

# Luther and Calvin

Seminar leader: David C. Steinmetz

Reporter: David C. Steinmetz

The seminar on Luther and Calvin had two principal foci: a set of common texts drawn from the writings of Luther and Calvin and a series of four papers touching on issues of importance to both. The ensuing discussions were stimulated by the papers and readings but frequently ranged beyond them as well.

The common texts consisted of six documents:

1. A letter dated December, 1539, in which Calvin informed Farel of a greeting from Luther to Bucer and Calvin and a report from Melancthon of Luther's generally favorable attitude toward Calvin.

2. A second letter dated November, 1544, in which Calvin expressed to Bullinger his own high regard for Luther as an extraordinary servant of God.

3. A selection from the 1536 »Christianae religionis institutio« in which Calvin critized Luther's doctrine of the eucharist.

4. A selection from »De la cene« (1541) in which Calvin gave his assessment of the eucharistic controversy among Luther, Zwingli, and Oecolampadius.

5. The exegesis of R 4, 1-5 in Luther's lectures on Romans (1515/16) and Calvin's commentary on the same text (1539/40).

6. The exegesis of R 8, 19-21 from the same commentaries.

Each seminar session began with the presentation of a paper.

David C. Steinmetz lectured on »Luther and Calvin as interpreters of Genesis 38«. Genesis 38 is the story of the sexual encounter of Tamar with her father-in-law, Judah, and the subse-

quent birth of their two sons, Perez and Zerah. While Calvin showed a lively interest in the moral sense of the story, Luther was more impressed with the failings of the principal characters, whose weaknesses threw into greater relief the grace of God. Because Judah and Tamar were remote ancestors of Christ, both Luther and Calvin emphasized christological themes in their interpretations. Calvin stressed the kenosis of Ph 2; Christ laid aside divine prerogatives and as an act of humiliation was born into the dysfunctional family of Judah. Luther concentrated on the birth narratives and the line that links Bethlehem, where Christ was born, to the hut on the road to Timnath, where Zerah and Perez were conceived. For him, Judah and Tamar were a sign that Christ assumed sinful human flesh.

Robert Guy Erwin spoke on »Luther and Calvin on the theology of the cross«. Erwin argued that how believers comprehend God in the cross is the heart of Luther's theology of the cross and was for him primarily an epistemological problem. Calvin, on the other hand, did not define true knowledge of God by the cross of Christ. Although he agreed with Luther on the soteriological aspect of the theologia crucis, he disagreed on the epistemological.

Miika Ruokanen limited his paper »Predestination in terms of the theologia crucis in »De servo arbitrio«, to Luther and invited the seminar to discuss the aspects of Calvin's thought that were relevant to his theme. Ruokanen argued that Luther intended to make salvation assured on the grounds that it was by no means dependent on human agency. The doctrine of election made grace certain precisely because it

was not dependent on human receptivity. The seminar in its discussion of the doctrine of predestination emphasized the similarities between Luther and Calvin, while conceding that Luther differed with Calvin over the advisability of preaching it.

Walter L. Moore lectured on »Luther and Calvin on Mary Magdalene«. Moore surveyed the controversy over Mary Magdalene in the early sixteenth century, which centered on the question whether Mary Magdalene was identical with Mary of Bethany and the unnamed woman who anointed the feet of Jesus. Luther maintained the traditional view that all three Marys were Mary Magdalene; Calvin was convinced that Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany were

not the same. Luther's picture of Mary Magdalene focused on the anointing; Calvin's on her witness at the resurrection. In spite of their different foci, both drew many of the same lessons from her story.

The seminar discussions dealt with five themes: exegesis and hermeneutics, the theology of the cross, eucharistic theology, predestination, and the social setting of their thought. While the seminar tried to distinguish carefully between Luther and Calvin on a wide range of issues, it also attempted to understand their large areas of agreement, even in eucharistic theology, and to assess the judgment of Karl Holl that Calvin was Luther's best disciple.

## Lutherrezeption der Philosophen (Kant und Hegel)

Seminarleiter: Dietrich Korsch

Berichterstatter: Dietrich Korsch und Risto Saarinen

Da von einer Lutherrezeption Kants und Hegels nur sehr eingeschränkt geredet werden kann, ließ sich das Seminar nicht von der Rekonstruktion historischer Zusammenhänge leiten, sondern versuchte, zwischen den Positionen Luthers, Hegels und Kants eine (synchrone) Debatte zu inszenieren unter der Vermutung, daß von Luthers Auffassung ein Beitrag auch zu philosophischen Problemen zu erwarten sein könne. Solche Synchronie verlangt freilich danach, die historischen Zuordnungen zwischen Luther, Kant und Hegel auch in ihrem systematischen Ertrag zur Kenntnis zu nehmen. Daher ging im Seminar der Interpretation von Luthertexten der Blick auf die Luther-Kant-Debatte um 1900 voraus.

### *I Luther und Immanuel Kant*

Zum Beginn skizzierte Dietrich Korsch die Grundzüge der älteren Luther-Kant-Debatte (1900-1930). Seit Albrecht Ritschl wird die »antimetaphysische« und »praktische« Bestimmung der Religion bei Luther als Vorbereitung der neuzeitlichen Philosophie Kants betrachtet. Nach Ritschl hat vor allem der Philosoph Friedrich Paulsen zur begrifflichen Bestimmung der Verbindungslinie Luther-Kant beigetragen. Paulsen betonte den »Voluntarismus« bzw. den »Primat der praktischen Vernunft« bei Luther als neuzeitliche Denkkategorien.

Korsch hob drei Positionen als idealtypisch für die ältere Debatte hervor.

1. Bruno Bauch vertritt die These, Luthers Anschauungen seien der Keim der Philosophie