

Christopher Croghan und Sarah Stenson (Sioux Falls, USA) referierten gemeinsam über »Luther und Calvin« und über »Luthers Deutung der Opferung Isaaks«. Der erstgenannte Beitrag konzentrierte sich erstens darauf, welche Rolle die Ausbildung, die Luther und Calvin genossen hatten, dabei spielte, wie sie bei der Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift methodisch vorgehen und zweitens darauf, aufgrund welcher fundamentaler Annahmen sie diese Methoden anwandten. Calvin versuchte, die historische Grenze zwischen der Zeit, in der die biblischen Schriften geschrieben wurden, und seiner eigenen Zeit durch Logik und Rhetorik zu überbrücken, um deren Wahr-

heit zu erweisen. Luthers Verständnis des *verbum reale* ist grundlegend für seine Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift, weil diese für ihn das lebendige Wort ist, das dem Hörer begegnet, seine Existenz begründet und dem Hörer Glauben schenkt. Luthers Deutung der Opferung Isaaks verdeutlicht, auf welche Weise er in seiner Exegese der Heiligen Schrift philosophische Methoden heranzog. Kennzeichnend ist Luthers Unterscheidung zwischen dem ›wer‹ und dem ›was‹. Konzentriert sich der Ausleger auf das ›wer‹, dann trifft er auf Gottes Wort in der Gestalt von Befehl oder Verheißung, auf die Sache selbst, das wirkende Wort (*verbum efficax*).

## Luther and the Old Testament

Seminar Leaders: Brooks Schramm and Kirsi Stjerna

Reporters: Brooks Schramm and Kirsi Stjerna

Though it is commonplace to say, with H. Bornkamm, that Luther »Christianized the OT thoroughly,« the influence that the OT itself had on Luther's own personal faith and theology is perhaps less appreciated. The seminar invited papers seeking to reassess the influence of the OT

on Luther's theology, as well as Luther's own unique understanding of the OT as a whole.

Brooks Schramm presented on »Luther on Jacob and the Election of Israel: the Coercion of the OT on Luther's Understanding of God (and of the Jews).« He noted the double-

edged character of Luther's thinking on election. On the one hand, the Jewish claim to be the children of Abraham and thus the chosen people of God was something against which Luther contended throughout his career. On the other, the doctrine of election itself was at the center of Luther's own theology. Luther never opposed chosenness as such, but he did oppose Jewish chosenness based upon natural descent. The double-edged character of Luther's thinking on election comes into clear focus in his discussions of the meaning of the name »Israel.« He understood God's *in utero* choice of Jacob over Esau as the definitive statement regarding the nature of God and the way in which God works in the world. The chief function of the story of the conception and birth of Jacob and Esau is to prove the claim that apart from the election of God, natural birth is useless before God – even for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Luther makes Jacob's natural descent from Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, actually irrelevant, in that in his interpretation of Gen 25:23 he defines *populus Dei* in a completely spiritual manner. In so doing, he simultaneously establishes the theological principle that what makes the people of God the

people of God has always been the same. Luther is thus not a traditional supersessionist, rather his understanding of *populus Dei* as a wholly spiritual reality makes him a suprasessionist, in the sense that for him the true Jew has always been a *de facto* Christian.

In »Luther and »Proper« Philological Interpretation in *On the Last Words of David* (1543),« Stephen Burnett discussed this late work of Luther's, written as the final installment of a three-part series of polemics against German Jewry in 1543. Luther's calculated use of anti-Jewish polemic in the book was not directed against Jews but rather against Christian Hebraists who deferred too willingly to the authority of Jewish scholars. As in *Bondage of the Will* (1525), Luther asserted that a knowledge of the »subject matter« (*res*) of the Bible was essential for complete understanding of the biblical text, and since Jewish interpreters rejected Jesus the Messiah, the subject of the OT, their interpretations of individual passages were to a greater or lesser extent flawed. Luther expounded II Sam 23:1–7, translating the Hebrew text into German and then emphasizing places in the passage that he believed referred to the Triune God and to Jesus the Mes-

siah. Mere philological interpretation of the passage, such as one finds in S. Münster, was inadequate, and Münster's reticence in identifying Christian teaching in the OT mirrored the rabbis and their blindness to the »subject matter«. By emphasizing the theological distance between Jew and Christian, rabbi and Christian Hebraist, Luther hoped to »strengthen« the faith of Christian Hebraists, by warning them that those who uncritically followed the Jews in biblical interpretation were in danger of becoming »thieves of truth« themselves. Here, Luther was more worried about Jewish »lies« and their impact upon Christian interpretations of the Bible than flesh and blood Jews.

In his recent dissertation, *Is Evil Inevitable for Creation and Human Life? – Studies on Martin Luther's Biblical Interpretation*, Jussi Koivisto argued that the inevitability of evil in its various forms is an attribute that can be added to Luther's theology of evil. In his seminar paper, »Luther on the Inevitability of Evil,« Koivisto presented two examples of the inevitability of evil in Luther's interpretation of Gen 3. Example 1) »The Serpent Possessed by the Devil,« demonstrated that there exists an ancient, medieval, and

early modern exegetical tradition regarding Gen 3, which modern biblical scholarship has been unaware of or reluctant to refer to. According to this tradition, the serpent mentioned in Gen 3 was possessed. Luther shared this view, and his personal contribution to this tradition was the clarification of the »logic« behind this odd-sounding conception. According to Luther, the serpent became the victim of the Devil, who possessed it and used it for his evil wiles. Because the serpent became a victim, it can be said that evil (inevitably) took over the serpent. Luther in fact called the Devil the architect (*architectum*) of the whole deceitful event. Example 2, »The Fall,« suggested that Luther's interpretation of Gen 3 differs substantially from Catholic tradition. For Luther, the »poison« of the serpent possessed by the Devil takes over a human being through God's secret permission. By this »poison« Luther meant the original sin which took over the first woman through the corrupting words of the serpent. Catholic tradition depicts the human being as much more of an autonomous subject in the Fall.

David Whitford, drawing from his *The Curse of Ham in the Early Modern Era*, examined »The Curse of Ham in Luther's Sermons on Gen

9« and argued that Luther's approach changed over time. In his 1519 sermons, Luther emerges as a preacher who is conversant with medieval traditions of the text while simultaneously feeling free to set aside part of that tradition. He ignores the common medieval question regarding whether Noah sinned when he became drunk. With the tradition, Luther reads the condemnation of Ham who saw his father naked as an allegorical condemnation of the Jews, for just as the Jews mocked Christ so Ham mocked Noah. With a new Protestant reorientation to the text, Luther's later 1523 sermon condemns Noah's drunken behavior as entirely sinful and considers the fallen Ham as a dire warning to those who mock or deride their parents, and to Christians who could fall just as the »perfect man« Ham fell. Luther passes over in silence any message of mocking the Jews, emphasizing rather the Reformation tenets of *sola fide* and *sola gratia* as well as his understanding of the theology of the cross. Whitford reminded of the importance of Gen 9 and the condemnation to slavery of Canaan, Ham's son, as an ideological and theological defense for African slavery and then American segregation.

Kristen Kvam presented on

»Luther, the Psalms, and the Communion of Saints: Gleanings in the Twenty-First Century for a Christian Theological Commentary.« She argued that the influence of the OT on Luther's theology and personal faith is clearly seen in his long-standing, deep immersion in the Psalms. Kvam examined one facet of the importance of the Psalms for Luther's theology by offering a close reading of Luther's *Preface to the Psalter* (1545/1528). She contended that Luther's praises for the significance of the Psalms crescendo even as his descriptions of their texture acquire complexity. Through this double movement, Luther calls upon Christians to be nurtured by the piety of the Psalms and come to recognize their own inclusion in the *communio sanctorum*. Luther's *Preface* gives evidence of his »Christianizing« of the OT, but the Christological theme, in actuality, receives scant attention. Luther's concentration instead is upon the ways that the Psalms provide examples of how saints have spoken to God, and have done so with joy as well as sorrow. He frequently compares the virtues of the Psalms to the legends of the saints, praising the former for how it offers access to »real, living, active saints,« and contrasting this to the »silent« and

»half dead« saints of the legends. Luther values that the saints not only speak and pray in the Psalms; they also »lay out their heart,« speaking to God both from the storms and sorrows of their lives as well as from positions of joy and thanksgiving. By expressing both fear and thanksgiving, the Psalms teach Christians that they too are included in the *communio sanctorum*.

Kerstin Wimmer's »A Repressed Lament« began with the claim that lament awakens hope and strengthens compassion and solidarity. She then raised the question: what happens when lament is repressed at the expense of praise and joy? Luther points to the paramount importance of verbalizing every situation before God, and he considers a silent human being to be »half-dead.« For Luther, the way to encounter God's grace anew is by living through situations of despair and of God's absence, while bringing these traumatic deep-death experiences before God. The ongoing movement from lament to joy constitutes the non-solitary journey of baptism, from death to life anew. Luther's intention from the beginning was to encourage people to verbalize their fear and pain, joy and thanksgiving, *coram Deo*. His con-

cern also included communication with ordinary people, to provide them with resources for their God-talk. Noteworthy is that in Luther's introduction to *The Seven Penitential Psalms*, nothing is said about penitence. In his following exposition the emphasis is on the perpetual journey from death to life, and thus his concern was to elucidate the significance of lament. Even if lament, crying out against suffering or the absence of meaning, is an unknown way, it must be vocalized. Luther's encouragement to become loud-voiced in situations of pain and loss derives from his confidence in the dialogue. In lamentation, a hope resides. But the journey toward hope includes a descent into the abyss, not knowing the way any further. Luther highlights *The Seven Penitential Psalms* as encouragement to learn that trusting God is also to question God. With Luther, therefore, it can be said that self-knowledge as well as solidarity require lamentation.

Kirsi Stjerna offered »Observations on Luther's Passionate and Assiduous Reading of the OT«. First, Luther reads the OT with an uncompromisingly Christ-centric premise and with misinformed anti-Jewish faith convictions that permeate his theology. As demon-

strated in *Martin Luther, the Bible, and the Jewish People: A Reader* (Fortress Press, 2012), co-authored with B. Schramm, Luther's dismissal of Jewish exegesis and conversation partners compromises his biblical hermeneutics and celebrated arguments on salvation. At the same time, Luther's abiding love of the texts and especially the matriarchs and patriarchs fundamentally shape his faith. His piety and theological convictions are inseparable, and both are rooted in his devouring of the OT. Second, Luther consistently reads into OT texts his chief revelation about justification and original sin as faith issues. This affords him the opportunity to interpret the Fall-story in Gen 3 in less misogynist and sex-phobic ways than one might expect from a

medieval exegete. Identifying the first disobedience as a matter of the will when the human heart lost trust in God, and not as the *culpa* of the body or the first woman, Luther grieves over the post-Fall distorted (mis)awareness that makes human beings experience as shameful their most divine, original state: nudity and sexuality. In gender relations and »in the nude« human beings know what it means to live as *simul iustus et peccator*. Third, future re-exploration of Luther's interpretation of the OT as a source for his theology will do well to embrace the input of gender studies and Jewish scholarship and to address issues pertaining to unnecessarily male-centric and Christ-centric readings of the Hebrew texts.

## Luther Reception in Asia and Africa

Seminar Leader: Miikka Ruokanen

Reporter: Miikka Ruokanen

The participants of this seminar were: *Michael Albrecht, Armin Buchholz, Chen Yongtao, Jin-Seop Eom, Paulos Huang, Kathryn Kleinhans, Gregory Miller, Ken-*

*neth Mtata, Miikka Ruokanen, Carolyn Schneider, William Schumacher, Jane Strohl, Wang Aiming and Karl Weber.* Half of the fourteen participants of the seminar