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Christopher Spehr

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Luther Across Borders

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## Vorwort des Herausgebers

Der 90. Jahrgang des Lutherjahrbuches dokumentiert die Plenarvorträge und Seminare des 14. Internationalen Kongresses für Lutherforschung, der vom 14. bis 19. August 2022 an der California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks/USA stattfand. Unter dem Titel »Word and World – Wort und Welt: Luther Across Borders« versammelten sich ca. 150 Lutherforscherinnen und Lutherforscher aus der gesamten Welt, präsentierten ihre Forschungsbeiträge und diskutierten in den Veranstaltungen oder auf dem Campusgelände intensiv miteinander. Neben den Hauptvorträgen, Seminaren, Kurzpräsentationen, Morgenandachten und der angenehmen Arbeitsatmosphäre unter der Sonne Kaliforniens waren die abendlichen Empfänge an unterschiedlichen Orten auf dem Campus sowie die Exkursion nach Santa Barbara am Pazifik besonders eindrücklich.

Nach der Begrüßung durch den Vorsitzenden des Continuation Committee, *Volker Leppin*, und den organisatorischen Hinweisen durch die Vorsitzende des Local Committee, *Kirsi Stjerna*, eröffnete *Robert Kolb*, Präsident des Kongresses, die Veranstaltung durch seinen Vortrag »Martinus Peregrinus« am Sonntagabend, dem 14. August 2022, in der Samuelson Chapel. Bis zum 19. August fanden ebendort an vier Tagen vormittags die Hauptvorträge statt, die ein Thema jeweils aus historischer, systematischer und gegenwartsorientierter Perspektive beleuchteten. Entsprechend ihrer Reihenfolge sind diese hier abgedruckt. Am Montag referierten *Anna Marie Johnson*, *Marius Mjaaland* und *Kenneth Mtata* zum Thema »Word and Languages / Das Wort und die Sprachen«. Am Dienstag widmeten sich *Armin Kohnle*, *Christopher Spehr* und *Wanda Deifelt* dem Thema »Word and Church / Das Wort und die Kirche«. Am Donnerstag sprachen *Sini*

*Mikkola, Brian Brock* und *Guy Erwin* über »Word and Society / Das Wort und die Gesellschaft«. Abschließend beleuchteten *Anna Vind* und *Gesche Linde* die Thematik »Word and Creativity / Das Wort und Kreativität« in ihren Vorträgen.

Weitere Aspekte und Themen wurden nachmittags in den zahlreichen Seminaren vertieft. Von ihren vitalen und tiefsinnigen Forschungsdiskursen zeugen die hier abgedruckten Berichte.

Der Kongress, der erstmals in seiner Geschichte in Kalifornien durchgeführt wurde, endete am Freitagabend, dem 19. August 2022, mit einem festlichen Bankett. Dem Local Committee und besonders *Kirsj Stjerna* sei herzlich gedankt.

Weil die inhaltliche Vorbereitung des Lutherforschungskongresses in der Hand des international zusammengesetzten Fortsetzungsausschusses, dem Continuation Committee, liegt, seien die Änderungen in der Zusammensetzung des Gremiums hier kurz genannt: *Robert Kolb* (USA) und *Ricardo Rieth* (Brasilien) verabschiedeten sich nach vielen Jahren intensiver und produktiver Mitarbeit. Plötzlich und unerwartet verstarb im Herbst 2022 unser Kollege *Antti Raunio* (Finnland), der als konstruktiver Wissenschaftler und liebenswerter Mensch nicht nur der Lutherforschung fehlt. Für sie wurden hinzugewählt: *Erik Hermann* (USA), *Claus Schwambach* (Brasilien) und *Sini Mikkola* (Finnland). Darüber hinaus gehören dem Continuation Committee an: *Mary Jane Haemig* (USA), *Mark Mattes* (USA), *Volker Leppin* (Deutschland/USA), *Armin Kohnle* (Deutschland), *Christopher Spehr* (Deutschland), *Marius Mjaaland* (Norwegen) und *Anna Vind* (Dänemark). Den Vorsitz haben *Anna Vind* und *Volker Leppin* inne. Über den 15. Lutherkongress, der 2026 in Aarhus stattfinden wird, gibt es in diesem Jahrbuch erste Informationen.

Ergänzt wird die Kongressdokumentation durch einige Buchbesprechungen. Schließlich informieren *Michael Beyer* und seine internationalen Zuarbeiter in der »Lutherbibliographie 2023« über aktuelle Publikationen zur Lutherforschung.

In eigener Sache sei mitgeteilt, dass nach elf Jahrgängen an der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena die Herausgeberschaft des Lutherjahrbuchs umziehen wird. Weil der Herausgeber den Ruf auf den Lehrstuhl für Kirchengeschichte II (Neuere Kirchengeschichte) an die Evangelisch-Theologische Fakultät der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München zum Win-

tersemester 2023/24 angenommen hat (Nachfolge *Harry Oelke*), wechselt die Redaktion von Jena nach München.

Erneut gilt es Dank zu sagen: Allen Autorinnen und Autoren, die durch Aufsätze Seminarberichte oder Rezensionen am Gelingen dieses Jahrbuchs beteiligt waren. Meinen Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeitern in Jena, namentlich vor allem *Karl-Christoph Goldammer*, dem die Redaktionsleitung oblag, sowie *Kristin Sommerschuh*, *Klara Simon*, *Vivien Belke* und *Petra Richter*. *Michael Beyer* für die Erstellung der Lutherbibliographie. Zudem den Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeitern von Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht in der Verlagsgruppe BRILL Deutschland GmbH für die erneut reibungslose Zusammenarbeit und Herstellung. Allen Leserinnen und Lesern wünsche ich eine bereichernde und anregende Lektüre.

Jena, den 3. August 2023

Christopher Spehr

## Begrüßung durch den Vorsitzenden des Continuation Committee

von Volker Leppin

Dear colleagues,  
verehrte, liebe Mitwirkende dieses Kongresses,  
It is my duty, honor and pleasure to welcome you to the 14<sup>th</sup> International Congress for Luther Research on behalf of its Continuation Committee. It is the 14<sup>th</sup> in 66 years now. This seems to be a short history, but it includes at least one host country which has vanished from history. The Luther Congress took place in Erfurt, six years before the GDR ceased to exist. So, we can say at least, that the Congress has now existed longer than some countries which it took place in.

Und wir können sehen, dass es zu diesem Kongress gehört, stets an unterschiedlichen Orten stattzufinden. Da sind die historischen Lutherstätten, die uns Deutschen besonders am Herzen liegen, neben Erfurt natürlich Wittenberg vor fünf Jahren, oder Heidelberg, das 1997 freilich mehr ein Melanchthonort war, weswegen der Kongress den Praeceptor zum Thema machte. Da sind aber auch die Orte, die mit der Reformationsgeschichte außerhalb Deutschlands verbunden sind, wie Kopenhagen oder, etwas ambivalenter, Lund. Da war mit Canoa auch ein Ort der anzeigt, dass Lutherforschung auch im Globalen Süden betrieben und gehört wird.

And there are the many places of Luther research in the United States, each one with a different background, denominationally and culturally, like St. Louis 1971, St. Paul 1993, and, now, right today: Thousand Oaks, California. Thank you, Guy Erwin, for raising your hand some years ago and inviting the Luther Congress, and thank you, Kirsi Stjerna, for taking over the torch when Guy had to leave for his new tasks in Pennsylvania. I found an email from you, Kirsi, in my former Tübingen account, in which you asked



what Guy's move would mean for the Congress. A close reading of this mail might find the question between the lines: What does this mean for me. It meant a lot for you, especially, as the date of your mail was of June, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020. We all know, the world was already out of jolt at that moment. Planning a Congress like this under conditions of pandemic looked like being weird. And, indeed, it meant being weird. You started a journey with this mail, Kirsi, for which the description of up and down would not be enough. It was more like being in the position Heiko A. Oberman ascribed to Luther: between God and Devil. But God made you a helper as your partner, and I include Brooks Schramm into my thanks for bearing all this together for the benefit of our Congress.

Als Kirsi Stjerna mir im September 2020 mitteilen konnte, dass die Website für den Kongress eingerichtet war, wusste niemand von uns Europäern, ob wir bis zum Beginn des Kongresses wieder in die USA würden einreisen können. Niemand ahnte, dass dieser Kongress in Zeichen des Krieges stattfinden würde. Neben den weltweiten Krisen kam es an der Californian Lutheran University zu Personalwechseln und Änderungen von Planungen, die Schwierigkeiten in der Übernachtung mit sich gebracht haben, für die ich ausdrücklich um Entschuldigung bitten will. Nie hat ein Lutherkongress unter solchen vielfach und vielfältig erschwerten Bedingungen stattgefunden. Wir schulden Dir, Kirsi, und dem Lokalkomitee, tiefen Dank, dass wir nun hier unbeschwert Gäste sein dürfen und eine große Anzahl von Forschenden – fast 130 – treffen können. Diese Zahl wurde erreicht, obwohl viele aus unterschiedlichen Gründen absagen mussten, aus privaten Gründen, wie im Falle unserer Hauptrednerin Bridget Heal, aber auch aufgrund der Pandemiesituation.

Some researchers have explained to us that they didn't feel able to plan a travel as far as this one in times of pandemic. Others felt unable to attend a congress whose policy about Covid they considered to be too restrictive. We regret every withdrawal and hope, that things change and stirs calm, so that we can gather all Luther researchers again in 2026. Yet, the Congress gathers a tremendous number of them, and I am more than confident that we will experience an inspiring week here in Thousand Oaks. One might ask, why do we have a Congress in the year 2022 that does not deal with the questions that lie on top of our priorities. Why not about peace ethics. Why not about pandemics. Because on the top of all issues is the desire for God's

word. That's why. The continuation committee has chosen this topic three years ago. It was up to date then, and it is still up to date, because God's word is always imbedded in history and Culture. Talking about the Word of God Across Borders in a region of the United States that knows quite well what it means when people are not allowed to cross borders, not only for reasons of pandemic, might reveal something of the Power of the Word of God still today. Talking about the Word of God in one of the most diverse regions of the United States might help to reflect how and why the Word of God can touch people of any nation, of any race, of any gender. Universality of the Word of God proves by its diverse applicability.

Verstehen wir das Kongressthema so, bedeutet es, dass wir auf jeder Etappe unseres Weges in dieser Woche Kontexte zu beachten haben – genau das prägt die Anordnung unserer Hauptvorträge: Wir fragen in einem ersten Schritt nach dem historischen Kontext, in dem Luther seine Theologie entwickelte und verbreitete. Ein zweiter Schritt entwickelt die theologischen Grundgedanken Luthers, wie er sie in seiner Zeit denken und formulieren konnte. Und schließlich beziehen wir sie, in unterschiedlichen Perspektiven und Zugängen auf die geistige und soziale Situation unserer Gegenwart. Dieser Dreischritt soll die unterschiedlichen Weisen der Lutherforschung zwischen historischer Rekonstruktion und konstruktiver Theologie in ein fruchtbares Gespräch miteinander bringen. Auf ein solches hoffen wir, in den Plenarsitzungen, aber auch in den Seminaren, die von den Leitenden gründlich und beharrlich vorbereitet worden sind. Ihnen gilt ebenso wie den Hauptvortragenden ein herzlicher Dank dafür, dass auch sie in schwierigen Zeiten diese Arbeit auf sich genommen haben.

We have arrived. We ARE in Thousand Oaks. We are gathered for the 14<sup>th</sup> Luther Congress. Let's do it. Let's make it a success!

# Martinus Peregrinus\*

By Robert Kolb

What is a guy like Martin Luther doing in a place like Thousand Oaks? If this territory belongs to any religious figure from the early modern period, it is the land that the Franciscan Frater Junipero Serra traversed in service to God and Spanish king. It is apparently true that twenty public statues honor Serra in the United States, compared to Luther's nineteen, but Padre Serra is not gathering a congress that usually brings people from six continents together at regular intervals to discuss his message three centuries later, to say nothing of five. It is amazing that we, from a dozen lands around the globe, gather as we emerge from Covid-land to engage as a conversation partner this Augustinian brother's person and thought. And we do that under the theme »Luther across borders« although imperial ban and papal excommunication somewhat restricted his movement the last quarter century of his life. Nonetheless, he certainly did not let even the restrictive nature of his stay in the Wartburg cut him off from the team members on the outside with whom he had already begun to work. And it did not prevent him from seeing his life as a pilgrimage.<sup>1</sup>

\* I am grateful to Mary Jane Haemig and Mark Mattes for suggestions and critical reactions that have enriched this essay. This text reflects the oral nature of the original presentation.

1 Recent scholarship has even demonstrated his influence on the seventeenth-century Nonconformist Puritan John Bunyan and his classic *Pilgrim's Progress*. Cf. V.J. CAMDEN, »Most Fit Place for a Wounded Conscience«: The Place of Luther's »Commentary on Galatians« in *Grace Abounding* (RenQ 50, 1997, 819–849); T. LUXON, *The Pilgrim's Passive Progress: Luther and Bunyan on Talking and Doing, Word and Way* (ELH 53, 1986, 73–98).

In a Table Talk from 1537, Luther did label himself and his followers pilgrims, not as once

the saints went to Rome, Jerusalem, Compostela, for the satisfaction of their sins, but as true pilgrims, we are able to make our way in faith, when we read the psalms, prophets, gospels, etc. diligently. Then we take a walk not through holy towns, but we visit their thoughts and hearts, the true promised land and paradise of eternal life.<sup>2</sup>

His devoted student Cyriakus Spangenberg preached a sermon on the twenty-second anniversary of his mentor's death, in 1568, entitled *On Luther of Blessed Memory, That he was a True Pilgrim of God and a Christian Companion on the Pilgrimage*.<sup>3</sup> In this sermon he traced Luther's treading the »slippery« way of the cross over the cross-filled life on earth.

### 1 *Luther on the Move*

It is true that after he had returned from Rome and from Worms, Luther's travel was quite restricted to electoral Saxon lands, including the border town of Schmalkalden. Within electoral Saxon jurisdiction, however, he frequently visited other towns to preach, consult, or aid reform in other ways. In addition to trips for consultation to the electoral castle in Torgau, according to the recent study of Roland M. Lehmann, he preached roughly one hundred twenty-five sermons outside Wittenberg in the last thirty years of his life.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, Luther's thought did cross geographical borders, reaching hearers and readers from Finland to France, from Siebenbürgen to Scotland, in part because he had mastered arts of oral communication, in tandem with his right-hand-man Philip Melancthon. He communicated with students

2 WAT 3; 434,28–435,4, Nr. 3588: »Olim multae peregrinationes sanctorum fiebant Romam, Hierosolimam, Compostellam ad satisfactionem pro peccatis, sed iam veras peregrinationes praestare possumus in fide, scilicet wen wir die psalmen, propheten, evangelia etc. mit vleysse lesen. Da wurden wir nicht durch die heylige stedte, sondern durch ire gedanken vnd hertzen spaziren, das recht gelobethe lanth vnd paradis des ewigen lebens besuchen.«

3 C. SPANGENBERG, Die Eylffte Predigte. Von dem Seeligen Luthero/ Das er ein rechter Pilgrim Gottes/ vnd Christlicher Walfarts bruder gewesen. Geschehen im Thal Mansfeldt/ 1568. Den 18. Februarij, 1569.

4 R.M. LEHMANN, Reformation auf der Kanzel. Luther als Reiseprediger (BHTh 199), 2021.

who had come to Wittenberg from across Europe and sent them to proclaim his vision of ecclesiastical and societal life to their homelands, in many cases to make profound imprints on church and society.<sup>5</sup> He marshalled and experimented with the potential of print, sending out his message not only in words but also in visual images and musical genres.<sup>6</sup>

Luther's intellectual and theological pilgrimage was even more dramatic. In this reformer's metaphorical journey out of the world of his first twenty-five years, it is important to remember that like most immigrants he brought several pieces of luggage with him.<sup>7</sup> He never stopped using the language of his late medieval academic homeland, Latin, absorbed in school, cloister, and university lecture. He moved easily across the border between his household German and his academic Latin, practically equally fluent in both, as Birgit Stolt has shown.<sup>8</sup> The formulations of the Vulgate never ceased to come to mind as he sought the right German words and studied the Greek and Hebrew texts.<sup>9</sup> But he settled new ground in German and Latin as he kept on moving.<sup>10</sup> In so doing, he altered aspects of language and culture, of society and church. The fine art of disputation, which his instructors had honed to a sharp edge, he transported out of the university

5 M. EDWARDS, *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther*, 1994, 37, 11.

6 A. PETTEGREE, *Brand Luther: 1517, Printing, and the Making of the Reformation*, 2015; R. LEAVER, *Luther's Liturgical Music: Principles and Implications* (Lutheran Quarterly Books), 2007; D. KORSCH, *The Word of God and Music in Luther: Re-Reading Luther's 1538 Rhau Preface*, in: *Lutheran Music Culture: Ideals and Practices* (AKG 142), ed. by M. LUNDBERG / M. SCHILDT / J. LUNDBLAD, 2021, 21–33, esp. 24–28; cf. M. ANTILLA, *Luther's Theology of Music: Spiritual Beauty and Pleasure* (TBT 161), 2013.

7 Key works offering examples of current assessments of the background of relationships of Luther's thinking to earlier streams of thought include, regarding scholastic theology, H. OBERMAN, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism*, 1963; regarding popular piety, B. HAMM, *Religiosität im späten Mittelalter. Spannungspole, Neuaufbrüche, Normierungen*, ed. by R. FRIEDRICH / W. SIMON, 2011; regarding broader streams of thinking, V. LEPPIN, *Repräsentation und Reenactment. Spätmittelalterliche Frömmigkeit verstehen*, 2021.

8 B. STOLT, *Martin Luther. Rhetorik des Herzens* (UTB 2141), 2000, 6–41.

9 H. BLUHM, *Martin Luther: Creative Translator*, 1965.

10 B. CUMMINGS, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation. Grammar and Grace*, 2002, 57–101; STOLT, *Rhetorik* (s.n. 8), 1–41, A. NIGGEMANN, *Martin Luther's Hebrew in Mid-Career: The Minor Prophets Translation* (SMHR 108), 2019, 47–164.

and out of the Latin language, bringing this means of exposing truth into the German conversations of those who could not read or write themselves by means of his polemic that set forth his teaching in contrast to that of his opponents. Those skills served him well as he strove to deconstruct the approach to theology and piety of his childhood, youth, and years as a student and to defend his construction of his evangelical way of thinking and living the Christian faith.<sup>11</sup>

In his calling as a *Doctor in Biblia*, Luther joined the stream of humanist émigrés led by Erasmus and Melancthon in what Brian Cummings calls a »reformation of grammar«, departing from old ways of understanding how Latin grammar functions, leaving behind many of the strict rules of the Middle Ages for a more use-based assessment of how words work.<sup>12</sup> This grammatical reformation in Wittenberg defined new ways in which rhetoric and dialectic are to be wed. With Melancthon at his side and Erasmus's *Paraphrases* and *Annotations* within his grasp, Luther struggled with Greek and Hebrew texts and carried medieval theological terminology into deeper and more biblical definitions – of terms such as faith, repentance, righteousness, original sin, church, and even purgatory along with others.<sup>13</sup>

- 11 I. DINGEL, as developed in: Zwischen Disputation und Polemik. »Streitkultur« in den nachinterimistischen Kontroversen (in: Streitkultur und Öffentlichkeit im Konfessionellen Zeitalter [VIEG 95], ed. by H. JÜRGENS / T. WELLER, 2013, 17–29); IDEM, Pruning the Vines, Plowing Up the Vineyard: The Sixteenth-Century Culture of Controversy between Disputation and Polemic, (in: The Reformation as Christianization: Essays on Scott Hendrix's Christianization Thesis, [SMHR 66], ed. by A.M. JOHNSON / J.A. MAXFIELD, 2012, 397–408); IDEM, Streitkultur und Kontroversenschrifttum im späten 16. Jahrhundert. Versuch einer methodischen Standortbestimmung (in: Kommunikation und Transfer im Christentum der Frühen Neuzeit [VIEG 74], ed. by IDEM / W.-F. SCHÄUFELE, 2007, 95–111); and IDEM, Von der Disputation zum Gespräch (LuJ 85, 2018, 61–84).
- 12 B. CUMMINGS, The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace, 2002, 15–143.
- 13 R. KOLB, Luther's Transformation of Scholastic Terms (in: Handing over the Good: Determined to Proclaim Nothing but Christ Jesus and Him Crucified. Essays in Honor of James Arne Nestingen, ed. by S. PAULSON / S. KEITH, 2018, 21–38). On Luther's transformation of the word purgatory from a physical place for Christians who have died to a reference to intense suffering from *Anfechtungen* in this life, and then his setting the word aside altogether, see M. KIM, Luther's View of Purgatory, Ph.D. dissertation, Trin-

Not only Erasmus but also other biblical humanists of his era, including Johannes Reuchlin and Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, provided further help in is probing the Scriptures.<sup>14</sup> His appreciation of the graphic arts brought him along on the journey of his friend Lukas Cranach, experimenting with him to use the artist's woodcuts and paintings for the spread of his message.<sup>15</sup> His love for music helped him push forward new frontiers as he explored polyphony with Ludwig Senfl and brought singing into the congregation's worship and world.<sup>16</sup>

Luther easily wandered with his colleagues in other disciplines at the university as they experimented with new approaches to their subject matter. He never immersed himself in these other disciplines outside theology, as did Melanchthon in some cases, but he was open to using the colleagues insights for the enrichment of those at »table« with him or those hearing his lectures or sermons. He may not have had much regard for the strange idea that the earth moves around the sun, but he respected those who pursued new calculations of the heavens in their use of Copernicus's mathematics and related research, especially Erasmus Reinhold and Joachim Rheticus.<sup>17</sup> He welcomed his disciple and colleague Valerus Cordus, who experimented with new methods of teaching and learning about the plants in God's creation with his field trips into the fields and woods around Wittenberg.<sup>18</sup>

ity College and the Graduate Centre for Theological Studies of the Toronto School of Theology, 2022.

- 14 Cf. R. ROSIN, Humanism, Luther, and the Wittenberg Reformation (in: *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, ed. by R. KOLB / I. DINGEL / L. BATKA, 2014, 91–105).
- 15 S. OZMENT, The serpent and the lamb: Cranach, Luther, and the making of the Reformation, 2011; cf. M. MATTES, Martin Luther's Theology of Beauty: A Reappraisal, 2017, 133–154. On possible influences of Luther's way of thinking on Cranach's artistic style, cf. H. POULSEN, Between Convention, Likeness and Iconicity: Cranach's Portraits and Luther's Thoughts on Images (in: *Lucas Cranach 1553/2003. Wittenberger Tagungsbeiträge anlässlich des 450. Todesjahres Lucas Cranachs des Älteren*, ed. by A. TACKE, 2007, 205–216), esp. 215.
- 16 Cf. KORSCH, Word (see n. 6).
- 17 D. DANIELSON, The First Copernican: Georg Joachim Rheticus and the Rise of the Copernican Revolution, 2006; R. WESTMAN, The Copernican Question: Prognostication, Skepticism, and Celestial Order, 2011.
- 18 K. DANNENFELDT, Wittenberg Botanists during the Sixteenth Century (in: *The Social History of the Reformation*, ed. by L. BUCK / J. ZOPHY, 1972, 223–248).

Luther diverted his disciple Michael Stiefel from the path of apocalyptic speculation to using his mathematical skills that finally produced a basic textbook for students to learn arithmetic.<sup>19</sup> His encouragement of the study of history supported Melanchthon as he began formal lectures on Carion's *Chronicle*.<sup>20</sup>

Since his death Luther has been transported across borders of time and culture, sometimes quite the worse for wear and in hardly distinguishable form. Something about him appeals not only intellectually but in his person. He has been dragged into National Socialist propaganda and found both bitter hostility but occasionally an uneasy though sometimes peaceful co-existence with Marxist scholars in the twentieth century. He has turned up in nineteenth century Chinese educational theory and in twentieth century Latin American liberation theology. He has crossed confessional borders, even if quite regrettably an era of healthy Roman Catholic Luther scholarship has receded and lost much of its voice. But across denominational lines around the globe, he commands interest for a variety of reasons. He is contributing to the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ in Africa and Asia as well as Latin America in fresh ways in the twenty-first century.

Luther did not travel alone. He picked up vital companions along the way, especially his Wittenberg colleagues Melanchthon, Jonas, Bugenhagen, and Cruciger.<sup>21</sup> He kept some companions from the past, Johannes Tauler and William of Ockham, for example, with him for a while or for the duration. Some of Tauler's terminology and his emphasis on the passive reception of God's grace along with Ockham's emphasis on God's omnipotence and the Creator's comfort in his material creation endured in Luther's thinking.<sup>22</sup>

Some scholars pose the question whether Luther lived with a medieval or a modern paradigm for being human. Both paradigms focus on human performance, the medieval with God and some measure of grace as a neces-

19 M. AUBEL, Michel Stiefel. Ein Mathematiker im Zeitalter des Humanismus und der Reformation, 2008.

20 M. LOTITO, The Reformation of Historical Thought (StASRH), 2019; J. HEADLEY, Luther's View of Church History, 1963.

21 T. WENGERT, The Wittenberg Circle, (in: Oxford Handbook [see n. 14], 491–501).

22 V. LEPPIN, Luther's Roots in Monastic-Mystical Piety (in: ibd., 49–61), and TH. DIETER, Luther as Late Medieval Theologian: His Positive and Negative Use of Nominalism and Realism, (in: ibd., 31–48).



sary ingredient, the modern with God at best a distant clockmaker – more generally with God, if there is a god at all, banished beyond the edges of the frame. The relegating of God to irrelevance or death has not solved the problems of daily life any better than did the relegating of the material, earthly world to inferior status for the most ardent Christians. Standards for evaluating life on the basis of human performance inevitably create the crushing burdens Luther claimed they do. The Wittenberg team configured a paradigm distinct from both the medieval and the modern that still seems to speak, as it did to many of his contemporaries, to some today. For it celebrates God's liberating presence in human history, which is also a part of God's own history. It frees us from dwelling on, and dwelling in, the past, or obsessing about the future, since both are in the Creator's hands. It concentrates our attention on the present and the feast of service to this creation that God sets before us.

## 2 *Luther's Theological Pilgrimage*

Spangenberg focused on two other pilgrimages that Luther had made, in his opinion. The first was his exodus from the medieval ritualistic-hierarchical definition of being Christian – and thus of being human – to his view of the relationship between God and his chosen people as one initiated and maintained by God, who, as a person, relates to the creatures fashioned in his image. He relates with them by speaking, an understanding of the Christian as one who listens to the Word of the Lord and trusts what God says – about himself and about human beings and the world around them. Luther himself, as noted at the outset of this address, described his pilgrimage as one through the thoughts and hearts of the apostles and prophets, into their way of thinking.

According to Spangenberg, Luther's second pilgrimage was his journey through life as a person both sinful and righteous, passively righteous according to the action of the gospel that delivers the benefits of Christ to those who trust his promise of forgiveness, life, and salvation and actively righteous in living out the identity God shaped for his human creatures within the structure of their callings, in obedience to his commands.<sup>23</sup>

23 A. STEGMANN, *The Development and Structure of Luther's Ethics* (LQ 33, 2019, 137–152).

Luther made these metaphorical and theological journeys freely and joyfully because he believed that God remains constant in his faithfulness to his promises to himself and other sinners, the promise of forgiveness and new life and the pledge of providence and protection in daily life. Change – history – arise out of the Creator’s design for the creation. Such a thought seemed unsettling to those who depended on an impersonal, immutable eternal law to insure peace, stability, and order in life. Luther caught the spirit of the Hebrew prophets, who saw God on the move in and through his people’s history, but who counted on peace, stability, and order coming from their faithful, totally reliable, God. For his promises obligate him to be the God he has pledged to be.

This first journey began in a Mansfeld childhood, where Luther’s priest, teacher, parents, and community inculcated in him the Christian faith of his time, a faith filled with biblical names and terms but understood within religious structures inherited from ancestors who practiced their traditional religion before mission efforts converted them. These conversion methods consisted largely of decisions made by tribal chiefs or Frankish conquerors. Given the absence of sufficient numbers of preachers and catechists to implant another way of thinking, significant elements of the religious structure of the traditional religions framed and formed much of this Christian pious belief and practice. This way of thinking focused on the human approach to divine powers, however defined precisely, an approach through appropriate religious or sacred activities. Sacrifice assumed a vital role in this process. Therefore, the Lord’s Supper, as a commemoration of Christ’s sacrifice, took a central role in this newly Christianized way of conceiving of the human approach to God. God indeed was seen as giving grace, but his graciousness came either on the condition of the proper human offering beforehand or of the proper human use of divine grace to produce the God-pleasing, heaven-winning deeds, first of all religious or sacred actions, but also ethical behavior. The English historian Keith Thomas labels this medieval way of conceiving of Christian faith a religion of »a ritual method of living, not a set of dogmas«. <sup>24</sup>

The theology taught at the University of Erfurt leaned heavily upon the Ockhamist tradition as expressed by the instructor of several of his

24 K. THOMAS, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 1971, 76.