

eschatologische Theologie habe eine neue Konzeption von Kirche entwickelt, die der Obrigkeit die Aufgabe als Schutzmacht einer fortschreitenden Reformation zuwies. Dabei kreise sein theologisches Denken wie dasjenige Luthers um das Kreuz Christi, wobei er die Nachfolge des gläubigen Christen im Leiden Christi betonte, was bei Luther wenig ausgeprägt gewesen sei. Müntzers spiritualistische Mystik des inneren Wortes fehlt bei Luther weitgehend. Im Gegensatz dazu stellte Müntzers Predigt

fordernde Ansprüche an Hörer und Obrigkeit. Der reine Schriftbezug der Wittenberger Reformation erscheine Müntzer als mangelnder Glaube. Erst das Zeugnis der ins Herz geschriebenen Offenbarung bewähre das Bibelwort als Wort Gottes. Von der Gemeinsamkeit beider Reformatoren aus der Zeit des Ablassstreites sei unter den Zwickauer Einflüssen und durch die Dynamik des Bauernkrieges ein tiefer Hass zweier reformatorischer Brüder geworden, die dem Solafideismus zeit lebens treu geblieben seien.

Luther and the Jews to 1523

Seminar Leader: Stephen G. Burnett

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This seminar considered the early Luther's discussions of Jews, both as contemporary living persons and as theological tropes in a variety of genres through 1523, when *Jesus Christ was Born a Jew* appeared in print. Participants included *Stephen Burnett* (University of Nebraska-Lincoln, USA), *Anna Marie Johnson* (Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois, USA), *Ralph Keen* (University of Illinois-Chicago, USA), *William*

Marsh (Cedarville University, Cedarville, Ohio, USA), *Gregory Miller* (Malone University, Canton, Ohio, USA), *Craig Nesson* (Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, USA), *Tine Ravnsted-Larsen Reeh* (University of Copenhagen, Denmark), *Brooks Schramm* (United Lutheran Seminary, Gettysburg, USA) and *Hans Wiersma* (Augsburg University, Minneapolis, USA).

Burnett, Marsh, Schramm, and Keen gave presentations on the Jews

in Luther's theology. *Burnett* spoke on »Jews and Judaism in Luther's Lecture on Romans (1515–16)«, exploring how he portrayed »biblical Jews« of the past, his Jewish contemporaries and the »Jewish future« in light of Romans 11. Luther's exposition casts Jews (including his Jewish contemporaries) in the role of foils to devout Christians and the true church, embodying the presumption, self-righteousness, and hypocrisy that Christians should avoid. Luther characterized Jews as part of the »chain of iniquity«, revealing the sins of Christians and non-Christians alike. Regarding the Jewish future, Luther sketches an argument for Jewish conversion at the end of days that he would develop more fully in his *Christmas Postil* (1522) sermon on Matthew 24:21 and repeat in the *Winter Postil* of 1540.

Marsh presented »A Comparative Study of Luther's understanding of the Jews in his Lectures on Galatians from 1519 and 1535«. He analyzed passages where Paul addressed the themes of »offspring«, »Jewish birthright«, »heirs/sonship«, as well as the Sarah/Hagar allegory in Galatians 4:21–31. Luther's theological position concerning the Jews in his 1535 Galatians-commentary exhibits continuity with his theology

in the lectures from 1519; however, noticeable »change occurs in the development and intensification of his polemical posture towards the Jews, including discernible resentment in reaction to their perceived »prideful boasting« over claims to »Jewish exclusivism«.

Schramm offered a study of »*Iudaeorum figmenta et superstitio*: Luther's Excursus on the Tetragram in *Operationes in Psalmos*, Ps 5:12«. For Luther, knowing the one true God involved understanding his covenant name. Luther asserted that the Tetragrammaton should be understood as a unique symbol for the Trinity, a symbol which in Old Testament times *was* ineffable but no longer *is*. Schramm then posed three questions that arise from an analysis of the excursus, all of which relate to Luther's later understanding and use of the Tetragrammaton: 1) How much weight should be given to Luther's assertion in the excursus that neither the Tetragrammaton nor the entire Hebrew language are needed any longer in order to understand God? 2) How should Luther's later discussion of the Tetragrammaton in *Vom Schem Hamphoras* be understood? 3) Why did Luther begin using »HERR« in all-caps in his New Testament translation in 1539?

Keen in his presentation on »Luther and the Jew« focused on the ways in which Luther utilized popular stereotypes of Jews and Judaism for polemical purposes against the ritual system of the Catholicism of his day. Scrupulosity in external works, transmission of religious authority through a hierarchy, and the idea that grace is proportional to merit are among the ideas that in Luther's mind link diasporic Judaism and legalistic Catholicism as forms of idolatry negated by the Gospel. This aspect of Luther's rhetoric, which he employed even before 1517 and continued through his career, was less an example of his attitude to the Jews than a deployment of popular anti-Jewish prejudices in his polemical agenda against the Catholic Church. Although the language of these passages participates in the anti-Judaism of his day, Luther applies anti-Judaic stereotypes to what he sees as an idolatrous and »Pharisaic« church.

Johnson and *Miller* explored Luther's use of »the Jews« in his popular pastoral works. *Johnson* presented on »The Jews and Christian Faith in Luther's Early Pastoral Works (1518–1520)«. Luther published about 25 pastoral works that criticized late medieval piety and suggested modifications. While

Jews and Judaism did not appear frequently in these works, when they do, Luther portrayed them in a distinctly negative light. Most often he characterized Judaism as a faith of works-righteousness, in stark contrast with ideal Christian faith. He saw Jewish faith as outward, insincere, self-seeking and works-based, and he urged Christians to be internal, sincere, focused on God's grace and selfless. The target of this critique of Judaism was not the Jews themselves, but rather scholastic theologians and church officials who encouraged Christians to buy indulgences, go on pilgrimages, endow masses, etc. He used »the Jew« as a trope to reproach his Christian enemies and their audiences. In several of these pastoral writings, Luther grouped the Jews together with heretics, pagans and »evil Christians« as »enemies of God«. These early understandings and purposes are continuous with his later portrayals of Judaism.

Miller adopted a somewhat different lens to consider Luther and the Jews, speaking on »The Use of the Rhetorical Pair ›Jews and Turks‹ in the Postils«. *Miller* examined passages of sermons in the *Church and House Postils* that referred to terms such as »Turk«, »Muhammad« and »Qur'an«, especially

when these terms were connected to the Jews. For Luther, Jews and Turks had much in common as part of a larger group of satanically-inspired enemies of the people of God. However, in the Postils he stayed close to the scriptural texts and the central theme of his preaching: salvation by faith alone. In the Postils Luther primarily used the rhetorical pair »Turks and Jews« to support his central claim that salvation comes not through any human activity no matter how pious, or any intellectual assent to an article of belief no matter how accurate, but only by a trusting reliance on God's gift of life given through Jesus the Christ.

Ravnsted-Larsen Reeh and *Nessan* considered aspects of the long-term reception of Luther's views of Jews and Judaism. *Ravnsted-Larsen Reeh* discussed the concept of »Mosaic Law and Luther's Deuteronomy Lectures (1523)«. The concept of »Mosaic Law« became pivotal in the legislation and construction of society in post-Reformation Lutheran lands of Europe. But as readings in Luther's texts on Deuteronomy show, the concept is not prevalent in Luther's own occupation with these texts. For Luther Deuteronomy was first and foremost part of scripture. He understood these texts on Jews and Jewish rules of life first and fore-

most as pedagogical tools. The »Mosaic« or »Jewish« rules reveal sin and godlessness as a general feature present in the Jewish society, the Roman papacy and Christian societies alike. Through the means of allegorical interpretation both Moses and the Mosaic Law point to Christ. Finally, Luther's own context may have played a role, as he worked with these texts relatively early in his career and one does not find the antisemitism of the later works in these texts. *Ravnsted-Larsen Reeh* also considered how Luther's understanding of »Mosaic Law« was further developed in 17th century Danish Lutheran thought.

Nessan extended discussion to the present day in his »Luther against the Jews: The Ethics of Historical Interpretation«. He asserted that Luther's writings against the Jews call into radical question not only his ethics but his entire theology. The ethical integrity of the Lutheran Reformation becomes severely questionable if the conclusions drawn by Luther in his writings against the Jews are not repudiated. In the present day, when analyzing Luther's writings about and against the Jews, theological reflection requires both ethical awareness and historical rigor. The ethical imperatives of this topic also

demand that historians and theologians advocate for the church's repudiation of Luther's writings against the Jews. The ELCA and ELCIC as member churches of the LWF and some regional church bodies have issued statements repudiating Luther's writings against the Jews, but the EKD has not yet adequately done so. *Nessan* contends that the 2015 »Kundgebung der EKD« (www.landeskirche-hannovers.de/damfiles/default/evlka/frontnews/2015/11/19/EKD-Beschluss-11-11-2015-6da1af1131c1b4a18be18ced723cdo82.pdf) interprets Luther's writings against the Jews to historicize and minimize (*mildern*), falling short of a direct ethical repudiation. This action by church bodies could provide the occasion for teaching more broadly in congregations about Luther and the Jews as well as contribute constructively to interreligious dialogue, particularly between Jews and Christians (see C. L. *Nessan*, *Luther Against the Jews: The Ethics of Historical Interpretation* [Currents in Theology and Mission 45,1, 2018, 5–10], cf. <http://www.currents>

journal.org/index.php/currents/article/view/95/114).

In addition to formal papers, seminar participants discussed several texts. *Hans Wiersma* led a discussion on *Jesus Christ was Born a Jew* (1523). In it, he raised questions about just how »pro-Jewish« Luther really was in the book. The book was largely written as an anti-Catholic polemic, as Luther's lengthy criticism of the Catholic church's theological failure to offer the true Gospel to Jews, and their loveless harassment of them. But it also contains a sketch of how Christians might successfully present the Gospel to Jews, while advocating that Christians treat them in a humane way. While Luther favored neighborliness in the book, he still saw no good future for Jews as Jews—they should become Christians. *Burnett* led a final discussion of Wilhelm Maurer's classic essay *Die Zeit der Protestantischen Reformation: Luther* (in: *Kirche und Synagoge* [1968]). Participants concluded that the essay had aged fairly well and continued to serve as a good basis for discussion of the problem of Luther and the Jews.