

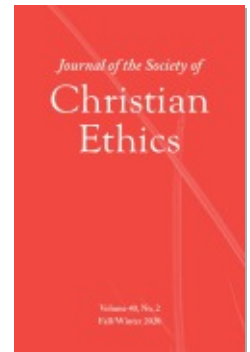


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Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics, Volume 40, Number 2, Fall/Winter
2020, pp. 237-253 (Article)



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Luther's Reformation and His Political and Social Ideas for Korean Church and Society

Myung Su Yang

ABSTRACT: Luther's beliefs provide three avenues of change for the Korean church and Korean society at large. First, Luther's argument about two different kingdoms can help the Korean church set itself free from the deeply rooted political attachment stemming from the ideological conflict with North Korea over the past six decades. Second, Luther's understanding of the individual's inner mind as the locus of revelation of the divine truth is expected to enhance an autonomous self-determination that is independent of the collective mindset of the multitude, which leads to the naissance of being truly individual. Lastly, Luther's ethics of love will hopefully improve the public awareness concerning human rights of criminals and, through his vocation theory, give the vision of a unified organic society that Rises above the possessive individualism that spread widely during Korea's rapid economic growth.

INTRODUCTION

THE IMPACT OF LUTHER'S REFORMATION on the rise of modernity is usually found politically in the naissance of the sovereignty of the state and culturally in the secularization of human society. As a Korean theologian, I find the key point of Luther's revolution in the transformational viewpoint of the human being; not outside of religion but inside of religious spirituality, the Reformation had great impact on the foundation of the liberal and responsible individual. I think this is the most important lesson that the Korean church must learn from Luther: it is crucial for the progress of democracy and human rights in Korea.

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The Korean church that is still steeped in medieval authoritarianism needs to be theologically renewed. Since American missionaries set foot on the Korean Peninsula for the first time in the late 19th century, Christianity awoke the spirit of liberty and equality of every human being. Nevertheless, the Korean church today has become an ultra-conservative group and an obstacle for the progress of Korean society. Including Protestants and Catholics, Christians currently account for 30 percent of Korean population; therefore, the transition of theology would most likely be quite influential in Korean society. The Reformation of Luther is not in the past but is a necessary task the Korean Church faces.

In encouraging this change for Korea, I expound on three aspects of Luther's thought. The first is about the desacralization of the state and the political power that Luther's two kingdoms doctrine achieved; this doctrine is expected to help Korean Christians find a theological groundwork to pull away from the tendency of high dependence on political ideology. The second focuses on the liberal and responsible self whom the Reformation fostered. The last concerns the ethics of love: Luther drew up an organic society of love in connection with vocation, and this connection can give a unifying message of belonging to Koreans who are losing their communitarian spirit in the midst of the capitalistic economic growth.

1. TWO KINGDOMS AND THE LIMIT OF POLITICS

Luther's thought about two different kingdoms has been controversial and undergone many critiques. One of the criticisms leveled against it is that it has brought about a completely secularized world by weakening the power of the church, and it is also refuted as being incapable of changing the world because of its historical pessimism. However, now that contemporary life has sunk into the depth of secularism, that state power is becoming increasingly stronger, so that every individual's whole course of life may profoundly depend on state policies, Christians need to take back the spirituality of the teaching of the double reality of the two different kingdoms, especially so that Christian faith may recover its original prophetic status.

In the fifth century, Augustine divided humankind into two groups: those who belong to the city of God and those who belong to the earthly city. Similarly, Luther divides people into two kingdoms, those of the kingdom of God and those of the kingdom of the world, and notably, Luther referred to two different governments as well. If the two kingdoms can be properly defined as the realm of God's lordship and the two governments as the mode of God's lordship, as Heinrich Bornkamm summarized,¹ then the kingdoms are equally divine areas where God is at work. The two kingdoms must be distinguished but cannot be separated, just as the two governments cannot.

¹Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms: in the Context of his Theology*, trans. Karl Hertz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 17.

It should be noted that delineating two governments is meaningful only for Christians who believe in God; only those who live the kingdom of God in their minds² are able to recognize both the divinity of secular authority and its decisive limit. Christians must prove faithful to both kingdoms in two different ways: inner obedience to the direct reign of God by the Gospel in one's own soul and external obedience to God's indirect reign through the law of the state; under this paradigm, theological righteousness and civil justice collaborate in the individual. The importance is that the distinction and the tension between the two kingdoms must be maintained: The kingdom of God is the kingdom of God and the world is the world, and the duality of these two realities—internal and external—relativizes the authority of the state, the worldly kingdom.

Luther's constriction of ecclesial power by locating the kingdom of God in the individual's inner soul is well-known, but even so, this demythologization is not limited to the Catholic Church. Luther recognized another world, the kingdom of God, within the individual self in distinction with the state, the actual world all people live in; because the internal world belongs to God's direct reign, the external world, namely the state,³ is relativized. In fact, Luther defines the state as "the rule of sin" or "the rule and remedy of sin," following the theological diagnosis in Book 19 of *City of God*, in which Augustine thinks that the state as a political community is the result of the corruption of human nature and that it is not of God's natural providence but of His volitional providence.

To be sure, compared with Augustine, Luther does place more weight on the godliness of the existing state and public power.⁴ However, the godliness of state power presupposes its limit: To sum up Luther's political theology in one sentence, the state and politics preserve but cannot save; salvation happens in the individual's internal condition. Luther tends to take the inward kingdom

²When it comes to interiorizing and making present God's kingdom, I cite Luther's comment on the Lord's Prayer in the *Small Catechism*. The kingdom of God comes to us "when the heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that we may believe in His holy Word and live a godly life, here in time and yonder in eternity." *Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 546.

³Unlike today, the state Luther conceived was somewhat personalized in the sense that it was confused with magistrates. However, Luther is still estimated to be a prime political thinker. Cf. Cargill Thompson, *The Political Thought of Martin Luther* (Hemel Hempstead: The Harvester Press Limited, 1984), introduction.

⁴There are few descriptions in detail about sinfulness of the state system or the will to power (*libido dominandi*) of politicians in Luther's text compared with in *City of God*. Unlike Augustine, Luther minimizes the nuance that the state is a kind of necessary evil. In fact, the first part of *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed* is dedicated to the theological justification of state power. Without doubt, this reflects the historical situation that drove Luther to defy anarchistic enthusiasts. Suffice it to say, scholars are in agreement that Luther has a more positive opinion of the state and politics than Augustine.

of God, the kingdom of freedom and love, as more substantial than that of the state, which restricts by law.⁵

Christians are those who are spiritually able to marginalize state power. Obviously, they must respect and follow the worldly order, but they do so in a way where they spiritually conquer it;⁶ they are not restrained by law but make free use of law to share in external peace. This is what free obedience means. Because Christians are in principle subject to none but Christ, theologically they do not obey political powers but obey God who is at work through them. No one is subject to a political ruler except to that ruler's social function.

Historically, the Reformation reinforced state power by delegating the Catholic Church, which had shared sovereignty with emperors and princes. In addition, Luther is recognized as the father of modern legal positivism⁷ because he urged people to respect secular authority and follow positive law in any given situation. However, the consolidation and the godliness of state power are assumed following its desacralization by the presence of the kingdom of God in parallel with it. This shows how variously Luther's theology of paradox plays out: It holds two seemingly oppositional aspects about positive law and civil justice: marginalization and divinization.

On the one hand, Luther certainly looks down on lawful and civil justice because of its moral shallowness and sinfulness compared with theological righteousness and the natural law of love in the Gospel. On the other hand, from the viewpoint of political realism, Luther highlights civil justice and profoundly vindicates the exercise of public power; he even commends obedience to unjust law. As long as his view does not seek to ground the validity of law in its own morality, Luther can be properly considered the founder of modern legal positivism.

The paradoxical combination of these two seemingly opposite aspects of law is possible through the attendant function of law. The goal of life is to achieve and live the kingdom of God, and the reason for the existence of state power consists in forming a peaceful environment to help individuals reach this goal.⁸ God's divine will is to save all souls in freedom and love, and political power must

⁵Luther compares the relationship between the preaching office and the office of the secular authority with that of the substance and the shadow; it is similar to the relationship between eternal and transient life. Martin Luther, *A Sermon on Keeping Children in School*, in *Luther's Works*, American ed., vol. 46:237, hereafter LW (St. Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 1958).

⁶"For by this submission [to temporal powers] it [the soul] is obedient to God and wills the same thing that He wills; and thus through this subjection it is victorious over all these things." Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, LW 25:469.

⁷Cf. Herold Bermann, *Law and Revolution, The Formation of the Western Legal System* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 29.

⁸Luther's demand for the prince's role in regulation of religious practices must be viewed as the measure to protect and help the secure and correct ministry of God's Word that is pivotal for the salvation of the human soul. Cf. James Estes, *Peace, Order and the*

be obeyed because it is in God's will as long as it assists in the salvation of the individual's soul. Obedience to the public power of the state has a precondition that it must remain spiritually marginal and not break into the central part of salvific truth. The state or political power is not a shepherd but a hangman of God's kingdom.⁹

It is worth remembering that the reason Luther denounced Carlstadt's antinomian and theocratic vision was that he exaggerated the significance of worldly law.¹⁰ The positive law of the worldly kingdom is on a lower level than the freedom and love of the kingdom of God. The state is designed to make only temporary peace through compulsive power; therefore, it cannot be overestimated as if the kingdom of God could be achieved by positive law: Within its absolute limit, the law must be followed. "The temporal power is but a very small matter in the sight of God and too slightly regarded by him for us to resist, disobey, or become quarrelsome on its account, no matter whether the state does right or wrong."¹¹ All attempts to transform the state, the worldly kingdom, into the kingdom of God, which is based on the rule of the Gospel, originate from overvalued human nature and law. Any coerced love of one's neighbors by law is doomed to fail; it causes the confusion of government (*confusio regnorum*) that brings about dictatorship.

Luther's doctrine of the kingdom of God can play a meaningful role in changing the Korean church and society in the sense that it establishes within individuals the internal authority that enables desacralizing political power. In the Korean church, followers typically believe that the kingdom of God comes at the end of the world or after one's death; Korean Christians are alienated from the concept of the kingdom of God being currently present in one's own mind. Due to the lack of this existential eschatology, it is difficult for Korean Christians to have any transcendent mindset regarding the worldly politico-economic structure. The Korean church needs Luther's resonating cry, "We are the kingdom of God."¹²

A primary cause of the secularism of Korean Christians is the ongoing ideological conflict with North Korea that has continued since the Korean War (1950–1953). The older generation of Korean Christians who experienced traumatic persecution by the Communists during the war strongly supports

Glory of God, Secular Authority and the Church in the Thought of Luther and Melancthon. 1518–1559 (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2005), chap. 5.

⁹Martin Luther, *Temporal Authority*, LW 45:113.

¹⁰Chris Thornhill, *German Political Philosophy, the Metaphysics of Law* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 39.

¹¹Martin Luther, *Treatise on Good Works*, LW 44:93.

¹²Martin Luther, "The First Sermon, March 9, 1522," LW 51:71. Luther said to the audience of Wittenberg that "we are the kingdom of God." Here, "we" obviously indicates each member of the audience.

the buildup of a national power strong enough to protect them from a possible enemy's attack. Being preoccupied with political issues, they identify Christianity with capitalism and have become passionate supporters of the right-wing party. Currently, public opinion in Korea is extremely divided, and the Korean church leads this divisiveness. Aside from the moral corruption within the institution, the excessively conservative attitude of the Korean church is widely subject to severe critiques and denunciation.

On the other hand, Koreans' political awareness is partially but strongly rooted in traditional Confucianism. The Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910) was based on Neo-Confucianism, a medieval humanistic philosophy; whereas Europe progressed into a modern society after the Reformation, Neo-Confucianism, which prioritizes the state over individuals, prevailed until the late 19th century in Korea.

In Confucianism, as well as in Aristotle's political philosophy, becoming a good citizen is a basic requirement, and the state is considered the natural community and the community of the highest good. There had never been a dualistic tension between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world; in Korea, politics was seen as the way to put heavenly truth into reality. Working as a public official was hailed as the greatest honor for not only a person but also for the person's extended family and such work was the ultimate goal of a person's life. Korean kings and officials were not merely politicians but were respected, at least in principle, as a type of saint and sage to guide people with heavenly wisdom and intelligence. Korean kings even presided over national rituals as high priests to show honor to gods.

In this respect, the medieval age of Korea was different from medieval Europe, where religious power and political power were separate. To use Luther's vocabulary, Korean kings performed even the role of the shepherd rather than just of the hangman, and this was the universal case for eastern Asian countries, including China and Japan.¹³ In the East, political power combined with moral and religious authority has not been demythologized or desacralized as much as it has in the West. For Korea today, this legacy has left the privileged awareness of politicians intact with the moral hazard problem that historically accompanied political rank.

Because of the war experience in Korea and the country's strong heritage of medieval philosophy, it is challenging for Koreans to see themselves as liberal and responsible individuals who have self-worlds independent of the outward state power. However, this lack is not desirable for enhancing democracy, and in some ways, this issue is not confined to Korea; it is in fact prevalent in the entirety of East Asian countries. This same inability to break from this traditional

¹³ For a brief reference about the position of the ruler in Confucian thought, see Daniel Gardner, *Confucianism. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 33–39.

view of the state and political power accounts for the difficulty in finding active peacetime cooperation between civic groups in times of conflict between countries. In the light of Luther's two kingdoms doctrine, the Korean church is expected to promote a universal spirit for humanity beyond national boundaries by desacralizing a nation and public power.

2. EMERGENCE OF INDIVIDUAL SELF-DETERMINATION

The emergence of the true individual is one of the remarkable achievements of Luther's Reformation, and it also had an immense effect on the later social and political changes. Luther's new conception of the kingdom of God and his doctrine of the priesthood of all believers made each individual the locus of revelation and the cognitive and practical subject, pulling out of the previous heteronomous casuistry of the divine law of the medieval church and defying the intervention of state power. Luther's religious individualism is very clear and impressive. For Luther, to be a Christian is to be solitary: "The world and the masses are and always will be un-Christian, even if they are all baptized and Christian in name."¹⁴ Spiritual divergence from the masses and the world is unavoidable for Christians; people of the kingdom of God are led away from the political world that is based on the will of the public and instead form their own individual inner worlds. One is to face oneself in Christ, deviating from relations with the other controlled by morals and laws. The individual's self-consciousness before God is anything but the identity formed in social life.

Luther delineates two distinctly different persons within an individual: One is one's self-consciousness arising before God referred to with terms such as "one's own person," "Christian person," or "individual person," and the other is one's person in relation with others as expressed with terms such as "Christian in relation," "secular person," and "natural person."¹⁵ Accordingly, one's own person is quite different from the person who relates to others. This implies that to be a Christian is first to be oneself and that to be oneself is to put relations with others in parenthesis before God. In Luther's text, one's relations with others refer to the social roles (*officium*) that individuals fulfill for the common goods of the state,¹⁶ as indicated by the term "secular person." Then, to be a Christian is first to be distinguished from being a secular person who is subject to the state and the community.

One is naturally born in the state before becoming a Christian and lives in various relations with others; Christian identity is determined through God out of the secular identity built up in social life. Undoubtedly, one's secular identity

¹⁴ Martin Luther, *Temporal Authority*, LW 45:91.

¹⁵ Martin Luther, *The Sermon on the Mount*, LW 21:109–111.

¹⁶ The two persons can be properly described as *persona privatifidelis et persona publica/politica*. Eike Wolgast, "Luther's Treatment of Political and Social Life" in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 400.

is a significant part of one's life; Christians should commit themselves to social roles and tasks in the world. Being oneself before God is the first way to fully carry out social tasks without losing freedom and love. As a member of the kingdom of God, one must first be a Christian in the face of oneself and then as a member of this world, assuming moral and legal responsibility in relation to others. Empirically, the latter comes first but theologically, for freedom and love, the former precedes the latter.

The philosopher Reiner Schürmann properly points out that Luther, long before Descartes, conceived of self-consciousness, which has become the main philosophical thrust of the last 400 years. After Luther, "to be means to be for consciousness," and the individual's self-consciousness becomes the origin of all phenomenality¹⁷ in the sense that it is the locus of revelation of divine truth. This explains why Luther's work is noted to be the origin of Kant's and other German idealists' philosophies.

In independent self-consciousness, everyone can know the truth and judge what is wrong and what is right.¹⁸ This is not equal to modern autonomy but indicates that everybody is the hermeneutical subject and participates in the revelation of God's will. Revelation is not a unilateral process of God but the result of each individual's interpretation of God's Word through human words, so that a believer may become a partner in revelation.¹⁹ Obviously, interpretation is not led by the human mind. When it comes to the interpretation of the Bible, the Holy Scripture "is its own interpreter."²⁰ However, each individual is the responsible agent for revealed truth. This means that there is no divine truth that does not go through the subjective aspect of a human being. This explains why Luther could even say that "faith is the creator of Deity."²¹ This means that God reveals to us who He is through faith. To be sure, it is the graceful God who creates faith, and yet paradoxically, it makes sense as well that faith creates God. Luther asserts, "Faith and God belong together."²² His theology of paradox

¹⁷Reiner Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 353.

¹⁸"Now everyone can note and tell for himself when he does what is good or what is not good." Martin Luther, *Treatise on Good Works*, LW 44:25.

¹⁹Ebeling sees the modern principle of hermeneutics in the Reformers' view of the Bible. Gerhard Ebeling, *Word and Faith*, trans. James Leitch (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), 307.

²⁰*Sui ipsius interpres*. Martin Luther, *Assertio omnium articulorum M. Lutheri per bullam Leonis X. novissimam damnatorum*, vol. 7, p. 97, Weimar edition, hereafter WA. (*D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Weimar, 1883–). This is the epistemological version of the passivity of the human will in doing good about which Erasmus is blamed by Luther for his unclear understanding. Cf. *The Bondage of the Will*, LW 33:32–33.

²¹"It (faith) is the creator of the Deity, not in the substance of God but in us." Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians 1535*, LW 26:227.

²²Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism in Triglott Concordia*, 581.

implies a hermeneutical circle. Now, at least, the heteronomous interference from outside is excluded in the individual's cognition of truth.

Luther insisted that heavenly truth cannot be achieved by force; the freedom of conscience must be protected from any other-directed regulation: "No one shall or can command the soul unless he is able to show it the way to heaven; but this no man can do, only God alone. Therefore, in matters which concern the salvation of souls, nothing but God's word shall be taught and accepted."²³ To say "No one shall or can command me" clearly demonstrates the representative modern spirit of liberty. Christians as free agents are also responsible individuals who must fight an eschatological fight on their own against the power of falsehood: "Each one has to stand before oneself, be called onto oneself and fight the devil"²⁴

Individuals should not be moved by the judgment or the behavior of the majority or of celebrities but must be self-determined, taking responsibility for their own decisions. Luther believed that the whole process of the Reformation also must proceed with individual's spontaneous engagement, and this principle goes for both the subject and the object of reform. Those who support reform should not be pressed to do so in the way group thinking and herd mentality can negate self-determination.

For those who are the objects of reform, meanwhile, their voluntary acceptance must be sought with the expected demonstrations of the power of God's Word itself. No use of violence is permissible, and all that is needed for the sake of the victory of God's truth is the preaching of His Word. Waiting with patience for the spontaneous reception of reform is indeed a way of love for those who are weak in faith.²⁵ Love includes acknowledging the dignity of others as liberal and responsible selves who make their own individual judgments. The reason Luther places such emphasis on spontaneous participation is that no one can be compelled to accept divine truth.

Luther, who demanded free decision of individuals even in the urgent situation of the reform of the Catholic Church, can be properly called a religious liberal; he considered freedom both the goal and the way to reach the goal.²⁶ In

²³Martin Luther, *Temporal Authority*, LW 45:106.

²⁴"The Third Sermon, March 11, 1522," WA 10 III:22.10–11. This is my translation of the original text: "Ein jeder muß vor sich stehen und geruft sein, mit dem Teufel streiten," which translates to "Everyone stands on his own feet and be prepared to give battle to the devil" in LW 51:80.

²⁵See, "The Second Sermon, March 10, 1522," LW 51:75–78.

²⁶Luther condemns the radical reform of Carlstadt in Wittenberg involving violence not because the content was wrong but because of the way to set down the Gospel of freedom turned to coercive law. David Whitford, "Luther's Political Encounters," in *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 184. This does not mean that Luther advocates nonviolence. The state is allowed to use physical power in order to keep a temporary peace.

fact, if Luther is rightly called an extremist,²⁷ he was an extremist for freedom more than for anything else. Freedom brought by the Gospel must come into play freely. This was so much the case that when Erasmus worried about the abuse of Luther's individual freedom because of the human inclination toward wickedness, Luther responded that the truth cannot and should not be given up in fear of the side effects that must be endured.²⁸ Just as Erasmus might have predicted the problem of modern society, Luther was not unaware of the possible uncontrolled expansion of greedy desire by this newly given freedom. Despite individual's possible abuse of freedom, Luther considered individual freedom a paramount and invaluable truth that it is worth achieving at any cost.

Luther's Christian freedom is bound to result in love of others; that is what religious liberalism means. It's far from "the liberalism of neutrality."²⁹ The gap between Luther's religious liberalism and modern political and legal liberalism based on an adversarial system is enormous. In fact, Luther's self-consciousness and self-determination are theonomous and occur in the innermost part of the individual rather than the humanistic interior mind of self-reflection, which is nothing less than the effect of interiorized morals and laws of the outer world that regulate everyday human relations.³⁰ Luther's freedom and love are supra-moral. The Gospel of God calls in a more inner location than the moral interiority, and thus Christians are all the more freed from the world, strengthening the independent reality of the self-world, the kingdom of God.

With the collapse of the long-standing caste system, a competitive society arrived, and the human desire of imitation naturally surged to reach limitless competition. Perhaps with the establishment of the inner self-world, Europe was more likely to prepare a way of weakening, if not preventing, the possible extreme conflicts of desires. That seems to be the merit of modern Western philosophy.³¹ Luther's theology of paradox contributed to the appearance of modern autonomy, as mentioned previously. However, when the tension and the appropriate distance with the world as understood in Luther's paradox are missing, modern autonomy may fall victim to increasing mimetic desire. René Girard views this as the ambiguity of modern individuals; for Girard, to be a Christian is to be

²⁷Scott Hendrix, *Martin Luther, Visionary Reformer* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015), 290.

²⁸Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, LW 33:54–55.

²⁹Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1991), 17.

³⁰"You are more inward to me than the most inward part of me" is Augustine's expression to depict God's transcendence. *Confessions*, trans. Albert Outler (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1955, 2006), 68 (III, 6, 11).

³¹René Girard with Pierpaolo Antonello and João Cezar de Castro Rocha, *Evolution and Conversion: Dialogues on the Origins of Culture* (London; New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 241. Girard notes that modern individualism reflects the confidence of Western society in its ability to make and keep external peace with individual internal self-regulation.

a “real individual,” belonging to the small minority and being able to take a stand against the crowd, becoming a peace-maker by being identified with the other beyond violent reciprocity.³² Luther’s “true Christian” or his theonomous self is precisely equivalent to what Girard calls the “real,” or truly autonomous, individual. Luther’s religious individualism stimulated the birth of the modern autonomous individual but is far from the modern atomization of individuals.

If autonomy is the groundwork of human dignity as Kant has said,³³ the role of intermediaries for modern autonomy that Luther’s theology played is significant for the Korean church and society. This is because there remains such a long way to go for democracy regarding social relations based on individual’s dignity and autonomy in Korea. And from Luther’s teaching of the theonomous liberal and responsible self, Korean Christians will hopefully gain a spirit of true freedom and love that promotes social solidarity beyond individual’s atomization.

3. ETHICS OF LOVE: HUMAN RIGHTS OF CRIMINALS AND THE VOCATIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF WORK

Luther emphasized the freedom of individuals and each individual’s independent self-world; however, the inward freedom is bound in outward love for others: “A Christian lives not in himself, but in Christ and in his neighbor. Otherwise he is not a Christian. He lives in Christ through faith, in his neighbor through love.”³⁴ As mentioned above, a Christian is fundamentally for oneself and stands before oneself to be independent and self-determined. However, to be for oneself and before oneself does not mean to be “in oneself” because to be for oneself occurs in Christ. In Christ, a Christian “lives in his neighbor.”

The priority of faith over any act, including ritual and moral conduct, creates individual’s free and independent self-worlds beyond their relations with others. At the same time, as long as escaping the masses happens in Christ, one’s independency is not reduced to individualistic isolation but goes together with living in relation with neighbors through love.

This independency establishes the precondition of the supra-moral relationships of love between individuals. Love is supra-moral in the sense that it extends liberation from external moral law and expands responsibility for the other beyond the requirements of common morals. Freedom and love, which seem to be unrelated, collaborate and strengthen each other; inner freedom gives rise to

³²It is not a surprise that Girard employs the same Augustinian words cited above, referring to the innermost mediation of Christian belief to keep the right distance from others that enables escape from the mimetic whirlpool; the internal mediation alone is doomed to undergo regression. René Girard, *Battling to the end, Conversation with Benoit Chantre*, trans. Mary Baker (Michigan: Michigan State University, 2010), 131–134.

³³Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 43.

³⁴Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, LW 31:371.

outer love, and love promotes and perfects freedom. Through the mediation of Christ, one's genuine independency necessarily shifts to ample care for another.

The paradox of Luther's Christian ethics is characterized by the concurrence of love and justice in every case. Loving one's neighbors does not mean covering over their evils without inflicting punishment on them; Luther, as a realist, well understood the necessity to curb the destructive power of wrongdoing: Wicked and illegal acts of evil must be paid for, and civil justice must be established and firmly protected. However, love for an adversary should accompany any accusation. Even when one resorts to law against another in the defense of one's benefit, one should not lose a motive of love for the person involved. In other words, justice must be restored externally, and at the same time, the love motif should come into play internally. This way, love and justice occur concurrently on every occasion. Individual ethics and social ethics are not divided but are jointly fulfilled. This means that one must simultaneously cover the order of salvation and that of preservation, being faithful to both of the two kingdoms. Inasmuch as Luther does not give up the love ideal even in social relational tensions, his ethics differ from the modern social ethics that are based on justice.³⁵

What type of sense does it make that the reformers³⁶ stress love even in social relations? I note two points about Luther's ethics of love that are relevant to the Korean church and society: One is about the respect of a criminal's own person, and the other is about the organic society of love in connection with vocation theory.

Christians who are called to love can appeal to law against those who illegally damage one's profit. What is needed in doing so is a pure heart without any private emotion of vindictiveness or hostility against the offending party. All actions must be done "out of a genuine love for righteousness" to "maintain the right and avoid the wrong."³⁷ This means that evil and the offenders who commit evil must be distinguished and treated differently. It is not the evildoer but the evil done that is subject to condemnation. Christians' legal acts encompass both legal and supra-legal aspects.

However, how is it imaginable to bring anyone to court without hostile sentiment? What does this teaching mean in a contemporary society that is

³⁵The starting point of Reinhold Niebuhr's social ethics is that the absolute ethics of love that Jesus taught does not apply to social ethics dealing with conflict of interests in everyday life. Cf. Reinhold Niebuhr, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics* (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), 45ff. Adam Smith, who founded modern capitalist ethics, viewed beneficence, namely that of love, as a mere ornament in contrast to the justice praised as the pillar that upholds the whole edifice of a society. See, Adam Smith, *The Theory of the Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. Raphael and A. Macfie (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1984), 86.

³⁶Calvin speaks almost the same message as Luther. See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John McNeill, trans. Ford Battles (Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 1506–1507.

³⁷Martin Luther, *The Sermon on the Mount*, LW 21:111.

greatly influenced by the critiques of Christian ethics of Nietzsche and Freud? The demand of the love motif in the punishment of crime seems unable to overcome the critique that it leads to the loss of human vitality or makes one suffer the masochism of self-violence. Luther affirmed that it is nearly miraculous, and possible only by the power of the Spirit, that the rational approach ends up failing.³⁸ No matter how rare the case, punishment without hatred remains an important part of Christian ethics. The commandment of love for thy neighbor should be put to practice even in the legal process.

The meaning and the relevance of Luther's theology of punishment can be found in the consideration of the human rights of criminals who break civil law. Although it is hard for anyone who was personally harmed to keep feeling love for the criminals who committed the harm, Luther's teaching can enhance the public's awareness regarding the treatment of criminals. According to Luther's logic, a criminal's inner soul is to remain untouched by any legal judgment even as the external body must undergo a penalty. This is because civil law concerns the secular person and all outward deeds, whereas one's own inner person belongs only to the direct reign of God. God can forgive the criminal's sin, Luther says, but the state should by all means pass judgment on him.³⁹ Forgiveness and retribution occur simultaneously. Because of the direct and spiritual reign of God, the criminal's own personhood should be protected as the kingdom of freedom and subjected to no coercion or insult.⁴⁰

Kant follows Luther and distinguishes the innate personality from the civil personality in the individual. The former concerns the inner freedom of morality and the latter external freedom of legality. According to Kant's philosophy of punishment, the innate personality of a criminal remains respected amid the public penalty, because the punishment is considered to be the effect of one's applying a law against oneself: subjection of one's phenomenal self as a criminal to the noumenal self as a holy legislator. By founding the essence of punishment on the criminal's autonomous regulation in the imitation of Luther's theonomy in the Enlightenment context, Kant could protect the inner freedom and dignity of a criminal whose civil freedom rightly undergoes a limitation through the punishment, which is also Luther's position.⁴¹

³⁸Martin Luther, *Temporal Authority*, LW 45:104.

³⁹Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis*, LW 8:205.

⁴⁰John Witte similarly relates the modern procedural rights of criminals to the image of God as the source of comfort, not of fear, that Luther highlighted. John Witte Jr., *Law and Protestantism, The Legal Teachings of the Lutheran Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 300.

⁴¹Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), trans. Mary Gregor, 144. See 141: "His innate personality protects him [a criminal] from this [being treated as a means], even though he can lose his civil personality."

Applied to the penalty law, Luther's ethics of love asserts respect for each criminal's own person, but in Korea, both suspects and their families are subject to public insult, especially in trials of public figures, and this treatment is immensely traumatizing and humiliating for victims; in extreme cases, they take own lives. The defamation of politicians' characters through suspicion in fact often divides the entire population, drawing in the massive numbers of supporters and opponents who thrive in the divisive party spirit. Korean Christians need to play their role as true Christians who are set apart from the masses, the minority who warn of the sinfulness of the aimless hatred spawned within the public. Luther's theology of punishment could be helpful in this area if "out of a genuine love of justice itself" were engraved in the mind-sets of Korean Christians.

Another needed lesson for Korean Christians concerns Luther's conception of an organic society of love related to vocation theory. His thinking can provide a theological groundwork to recover the communitarian ethics demolished during Korea's rapid economic growth. Furthermore, Luther's vocation theory leads to strengthening labor ethics and to taking pride in one's job by removing the discriminative stereotypes rooted in medieval tradition.⁴²

With the theory of the priesthood of all believers, the calling of God no longer applied only to priests but covered all vocations and social roles of everyday life.⁴³ God's calling to a vocation is the extension of the calling to be a Christian; the inner calling to freedom in the kingdom of God makes the job activity in the kingdom of the world a calling to serve others by meeting their needs. The nature of the job is to help others by providing the necessities through occupational labor. With the theological consciousness of God's calling, making a living and caring for others' good coincide. Therefore, vocation theory is a part of Luther's ethics of love that is based on one's inner freedom through faith in God.

With vocation theory, Luther could draw up a society as an organic and spiritual community made by intertwining individual's spirits through the networking of varying jobs.⁴⁴ This way, the realm of the kingdom of God extends

⁴²Stackhouse points out that Luther's vocation theory rendered the spiritual meaning of economic life for the first time in human history, so that all could carry out their vocations under moral self-control. Max Stackhouse, "Business, economics and Christian ethics," in *Cambridge Companion of Christian Ethics*, ed. Robin Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 237.

⁴³Compared with the Renaissance humanist promotion of daily life that concerned the wealthy and the politicians, Luther's theory of vocation was more focused on the lowly offices and stations. William Wright, *Understanding of God's Two Kingdoms. A Response to the Challenge of Skepticism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 170.

⁴⁴Luther's conception of organic society in connection with the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is found as early as in *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate*: "We are all one body of Christ the head, and all members one of another . . . everyone must benefit and serve every other by means of his work or office so that in this way many kinds of work may be done for the

well beyond the individual's soul and takes on a shape of society. As long as this society is organic, Luther's thinking is similar to the medieval theology that viewed the state as the organic community. The common good of Thomas Aquinas is not just about increasing the good of the community as a whole; it requires that personal relationships between members be tied together with friendly love for each other.⁴⁵ However, Luther's organic society is not the state or the political community but an invisible community comprising the voluntary engagements of liberal and responsible individuals who use jobs as opportunities to serve others. In this respect, the organic society is a kind of invisible church,⁴⁶ a community of *koinonia* that is distinct from the state's basis in the law of retributive and distributive justice.⁴⁷

Just as Augustine regarded the human being as social and not as political by nature, Luther surely recognizes the distinction between society and the state. It is certainly under the influence of Luther that Kant thought of the ideal moral community in distinction from the state as a legal community in his *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. Additionally, I note that Karl Marx's pursuit of an ideal society that turns away from the state system is not far removed from Luther's impact.⁴⁸ However, Marx, unlike Luther, did not acknowledge the distance between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world. Looking back, early modern political philosophers such as Hobbs and Locke thought of the ideal society beyond the state, but they did not feel the tension between the two as much as Luther did.⁴⁹

Hegel's theory of the state is the extension of Luther's organic community in which individual liberty and communitarian solidarity are united. As a community of love beyond civil justice, Hegel's state goes beyond social contract theory, which Kant calls the transcendental necessity in terms of individualistic liberalism. Hegel's teaching of the state is an alternative solution to the problem of modern society.⁵⁰ What separates Hegel from Luther is that Hegel attempts to

bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, just as all the members of body serve one another," LW 44:130.

⁴⁵John Finnis, "Aquinas's moral, political and legal philosophy," <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aquinas-moral-political/#CommGood>. The medieval theory of the organic society is designed to follow the ideal of Christian love.

⁴⁶Karl Holl, *The Cultural Significance of the Reformation*, trans. Karl and Barbara Hertz and John Lichtlau (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1959), 34–37.

⁴⁷Reijo Työrinoja, "Communio Sanctorum: remarks on the ideal society" in *Lutheran Reformation and the Law*, ed. Virpi Mäkinen (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006), 125.

⁴⁸Karl Holl, *The Cultural Significance*, 124–25.

⁴⁹Joshua Mitchell, *Not By Reason Alone, History and Identity in Early Modern Political Thought* (Chicago & London: Chicago University Press, 1993), 1–13.

⁵⁰Timothy Luther, *Hegel's Critique of Modernity: Reconciling Individual Freedom and the Community* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2009), 199ff.

see the reality of truth in the external, objective, and actual world, whereas Luther tends to find eternal truth in the internal, subjective, and invisible kingdom of God. It is well-known that Hegel's doctrine implicates the danger of totalitarian regimes. Hegel sees the state as the goal of everyone, but for Luther, the state is not the goal but a helpful means to get to the goal of freedom, which is not confined in individualistic interiority but necessarily expands to reach an organic community of love that remains distant from the state. Luther's position cannot be equivalent to idly looking on in regard to activities of the state and politics, and nor can Luther's community be the enthusiastic identification of an ideal state system according to which the state is likely to monopolize the totality of power.

Inasmuch as Luther seeks an ideal community different from the state, Allen estimates that Luther's thought was very near that of Anabaptists, who rejected state systems based on coercive law.⁵¹ However, unlike the Anabaptists's anarchism, Luther's organic society overlaps with the state because the same work of each individual externally produces the common goods demanded by the political community and controlled by law of the state, and also internally serves as a channel for assisting others under the commandment of love. Everyone is a member of both the community of lawful justice and the community of love based on the Gospel. The inner freedom through faith in Christ is what makes ordinary living activities the divine vocation for love. In the end, the ideal society and the state of Luther are inseparable in distinction. Unlike Anabaptists, the two must not be separated and, unlike Hegel, the two must be distinguished.

Luther's ideal of organic society affects state policies in the direction of encouraging welfare systems; in fact, during his lifetime, the churches and city council of Wittenberg cooperated to make a common fund to aid the poor and sick. Furthermore, as everyday work became God's calling, the community as a whole was being conscious of its responsibility to provide unemployed persons with jobs; in other words, engagement in a job became one's duty and right at the same time.

The underpinnings of the modern welfare system, which seeks for all people full employment and a social safety net, can be seen in the thoughts and practices of the Reformers. Researchers have found that the public welfare policies of contemporary states such as Germany date to the Reformation in their desecularization of poverty and secularization of poor relief,⁵² and that Nordic welfare states have a strong background of hundreds of years of Lutheran teachings.⁵³ Luther's vocational understanding of work and his teaching of an organic society

⁵¹John Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Methuen and Co Ltd., 1928, 1977), 30.

⁵²Larry Frohman, *Poor Relief and Welfare in Germany from the Reformation to World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 17–31.

⁵³Jørn Petersen, "Martin Luther and the Danish Welfare State" in *Lutheran Quarterly*, 1/32 Spring 2018, 17ff.

of love still inspire new meaning in work and renew morals of modern capitalism that are held captive by principles of profit maximization.

CONCLUSION

Luther's dualistic tension between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world consequently contributed to the emergence of liberal and responsible individuals, desacralizing not only ecclesial authority but political powers and removing any authoritarianism prevalent in a society. His theology of paradox also made it possible to keep dreaming of a more desirable and ideal society without falling victim to the pride of historical immanence of the kingdom of God. Hopefully, the abundance of Luther's theology provides the Korean church and Christians with transformational power for desirable change toward a more democratic and communitarian society beyond possessive individualism.