

Project description of doctoral student Kaja Wieczorek

“Kingdom of God” and the shaping of the world:

Luke between utopia and criticism of ideology

The dream of a better world is one of the most existential desires of humankind. Utopias of an ideal state, universal freedom and justice have always been a part of societal development. The current challenges of the refugee influx, the fear of terror and suicide attacks, and the expansion of fundamentalist religious movements raise the question: how can we still believe in a new vision of society when reality has made us sceptical of utopias in general?

Luke is aware of such disillusionment. He also knows the danger of blinding ideologies that deify profane structures and secular authorities. In this work, I will look behind the scenes of Luke 1-2. Beneath the harmless façade of the Christmas story there is a greater awareness of reality than the contemporary reader can see. Luke imitates a particular mode of expression that was used in bucolic texts about the Roman ideology of the “Golden Age,” serving as an instrument of propaganda for the Roman Emperor. In a form-critical analysis, I will show that a central motif in these texts was to honour the emperor as the saviour of the world and to describe his reign as an idyll of nature, with agricultural fertility bringing economic welfare and universal freedom. Luke 1-2 not only puts Jesus in the emperor’s place, but also lacks the motif of agricultural fertility. I propose that, rather than promising a carefree country life, Luke-Acts confronts the reader with heavy socio-economic critique, which should be interpreted as a radical rejection of the Roman ideology of the Golden Age. Although Luke maintains a utopia of a better world, he never promises a paradise on earth and questions the Roman notion of salvation. With this interpretation, I argue against the traditional scholarly opinion that Luke is an apologetic writer who describes Christians as harmless and loyal in matters of the Roman state. I suggest a new reading that views Luke as a critical mind who seeks to change economic and social structures from within.

Curriculum Vitae

Kaja Wieczorek

wieczorek.kaja@googlemail.com



- Since 2017 Member of the European Society of Women in Theological Research (ESWTR)
Member of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL)
- 2016 Teaching job at the Faculty of Theology at the Humboldt University Berlin (course for first-year students of Theology)
- Since 2015 Doctoral student of New Testament Studies at the Chair of Prof. Dr. Lampe at the Ruprecht-Karls-University in Heidelberg; Ekiba scholarship
- 2015-2016 Post-graduate student assistant of Prof. Dr. Schipper at the Department of Old Testament Studies at the Humboldt-University Berlin
- 2015 Examination in Theology (Evangelical Church in Baden)
- 2007-2015 Study of Theology in Heidelberg, Buenos Aires and Berlin
- 2009-2012 student assistant of Prof. Dr. Lampe at the Department of New Testament Studies in Heidelberg
- 2010 Study at the Instituto Superior Evangélico de Estudios Teológicos (ISEDET) in Buenos Aires
- 2013-2015 student assistant of Prof. Dr. Schipper at the Department of Old Testament Studies in Berlin
- 1998-2007 Johann-Sebastian-Bach-Gymnasium Mannheim