Gotha Society for the Commonweal, the highest *Christian* ideals were “Freedom, equality, brotherliness, and the resulting general happiness.”¹¹⁸ The Thuringian Foreign Mission Conference

¹¹⁵WZ 10 December 1897.

¹¹⁶*Jahresbericht des Waisen- und Erziehungs-Vereins im Kreise Sonneberg auf die Zeit vom 20. Mai 1883 bis 31. März 1884*, 4. Found in ThStAM, Inneres Neu 4896/1.

¹¹⁷Nipperdey, *Religion im Umbruch*, 103–4.

¹¹⁸“Christenthum und Socialismus,” in *Flugblätter der Gemeinnützigen Gesellschaft* 10. Blatt December 1877, 2. Found in Universitäts- und Forschungsbibliothek Erfurt/Gotha, Gothana 4 91 12.

in 1903, held in Roda (Saxe-Altenburg), made clear the complex relationship between Christianity and bourgeois culture in a declaration of its goals:

What does the mission seek to achieve through its pedagogical activities? It aspires to much loftier goals than the education of the blacks to work. Higher culture and obedience, effects of this education, are still not its main objective. It is the liberation of the primitive peoples from their weaknesses and bad habits, their intellectual and moral improvement, the awakening of their slumbering good natures and powers, the development of an intellectual maturity and independence and spiritual growth.¹¹⁹

The values Christian evangelization was to bring—including respect for hard work, order and authority, and intellectual and moral independence and cultivation—were thoroughly bourgeois and liberal.

The bourgeoisie came to place a great deal of weight in the *ideal* of religiosity—of devout Christian faith—and its members expressed that faith often and publicly. The decline of religion in Germany was a matter of dire concern: “If we ever came to the point that human society in its majority was composed of such [godless] types then the world would be a hell, life on it would be a brutal struggle of one against all.”¹²⁰ But many had faith that religion was in good shape. Thus Pastor Kohlschmidt of Denstedt, a speaker for the joint National Liberal and Conservative candidate for Weimar-Appolda in 1890, argued that “the church in the state cannot be spared; in the adversities of life it is, God be praised, still sought out.” The audience rewarded the speech with “roaring applause.”¹²¹ Similarly, the anonymous author of a six-part editorial series on the Reichstag election of 1898 called on the “hearts of all patriots” to support the anti-socialist political alliance. He argued that the “radical and demagogical party” (the socialists) had no “idealistic goals.” He contrasted this with the idealistic and Christian outlook of socialism’s enemies. The pundit celebrated “the idealistic world view, especially founded on church-religious life.”¹²² A world of idealism was thus necessarily a Christian world.

Bourgeois Protestants repeatedly expressed their belief that Germany *needed* religion. Thus the Gotha Society for the Commonweal in 1877 offered a basic truth of Christianity: “we must become better people, if better times are to come.” The Society called for renewed faith: “The more the spirit of Christ fills human souls, the more, too, public conditions will improve, the ravages of socialism will disappear, and the rightful demands of the poor will be fulfilled.”¹²³ The mayors of the Dornburg district (north of Jena) insisted,

¹¹⁹“Die Mission als Erzieherin der Völker in unseren Kolonien,” WZ 8 July 1903.

¹²⁰“Himmelfahrt,” WZ 7 May 1902.

¹²¹WZ 7 February 1890.

¹²²“Die Reichstagswahlen. V,” WZ 12 June 1898.

¹²³“Christenthum und Socialismus,” 3.

“we need a constant awakening and strengthening through all of life . . . and such is only to be expected from religion.”¹²⁴ At the dawn of the 1880s Paul von Bojanowski perceived that Germany was at a crucial moment; the consolidation of the nation was at stake: “Now it is necessary to hold fast to these achievements in the struggle against many enemies, but we can only lead the struggle successfully if we hold fast to the fear of God, which is the solid foundation of moral order in the life of nations (*Völker*).”¹²⁵ Bojanowski argued that the German nation could only succeed if it held fast to its Protestant faith. And in 1907, the Gotha Society for the Commonwealth urged everyone, poor or rich, of high or low birth, to hold fast to a faith in “the crown of eternal life.”¹²⁶ These statements placed responsibility for society’s improvement in the hands of the Protestant bourgeoisie and called them to renew their faith.

Respect for education, combined with the bourgeois calling to uplift the less fortunate, brought bourgeois activists to seek to educate and edify the masses. Protestant activists pursued mission as a pedagogical effort. In 1889 Pastor Nagel, then chairman of the Neustadt a.O. District Association for Mission to the Heathens, described Africa as the “dark continent” not just because of “the races that inhabit it,” the expanses of unexplored territory, and the reigning moral and social conditions, but also because of “the extremely low level of education and faith.”¹²⁷ The Gotha Society for the Commonwealth expressed its support for all educational efforts but averred that “the religious-moral basis” of these efforts must be “maintained and protected.” The society emphasized the *religious* aspect of education, stating that “there is no healthy morality without religion.”¹²⁸ The Luther Festival celebrated the place of Protestantism in education, and especially Luther’s role in educational reform. The author of “Luther in History” touched on Luther’s accomplishments in this respect. Luther, so the story went, had created the public school. His name lived on in every Protestant school, “if only in the catechism.” And even if critics had improved on his pedagogical methods, it remained a contribution of the Reformer that he saw winning the youth as a primary responsibility and that he showed religious instruction to be the heart of education (*Erziehung*).¹²⁹

¹²⁴WZ 21 January 1879.

¹²⁵WZ 1 January 1880.

¹²⁶“Nach uns?” in *Flugblätter der Gothaer Gemeinnützigen Gesellschaft, Gothaischen Zeitung*, Beilage, 1 March 1907. Found in Universitäts- und Forschungsbibliothek Erfurt/Gotha, Gothana 8 92 1.

¹²⁷WZ 26 October 1889. Nagel—chairman of the Association for Mission to the Heathens in the Neustadt [a.O.] District—spoke “On Africa and the Protestant Mission” in Auma before a gathering of about seventy people.

¹²⁸“Christenthum und Socialismus,” 3.

¹²⁹WZ 11 November 1883, 13 November 1883.

Christian mission advocated respect for labor. In a newspaper article that covered most of the front page of the *Weimarische Zeitung*, readers learned that Luther said: “Christians should not go idle. Worry is forbidden to us, but work is not, indeed it is commanded to us to work, until the sweat flows off the nose.” Luther believed, according to the newspaper, that idleness “brings the common man besides the spiritual damage two additional disadvantages: that he neglects his work, and so consumes more than otherwise.” The author believed that Luther’s views on work had had, and continued to have, a great effect on the reform of poor relief. The author pointed to Luther’s words on begging: “No one among the Christians should go begging. He who wants to be poor should not be rich; but if he wants to be rich, so he grabs hold of the plow and seeks it himself from out of the ground. It is not proper that one goes idle on the work of another, becomes rich and lives well on the bad life of another.” And he emphasized another passage of Luther: “No one may go begging, the work-fit poor should work or be expelled, the unfit for work should be cared for, the poorer children should be educated in school, in trade.”¹³⁰

The pedagogical parallels between Foreign Mission and Home Mission here are palpable. Both sought to uplift their clients by teaching them a respect for labor. Pastor Nagel, in a continuation of a speech introduced above, argued that worldly efforts alone could not “bring light into this darkness” of Africa’s “extremely low level of education and faith.” It might only be achieved by “‘the gospel and the plow’—that is, education brought through the gospel, which points the blacks toward work and brings them to Christian faith.”¹³¹ This is exactly what the Home Mission communicated about its mission to the heathens at home, based on Johann Hinrich Wichern’s call to “pray and work.”¹³² The system of hostels and workers’ colonies was a Christian and moralizing institution designed to instill a bourgeois work ethic in its clients. The hostels would, it was hoped, protect young workers from the dangers of pub life, and “through Christian house rules . . . further their physical and moral well being.”¹³³ Government councilor Stier, in an editorial in the *Weimarische Zeitung*, explained that the hostels were places “of purity and of peace” for “orderly” wandering laborers.¹³⁴ Supporters of the colony at Geilsdorf felt that the best assistance they could give, in addition to “the

¹³⁰WZ 9 November 1883. The article was based heavily on Roscher’s History of the National Economy in Germany. Roscher, *Geschichte der Nationalökonomik in Deutschland* (n.p., n.d.). The article was taken from the *Sozialkorresp.*

¹³¹WZ 26 October 1889.

¹³²See Sachße and Tennstedt, *Geschichte der Armenfürsorge*, 1:229.

¹³³WZ 12 December 1881.

¹³⁴WZ 31 July 1883.

necessary physical conditioning,” would be a “strengthened moral sense.”¹³⁵ This was Christian mission with an aim to build good workers.

An important aspect of the significance of mission work to bourgeois identity was the often-asserted belief that mission clients were not Christian. This “heathen” status may be obvious in the mission fields in Africa and Asia, but it was equally important to the bourgeois conception of the work of the Home Mission, whose target was the German lower class. Christian belief was for the Thuringian bourgeoisie an important marker of distinction from the immoral, faithless masses. Thus evangelical moralization was a central element of Protestant bourgeois identity; members of the bourgeoisie perceived their working-class “other” as godless and immoral, and they embraced a common bourgeois mission to save these “heathens.” This godlessness and immorality was also a source of fear for the bourgeoisie.¹³⁶ An association of a perceived working-class dearth of religiosity and social danger was most virulently excoriated in connection with the bourgeois prosecution of socialism. It was also apparent in bourgeois discussions of the social question. Christianization was thus an important plank in bourgeois efforts to integrate the lower class into bourgeois society.

Idealistic, spiritual values were essential to the improvement of the world and to the construction of community. According to J. A. Petzold, chairman of the Weimar pastors’ association and speaking at the Thuringian Conference of the Home Mission in 1881, the solution to society’s problems—a solution based in active faith—was the education of the people; the German people, they urged, must thereby be “reconstituted as one organism.”¹³⁷ Protestant religion served as a central plank of the bourgeois and liberal ideal of social harmony.

Religion was the best and perhaps only defense against socialism. The Gotha Society for the Commonweal in 1877 expressed its belief that “socialism will yield only to truthful, living Christianity.” They argued that without a Christian motivation, there could be no supportable ideological basis of opposition to socialism. Without a Christian basis, the society claimed, anti-socialism could be only an expression of self-interest.¹³⁸ Religion provided an ideological connection between efforts to uplift and to police, resulting in a kind of “tough love.” The anonymous author of a lead article on the occasion of Ascension Day expressed pity for those who had lost their faith, implicitly pointing toward the socialist working class. “Their desires find satisfaction in stewpots and beer mugs, and they are proud of this progress.” These poor souls “don’t even know how poor they are; they have voluntarily

¹³⁵“Eröffnung thüringischen Arbeiterkolonie,” in WZ 31 July 1889.

¹³⁶As Wilfried Spohn notes, “working-class dechristianization” was a threat to “the moral order of state and society.” Spohn, “Religion and Working-Class Formation,” 115.

¹³⁷WZ 28 September 1881.

¹³⁸“Christenthum und Socialismus,” 2–3.

degraded themselves to the level of the animals.” Through their lack of faith, however, they did more than injure themselves, “They are also a danger to the community.” The commentator concluded that “Without the awareness of responsibility before God, [and] higher duties to their fellow men . . . what does it matter to him if he treads his neighbor to the ground?”¹³⁹ This offers an important dual perception of the importance of faith: workers suffered from a lack of faith in God’s salvation and all that might entail, while at the same time those who lacked faith became a menace to the nation and bourgeois society. Protestant faith and heritage was central to the German nation, and the reliance of the German national idea on the Reformation required that the nation embrace Christianity.¹⁴⁰ Without faith the masses could never rise to become bourgeois and truly German, and without faith they must become essentially sociopaths lacking the ethical norms and values necessary to participate in bourgeois society.

VI. CONCLUSION

The literature on Germany’s bourgeoisie has focused a great deal of attention on the relationship between the bourgeoisie and liberalism. As this literature has matured, it has increasingly recognized the problematic and complex nature of that relationship. Nonetheless, historians often posit an “axis of difference” that places on the one side liberalism, cultural Protestantism, and the Protestant League, and on the other side political conservatism, conservative, orthodox, or national Protestantism, and Wichern’s Home Mission.¹⁴¹

A focus on bourgeois Protestantism, however, brings these relationships into doubt. The language of the Thuringian bourgeoisie demonstrates that the situation was more complex than a simple “axis of difference” between conservative and liberal. Thuringian liberals were involved in the “conservative” Home Mission pursuing evangelization that was also designed to instill bourgeois values in the working class. Public school teachers—the “culture commissars of the new generation”¹⁴² and the protagonists of the secularized public school—justified their role in terms of their membership in the Protestant general priesthood and took a leading role

¹³⁹“Himmelfahrt,” WZ 7 May 1902.

¹⁴⁰See Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte*, 2:367.

¹⁴¹Wolfgang Schieder, “Sozialgeschichte der Religion im 19. Jahrhundert. Bemerkungen zur Forschungslage,” in *Religion und Gesellschaft im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Wolfgang Schieder (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1993), 22; Gangolf Hübinger, “Kulturprotestantismus, Bürgerkirche und liberaler Revisionismus im wilhelminischen Deutschland,” in *Religion und Gesellschaft im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Wolfgang Schieder (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1993).

¹⁴²Hübinger, “Kulturprotestantismus,” 286.

in local mission associations. Liberals and conservatives agreed on a religious electoral program in opposition to godless socialism. The real situation was more complex and nuanced than previously assumed.

In a world increasingly ruled through the discourses of the public sphere, it is in that public sphere that we should look to find modern religion. In the nineteenth century the bourgeoisie, to a great degree, determined the nature and course of a very public Protestantism; one might say that Protestantism underwent a process of embourgeoisement. Protestant theology encouraged bourgeois civic activism and social leadership. Albrecht Ritschl focused on the Protestant duty to pursue one's calling (*Beruf*). Ritschl explained that if each fulfills his duty to his calling, God would establish His Kingdom. Ritschl influenced a broad acceptance of the theological idea of the responsibility and capacity of the individual to work "in his place and within his means for the achievement of the Kingdom of God; that is, for the moralization, the humanization and cultivation of humanity."¹⁴³ This civic activism was part and parcel of the bourgeois revolution of the nineteenth century. Bourgeois activists moved religion into the voluntary association, into the bourgeois civic festival, and eventually into the rhetoric of bourgeois election campaigns. The idea of four social-moral milieus (bourgeois Protestant, Catholic, socialist, conservative) first introduced by M. Rainer Lepsius has been under attack for some time.¹⁴⁴ This essay has argued that religion served as a more effective glue for a bourgeois sense of community than has been appreciated, at least in a place like Thuringia.

¹⁴³Greschat, "Zur Verhältnisbestimmung," 44.

¹⁴⁴See especially Jonathan Sperber, *The Kaiser's Voters: Electors and Elections in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), and von Reeken, *Kirchen im Umbruch zur Moderne*.