

CONFERENCE PROGRAM 2018

Rationale

This conference situates Luther's interpretation of the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, in the late medieval context of Christian-Jewish relations. Topics include: Christian learning of Hebrew, access to medieval rabbinic interpretations, and Christian biblical reading practices that involve anti-Jewish polemics.

SUNDAY, MARCH 25 MURRAY ROOM, YAWKEY CENTER

10:00-10:15 AM Welcome and Introduction

10:15 AM-12:30 PM PANEL 1

Moderated by Christine Helmer (Boston College)

10:15-11:00 AM Deeana Klepper (Boston University)
Reading Nicholas of Lyra in a German Landscape:
The Reception of Lyra's Exegetical Work in Context

11:00-11:45 AM Hans-Martin Kirn (Protestant Theological University
Amsterdam/Groningen)
The Concept of "Jewish Servitude" and its Ambiguities in Late Medieval
Contexts: The Case of J. Pfefferkorn and J. Reuchlin

11:45 AM-12:30 PM G. Sujin Pak (Duke Divinity School)
Anti-Judaism in Luther's Exegesis of Old Testament Prophecy

12:30-1:30 PM LUNCH

1:30-4:30 PM: PANEL 2

Moderated by James Bernauer, S.J. (Boston College)

1:30-2:15 PM Yaacov Deutsch (David Yellin College, Israel)
Christian Hebraism in the Late Middle Ages (1400-1520)

2:15-3:00 PM Volker Leppin (University of Tübingen)
The Use of Jewish Exegesis in the Christian Late Middle Ages,
Humanism and Luther: The Example of the Psalms

3:00-3:15 PM BREAK

3:15-4:00 PM Sarah Bromberg (University of Massachusetts/Lowell)
From Manuscript to Print in Jewish and Christian Biblical Commentary:
Visual Imagery in Copies of Nicholas of Lyra's *Postilla litteralis super
totam Bibliam*

4:00-4:30 PM Response by Candace Kohli (Northwestern University)

4:30-5:00 PM BREAK

- 5:00-6:00 PM KEYNOTE ADDRESS
 Stephen Burnett (University of Nebraska)
 Luther, the Rabbis and Biblical Understanding in his Anti-Jewish Polemics of 1543
 Moderated by Ruth Langer (Boston College)
- 6:00-6:30 PM Reception – all are invited
- 6:30 PM Dinner for presenters and invited guests

MONDAY, MARCH 26 MURRAY ROOM, YAWKEY CENTER

9:00-10:30 AM PANEL 3

Moderated by Christine Helmer (Boston College)

- 9:00-9:45 AM Ari Geiger (Bar Ilan University)
 Hebraism in the Absence of Hebrews:
 Nicholas of Lyra between Hebraism and Anti-Jewish Polemics
- 9:45-10:30 AM Graham White (University of St. Mary's London)
 Luther's Pragmatics and His Conflict with the Jews

10:30-10:45 AM BREAK

10:45 AM-12:45 PM PANEL 4

Moderated by James M. Weiss (Boston College)

- 10:45-11:30 AM Yosi Yisraeli (The Hebrew University)
Converso Beginnings of a Christian Biblical Reform?
 From Paul of Burgos to Martin Luther
- 11:30 AM-12:15 PM Philip D. Krey (Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia)
 The Mystery of the Salvation of the Jews in Romans 9-11 in Nicholas of Lyra, Johannes Bugenhagen, and Martin Luther
- 12:15-12:45 PM Response by Brian T. German (Concordia University/Wisconsin)

12:45-1:30 PM LUNCH

1:30-3:30 PM PANEL 5

Moderated by Susannah Heschel (Dartmouth College)

- 1:30-2:15 PM Aaron Moldenhauer (Northwestern University)
 Christology in the Old Testament: Luther and Lyra
- 2:15-3:00 PM Kirsi Stjerna (Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary)
 Martin Luther's "That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew"
- 3:00-3:30 PM Response by Brooks Schramm (United Lutheran Seminary)

3:30-4:00 PM Final reflections and discussion

Moderated by James M. Weiss (Boston College)

PRESENTERS

Sarah Bromberg (University of Massachusetts/Lowell)

From Manuscript to Print in Jewish and Christian Biblical Commentary:

Visual Imagery in Copies of Nicholas of Lyra's *Postilla litteralis super totam Bibliam*



In his biblical commentary, the *Postilla litteralis super totam Bibliam*, Nicholas of Lyra (1270-1349) compared Jewish and Christian biblical commentary. Visual diagrams played an essential role in Lyra's exegetical work. He designed fifty-five illustrations to augment his comparisons of Jewish and Christian commentaries on Old Testament descriptions of temples, ritual objects, and prophetic visions. My paper analyzes changes in style and content as *Postilla* imagery transitioned from Lyra's original schematic monochromatic drawings to brilliantly colored handmade paintings in manuscripts to innovatively designed woodcuts in incunables to hand-colored engravings in printed books.

Stephen Burnett (University of Nebraska)

Luther, the Rabbis and Biblical Understanding in his Anti-Jewish Polemics of 1543



During the final decade of his life, Martin Luther became convinced that Jews and Judaism had become a danger to the church and to Christians. He feared that unwary Christians would be misled by Jewish biblical interpretation and would come to reject traditional Christian interpretations of key Old Testament passages and perhaps even Christian doctrines such as the Trinity. In my lecture I will discuss the Jewish texts and authors who Luther opposed and how he learned of them, how he incorporated them into his biblical exposition in his 1543 polemics, and how he sought to discredit them as biblical authorities. Since Luther devoted over half of his discussion in *On the Jews and their Lies*, *On the Ineffable Name*, and *On the Last Words of David* to biblical exposition, knowing which rabbis and texts he interacted

with and how he understood them is essential for understanding his overall argument in these hateful books.

Yaacov Deutsch (David Yellin College, Israel)

Christian Hebraism in the Late Middle Ages (1400-1520)



My paper will focus on the phenomenon of Christian Hebraism in the late middle ages, just before the phenomenon reached its height in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I will examine the evidence concerning knowledge of Hebrew and the use of Hebrew sources among Christian scholars as well as the tools and methods used to study Hebrew during that period. Special attention will be given to the use of print as a tool for promoting the study of Hebrew and for the dissemination of Jewish sources.

Ari Geiger (Bar Ilan University)

Hebraism in the Absence of Hebrews:

Nicholas of Lyra between Hebraism and Anti-Jewish Polemics



The Franciscan scholar Nicholas of Lyra (1270-1349) is considered to have been one of the most important Christian biblical exegetes. He authored several works in various fields, his most famous being *Postilla litteralis super totam Bibliam*. In this comprehensive commentary Nicholas openly and frequently used Jewish interpretations along with the Hebrew versions of the relevant verses to support them. Nicholas' polemical essays against the Jews, and the sections in the *Postilla* in which he refutes the Jewish arguments against Christian doctrine while presenting deficiencies in Jewish character and faith, led to his also being

considered an anti-Jewish polemicist.

In my presentation I will discuss the seeming ambivalence in Nicholas' character in the context of Christian-Jewish relations. On the one hand, he was an outstanding Hebraist who acquired a high level of knowledge of the Hebrew language, quoted substantial amounts of Jewish exegetical material, and expressed appreciation for Jewish scholarship. On the other hand, he was a Christian scholar, a devout adherent to Christian attitudes on Judaism and the Jews, and a polemicist who used Jewish texts as tools to support this cause. I will argue that Nicholas combines multiple facets of medieval Hebraism: the scholarly Hebraism of Jerome and the Victorines, the polemical Hebraism that underlay the Talmud trial and the Paris anthology (*Extractiones de Talmud*), and the missionary Hebraism from the school of Raymond de Peñaforte and Raymond Martini. I will conclude with the symbolism inherent in the fact that Nicholas' Hebraism was fully expressed in a sphere devoid of Jews. His interest lay in the fragments of Jewish scholarship necessary for his exegetical project, rather than the friendship or welfare of the Jews or Judaism.

Hans-Martin Kirn (Protestant Theological University Amsterdam/Groningen)
The Concept of "Jewish Servitude" and its Ambiguities in Late Medieval Contexts:
The Case of J. Pfefferkorn and J. Reuchlin



The paper addresses the concept of "Jewish servitude" (*servitus Judaeorum*) as a basic biblical, theological, legal, and polemical category of medieval anti-Judaism in the broader context of J. Pfefferkorn's and J. Reuchlin's controversy on Jewish books in the early sixteenth century. I will argue that the controversy a) reveals the growing ambiguities of the term and its function under late medieval considerations; and b) helps to understand more clearly continuities and discontinuities in attitudes towards Jews and Judaism during the time of the Reformation (M. Luther).

Deeana Klepper (Boston University)
Reading Nicholas of Lyra in a German Landscape:
The Reception of Lyra's Exegetical Work in Context



Nicholas of Lyra's perceived mastery of Hebrew and rabbinic tradition contributed more than any other factor to the tremendously rapid and wide dissemination of his *Postilla litteralis super totam Bibliam* (and related works) across Europe. The very thing that made Lyra's work so attractive to Christian scholars sometimes made it problematic, however, as is evident in the course of the work's reception from the early fourteenth century through the sixteenth. Regional patterns in education, book production and ownership, and Christian-Jewish relations also affected the way that Lyra's work was read and shared. This paper will consider the circulation of Lyra's work in German lands, including the impact of the Councils of Constance (1414-1418) and Basel (1431-1449).

Philip D. Krey (Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia)
The Mystery of the Salvation of the Jews in Romans 9-11 in Nicholas of Lyra, Johannes Bugenhagen, and Martin Luther



In his volume, *Martin Luther's Anti-Semitism: Against His Better Judgment*, Eric Gritsch concludes that the older Luther betrayed his own theology of the cross, the hidden God, and the mystery of the salvation of the circumcised and the uncircumcised. The early Luther understood Paul's struggle with his role as a Jew bringing the gospel of Christ to Gentiles with a profound sense of ambiguity and subtlety that was faithful to the exegesis of Nicholas of Lyra's Romans Commentary (1329). With a close reading of Paul, Nicholas does not take an easy opportunity in his commentary to attack the Jews, but carefully follows Paul's text and faithfully communicates the Apostle's ambivalence about, and hope for his coreligionists. Even though he is critical of Nicholas, the early Luther nevertheless dialogs with him and the commentary tradition. The later Luther turns exegesis into indefensible tirade that, according to Gritsch, is "against his better judgment grounded in Paul, namely, that faith in Christ can never 'justify' the divine punishment of the Jews." Ironically, the later Martin Luther did not

even follow the lead of his own colleague and pastor, Johannes Bugenhagen, who in his *Romans Commentary* of 1527 interpreted the fate and relationship between Christians and Jews in light of the Parable of the Prodigal Son. He identified the Gentile Christians as the prodigal younger son with no merit and the Jews as the responsible older brother. Bugenhagen proclaims that even as the father professes his love for both sons, God loves both Jews and Gentiles.

Volker Leppin (University of Tübingen)

**The Use of Jewish Exegesis in the Christian Late Middle Ages, Humanism and Luther:
The Example of the Psalms**



While the *Glossa ordinaria* itself did not make much use of Jewish exegesis, later commentaries and additions to the Gloss did. An important case is Nicholas of Lyra with his *Postilla litteralis*. Using Jerome and Jewish exegesis, Lyra tried to improve the understanding of the Hebrew text. Later on, Paul of Burgos, a former Jew who had been baptized, inserted a lot of Jewish material into the commentaries. He found a counterpart in Matthias Döring, a Franciscan writer who shared the interest in the Hebrew text but tried to correct Paul. This is the background against which Faber Stapulensis would write his *Annotations to the Psalms*, which usually are seen as a highlight of humanist exegesis, but also contributed to medieval anti-Judaism.

Aaron Moldenhauer (Northwestern University)

Christology in the Old Testament: Luther and Lyra



While Nicholas of Lyra and Martin Luther both read the Old Testament Christologically, they differ in their conceptions of what informs a Christological reading and their accounts of what they judged to be Jewish unbelief. In this paper I ask how Luther's Christology informs his reading of the Old Testament, focusing especially on how Luther's new theological language leads Luther to depart from Lyra's reading of Christology in the Old Testament. By comparing Lyra and Luther, I aim to show that Luther's Christology leads to an evolution out of medieval exegesis and that Luther's Christology is critical for understanding his thought on Jews.

G. Sujin Pak (Duke Divinity School)

Anti-Judaism in Luther's Exegesis of Old Testament Prophecy



In his interpretation of the prophetic books of the Old Testament, Luther often set up a contrast between two histories, two peoples, and two kingdoms. Luther argued that the OT prophetic books exhibit two discrete histories: a history of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah and a foretelling of the historical (salvific, in Luther's view) events of the first advent of Christ and the gospel. Luther viewed these as two separate histories, so that he insisted that a faithful reader of the OT Prophets must carefully distinguish between them. This paper argues that such dual conception of the "sacred history" in the biblical prophetic texts undergirds Luther's further demarcation between two peoples (the Jews/the Synagogue versus Christians/the Church) and between two kingdoms (Jewish kingdom versus Christ's kingdom)—all of which serve as crucial elements of the logic operative in Luther's significantly anti-Jewish readings of Old Testament prophecy.

Consequently, Luther's anti-Jewish readings of Old Testament prophecy were not simply a matter of his conviction that all Scripture points to Christ (i.e., his commitment to Christological reading of the Old Testament); it also entailed a very particular conception of history and the ways in which he believed biblical history could be used to interpret one's own contemporary history.

Kirsi Stjerna (Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary)
Martin Luther's "That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew"



Martin Luther's theological grammar about "gift-righteousness" involved consistent argumentation against the fundamentals of Jewish faith. Engaged in imaginary debates with Jewish interpreters of the Scriptures, he labored to prove the superiority of Christian faith, Christians as God's chosen people, and Christ as the lens to understand God's revelation. Luther's 1523 text "That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew" sheds light on his method and rationale: while elaborating on the biblical promise of the Messiah, he underscores the fundamental role of the Jewish woman, Mary, as the bearer of the Word and a bloodline between Jews and Christians as in-laws. The text reveals the complexity of the meaning of Jew/Jewish for Luther.

Graham White (University of St. Mary's London)
Luther's Pragmatics and His Conflict with the Jews



Luther had a distinctive doctrine of human power, which influenced his pragmatics, and, in particular, his account of whether it was within human power to perform certain speech acts. We will be arguing that this pragmatics, regardless of how well motivated it was religiously, had disastrous effects when it was deployed in a political context: we analyze some of his pronouncements about the Jews from this point of view, and we suggest certain constraints on the link between pragmatics and theology which might enable better political interaction in a faith context.

Yosi Yisraeli (The Hebrew University)
Converso Beginnings of a Christian Biblical Reform? From Paul of Burgos to Martin Luther



Despite the many differences between them, Paul of Burgos (c. 1352-1435) and Martin Luther shared a major concern: that the medieval traditions of Christian biblical scholarship were linguistically and hermeneutically inadequate to the point of requiring serious reform. This talk will present some of Paul of Burgos' innovations in these fields, all of which derived from his training as rabbi. Following several examples, I will suggest that these ideas resonated in Luther's works more significantly than he was willing to acknowledge.

The Center for Christian-Jewish Learning is devoted to the multifaceted development and implementation of new relationships between Christians and Jews that are based not merely on toleration but on full respect and mutual enrichment. This defining purpose flows from the Mission of Boston College and responds to the vision expressed in Roman Catholic documents ever since the Second Vatican Council.

The building of new, positive relationships between Jews and Christians requires sustained collaborative academic research. Therefore, under the Center's auspices scholars and thinkers representing diverse Jewish and Christian perspectives engage in intense and ongoing study of all aspects of our related yet distinct traditions of faith and culture.

Educationally, we are committed to the goal that "Jews and Judaism should not occupy an occasional and marginal place in [Christian religious education]: their presence there is essential and should be organically integrated" (*Notes*, 2). We are convinced that Jews and Christians enrich and deepen their respective identities by joint educational endeavors. The Center is thus dedicated to conducting educational research and to offering programs, both in the university and the wider community, in which Christians and Jews explore their traditions together.

In short, the Center applies the scholarly resources of a Catholic university to the task of encouraging mutual knowledge between Christians and Jews at every level (*Notes*, 27).

[*Notes* = Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, *Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Teaching in the Roman Catholic Church* (1985).]

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