

boundaries were still fluid, her prayers encompass both Lutheran insights, for example, that salvation is certain, and expressions of loyalty to »one holy Christian and universal Church«.

Of the remaining seminar participants, *Mary Jane Haemig* (Saint Paul, Minnesota) and *Moyo Chipafadzo* (Harare, Zimbabwe),

each reported on recent research by others on the sermons of Johannes Mathesius (1504–1565) in Joachimstal. *Atahualpa Hernandez Miranda* (Bogota, D.C., Colombia) shared observations about possible traces of Luther's ideas on the preaching of Antonio Montesino, Gil de San Nicolas and Pedro de Cordoba in South America.

Luther's Translation into Languages and Cultures of the 21st Century

Seminar Leader: Ricardo W. Rieth

Reporter: Ricardo W. Rieth

Different people and groups from religious, educational and cultural institutions around the world remain convinced that Luther's heritage is relevant to their life and helps them to face new challenges in the 21st century. However, five hundred years separate their time from the historical context of the reformer and his work, so that an effective approach is only possible with a consistent translation effort, given the wide differences in languages and cultures. Seminar participants presented papers reporting and analyzing experiences of translating

Luther and the Reformation into different languages and cultures to discuss aspects of a global or international perspective.

Sarah Hinlicky Wilson shared her experiences of teaching the »Studying Luther in Wittenberg« seminar over the course of eight years, from 2009 to 2016. This seminar was developed by the LWF and the EKD to foster international friendships among Lutheran clergy through intensive study of Luther's theological writings in his own city. The course lasts for two weeks and involves three hours daily in the

classroom conducting careful reading of primary texts (e.g. *Sermon on Two Kinds of Righteousness, The Freedom of a Christian, The Large Catechism, What to Look for and Expect in the Gospels, How Christians Should Regard Moses, The Babylonian Captivity, Concerning Rebaptism, Confession Concerning Christ's Supper*). Participants were asked to restrict their questions to what Luther meant and his context. Each afternoon then took two hours to ask questions of interpretation and contextualization in the 21st century and across the diverse nations from which the participants came. The result was an intensive dialogue between Luther's theology and today's Lutheran churches. The teachers had seen a striking range of response, from relative initial disinterest among European participants (often, though not always, followed by a change of heart) to enthusiastic reception and engagement by participants from Africa and Asia.

Wilhelm Weber presented considerations on the challenge of translating Luther's theology into the African context, giving special attention to the themes of life and death. Addressing confession and contextualization, ideas, dogmas and absolute truths about life and

death on the one side and contextual particulars on the other side comprising individual stories, traditions, customs, fates and cultural features and details about the same issues, really do form two sides of the same coin. Africa is plagued with wars, violence of all sorts is killing thousands and denuding previously prosperous landscapes and filling seemingly endless refugee camps. It is a continent where pandemics like malaria, TB, yellow-fever and HIV/Aids are still ferocious killers with an insatiable appetite. Natural catastrophes are frequent. More and more bewail the inability to mourn any longer. People need to face up to death while still healthy and strong, before it is too late. That is only possible with the proper distinction of Law and Gospel, what means back to basics in everyday life. At its core, Luther's theology points very practical and effective means of God's grace to face up to death daily so that believers are practised and empowered by them in the time of trouble and final testing. God's Word reaches its destination so pointedly in confession and absolution, in cooperation with the sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper effectively sustain in faith while struggling with death and dying in this life.

Judith Becker presented a paper on the transformations Basel missionaries underwent in the first half of the 19th century in India. To the missionaries, slavery was both a religious and a humanitarian problem. They tied it directly to spiritual slavery. In the beginning, the missionaries interpreted what they saw in India in terms of their European awakened concepts: Indians lived in the bondage of sin and Satan. Then, they reported primarily about their teachings of liberation and their hope for the Indians. Freedom and equality were at the centre of their teaching at the time. A third phase was marked by a return to the notion of bondage, this time, however, with regard to particular Indian practices, social conditions and Hindu doctrines. Freedom then meant, according to the missionaries, freedom of choice and behaviour, commitment. In the fourth period, belief in the agency of the Devil and his binding power became more and more important to the missionaries because they believed that they encountered the Devil in certain Hindu practices. In this process, they developed a contact religiosity. Living in the contact zone fleshed out the missionaries' conceptions of bondage, liberation and freedom and how their system

of values and their religious notions changed due to the contact experiences.

Hans-Peter Grosshans addressed the permanent task of Lutheran theology to be contextual. At least, this is the case if theology aims to understand Christian faith in light of today's world. Especially in dogmatics, ethics and pastoral theology, it is vital that the contexts of churches and theologians, as well as that of their audience are taken into consideration. Pastoral theology is concerned with finding the best way of presenting the gospel today in the various places in the world and organizing the church in such a way that it is most true to the gospel and fits best into society. This is so because dogmatics and ethics are not about the repetition of old doctrines, but about the endeavor to discuss the old Christian doctrines in light of people's worldview and the problems and challenges facing them today. To explain the doctrine of justification, it is imperative to delve into the respective cultural heritages and use societies' and cultures' symbolic resources. Theological literature should bring the Christian faith into discussion with the various cultures, intellectual trends and political and economic problems people face today.

Clóvis J. Prunzel, Paulo W. Buss and Ricardo W. Rieth presented historical and theological aspects of Brazilian lutheranism from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, taking as special reference the translation of Luther's works into Portuguese. The introduction of Luther's literary legacy in Brazil started with the immigration of German Protestants in 1824 and the subsequent establishment of their religious communities, schools and synods. For over a century, German was the main language for the Reformer's writings as well as for worship, other church activities, and schools. His hymns, prayers and the *Small Catechism* were the most widespread texts. From the 1940s, a harsh nationalization program against ethnic minorities accelerated the transition from German to Portuguese. Liturgical, religious and pedagogical texts were the first to be translated into the Brazilian state's official language. Since 1987, CIL, an inter-lutheran publishing com-

mission, comprised of representatives of the two largest Lutheran churches in Brazil, has sponsored the publication of *Martinho Lutero: Obras Selecionadas*, a 16 volumes collection. Cultural and contextual aspects, among others, are also important as criteria for the selection of Luther's writings to each volume. Brazilian Lutheranism is deeply rooted in local communities. This led the editorial commission to select writings focusing on worship and liturgy, ministry and Christian education, for an entire volume. Factors that have marked the theological and ecclesiastical context in Latin America during the last thirty years (for example, the intense debate on liberation theology and pentecostalism, and the special interest from other academic fields in the social, political, economical, cultural, and educational impacts of the Reformation as a religious movement) prompted a representative collection of writings on ethical issues in two volumes.