

Justification is not by Race
Luther's Theology and a Biblical Basis for Antiracism:
Developing Lutheran Social Ethics

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We are not justified by race, but "by grace for Christ sake through faith." (Augsburg Confession Article 4)

Racism violates our Christian faith and Martin Luther's theology is completely undone by it. The way our Christian convictions make us fight against racism, bigotry, prejudice, and discrimination today, Luther fought against clericalism in his day. He did so by proclaiming the priesthood of all believers.

In those days as well as even in the Roman Catholic Church in our day, ordination made a priest ontologically superior to a layperson, because a priest could confect the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist.¹ Luther promoted all believers into the priesthood and made ordination merely a functional difference between the clergy and laity rather than one of status.

In those days the laity internalized inferiority opposite the priests while the priests internalized an unchristian superiority. The priesthood also had many social arrangements that supported their place of privilege. A priest could not be tried in civil courts by a lay judge, but only by priests in ecclesiastical courts, whose self-interest often did not take injustices perpetrated against the common folk seriously.

¹ Some priests said that while Mary brought Christ into the world only once, they did so every time they read the mass.

In declaring the priesthood of all believers, Luther did away with that inequality.² He lowered ordination to a non-sacramental status, while he affirmed baptism as one of the two biblically grounded sacraments. No longer could the clerical estate claim that baptism was almost a smudge on the soul of the believer that only ordination could wipe away. Luther fought against clericalism and our Lutheran theology convinces us to fight against racism, in which an internalized inferiority is fostered in the oppressed, with very tangible social disadvantages; and an internalized superiority, in the dominant White race, with very tangible privileges provided.

Jesus makes clear that his followers are not to lord it over others in the way of the world (Mat 20:25) and that as the Lord, he lived among us as one who served. (26-28) As the priesthood of all believers we are all ministers to one another, that means, ministers and not masters (*magisters*) wielding power and authority and wanting to be served.

In his most often published pamphlet called the "Freedom of a Christian" of 1520, Luther bids believers to be Christs for one another. Luther declared the freedom of a Christian in view of what he called the "Babylonian Captivity of the Church." But the Lord of lords and the King of kings, Christ himself became our servant, so to be Christs we also have to be servants. In two propositions derived

² Did only the early Luther proclaim the priesthood of all believers? Even if he never used this equalizing expression after the Peasants' War of 1525, (which may not be true) the revolutionary slogan of the laity's receiving the bread and the cup, that is, communion in both kinds, amounted to the same thing. The common folk regarded it as the privilege of only the clergy at that time. The priesthood of all believers also became embedded into the Lutheran tradition by calling its ministers pastors and not priests.

from scriptural verses, in the beginning of the "Freedom of a Christian," Luther places these two contradictory ways of being together in tension:

A Christian person is a free sovereign over all things and subject to no one. [Let me add by faith.]

A Christian person is a dutiful servant of all things and subject to everyone.³ [Let me add because of love.]

These two opposite ways of being have to be kept in tension with one another in the believer. The late Bishop William H. Lazareth warned that they should never fall apart into a dualism.⁴

The first lifts up the self-esteem of the Christian in faith while the second is the descent or falling in love. More is involved than self-esteem of course. Faith raises the whole person up with the strength for the descent into humble loving service. These two features of the Christian life have to be held in tension inside the person, because the law and gospel, that is, the Word of God is violated when they fall apart into a dualism. Such a dualism makes one group of people sovereign and free while another group is made into abject slaves.

Faith is the power from above that provides the strength to love. In the words of St. Paul, "faith becomes active in love" (Gal 5:6) and Bishop Lazareth adds that "love seeks justice." His whole formula now for the Christian life reads: "Faith becomes active in love and love seeks justice."⁵

³ LW 31:344 and WA 7: 21.1-4.

⁴ William H. Lazareth, A Theology of Politics, (New York: Board of Social Ministry of the Lutheran Church in America, 1965), pages 10-11.

⁵ Ibid., page 20.

Racial slavery, which was institutionalized by the color of one's skin in our country, made faith and love fall apart. This undermined what Christians stand for, according to the teachings of Martin Luther, a true and faithful interpreter of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Luther places sovereignty and slavery, faith and love into tension with each other. When the tension is sustained then a person grows and matures into the full stature of Christ. To allow these opposites to fall apart and divide people forfeits our self-knowledge and growth.

For example, when reading the parable about the "Sower and the Seed," (Mat 13:1-9 or Mark 4:1-9) we could point to some people and say, "Their faith was snatched away by the birds, the faith of others never took root, and the weeds choked the dear life of faith out of those." Applying Jesus' words solely to others is a very superficial interpretation of this parable. An authentic reading militates against self-righteousness and includes self-knowledge. We know that sometimes we ourselves are in those different stages of life, that we face obstacles, distractions, detours, experience rootlessness, and often have other things in our life crowd out and choke out the life of our faith. We ourselves have to grow and increase in faith until we sink roots in good soil and bear fruit.

Luther also teaches that we are sinners and saints at one and the same time. In this tension we dare not self-righteously identify ourselves as saints and point to others as sinners, nor abjectly take

ourselves to be sinners and point to others as saints.⁶ In the first case Luther says a person falls off a log to the right and in the case of the second, the person falls off on the left.⁷

Using different language,⁸ we all have a sun-shiny side and a shadow side in us. We can exult in our sun-shiny side, but we have to take responsibility for our shadow side as well. Sometimes our self-righteousness makes us identify completely with our positive side so that we become completely unaware of our shadow side, which is filled by our weaknesses and faults, our shortcomings, lust and greed. Then we can project our shadow side on persons belonging to a group that we do not know very well. Perhaps we do not have much experience with people of color and with that, we are prone to project and see our shadow side in them and oppress them, not realizing that it is our own shadow side that we are trying to suppress externally.

We are sinners and saints at one and the same time and we are forgiven, but we have to take responsibility for our shadow side in order not to make other people into our sin, the way we did when we crucified Christ.⁹ A Christian takes up the cross and follows Jesus. Following Christ makes us children of God. We dare not appropriate the

⁶ Such a division is what Bp. Lazareth calls a rigorous dualism. Ibid., again pages 10-11.

⁷ When in our Westerns the good guys always wear white hats and the villains, black hats, we can easily observe how inadequately our complex, contradictory, and complicated human anthropology is represented.

⁸ Carl Gustav Jung speaks of the ego or the self and the shadow, noting that to become conscious of one's shadow requires a considerable moral effort. The Portable Jung, (New York: The Viking Press, 1971), page 145. What Jung refers to as moral effort can also be called the work of the soul, in which one becomes aware of one's "growing edge."

⁹ Remember that it was not the Jews or the Romans even, who crucified Christ, so that we could blame it on them. No, we crucified Christ. In the words of William Sloan Coffin, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Yes indeed, with hammer and nails in hand!"

privileges of Christianity and place its cross on somebody else's shoulders.

When Christ was raised up on the cross and humanity stood there surrounding him, we stood there and Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34) When we have remained in our comfort zones and pleasantly identified with our self-righteous side, the evil that we are capable of, drops into our unconscious and we are not even aware of what we are doing.

We have to take responsibility for our sins and confess them to one another in order to be forgiven. One form this confession takes is caucusing together and honestly trying to dismantle our racial superiority feelings and becoming conscious of the White privilege involved. We confess our prejudice, bigotry, as well as our racism, which can be defined as prejudice plus the power that institutionalizes and enforces it.

Conspiracy groups like militias resemble people afflicted with prejudice and racism, because they too are guilty of projection. They claim some group is violent and going to commit an aggression against them and meanwhile they are doing paramilitary training for the sake of aggression. They think they want to suppress it in others, but they themselves are full of aggression and they themselves are getting ready to commit violence. Note the way that deranged Norwegian wanted to protect his people from immigration, multiculturalism and Moslems. With his bombing in Oslo and his shooting rampage in a summer youth

camp he killed 77 people, many of them teenagers. With protection like that, who needs enemies?

What conspiracy thinking and racism have in common is the projection of one's own sin and shadow side onto others. That shadow side is filled with unchecked prejudice, bigotry, and hatred, of which they may not even be aware.

We know the poignant passages in Isaiah, in which the suffering servant, the Son of man is described. As Christians we see Jesus Christ as the one Isaiah is describing, because it is "by his stripes that we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5) Now racism is the complete opposite of the vicarious suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ as described by Isaiah. Mostly unconsciously our prejudice and racism place our sins on another person so that we do not have to bear them. Jesus, on the other hand, took the sins of others and acted as if they were his very own in order to overcome them and bring forgiveness.

In the "Freedom of a Christian" Luther writes,

I must place even my faith and righteousness before God for my neighbor, so that they cover my neighbor's sin, and then take that sin upon myself, and act no differently than if it were my very own, even as Christ did for all of us. That, you see, is the nature of love when it is genuine.¹⁰

In our racism we place our own sins, often completely unconsciously on persons of color and failingly deal with our sin by persecuting and destroying them. We can see how racism undermines our

¹⁰ WA 7:37.36-38.2. It does not come through clearly in LW 31:371. See Philip and Peter Krey, Luther's Spirituality, (New York: Paulist Press, 2007), page 89-90.

Christianity and makes us live lives diametrically opposed to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

When we have become free of prejudice and bigotry, we can become one heart and soul, who ascend in faith and fall in love with the wonderful and compassionate heart of our Lord Jesus Christ throbbing in our breast. Then in the words of St. Paul we can also say, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Gal 3:28) For today that verse translates into "There is no longer White or Black, Gay or Straight, nor class that can divide us, because all of us are one in Christ Jesus." We have become one people of God with the compassionate heart of Jesus Christ beating in our breast. Having his body and blood, we are sisters and brothers together. We are one in Christ, who prays in the High Priestly prayer, that we all become one.¹¹ (John 17:11) Although our bodies like shells may be different, we are one heart and soul together in Christ.

Bishop William Lazareth commended Lutherans for making their faith active in love, but noted that we have traditionally been weak on the part of our love seeking justice. He writes,

On the one hand, Lutheranism has tended to say that the church should "preach the gospel and administer the sacraments," and strictly limit its social witness to the everyday lives of the laity. This concentration on the gospel energized a sound evangelical *personal* ethic: "faith active in love." But the whole vast realm of corporate structures and institutional life has thereby been deprived of the normative judgment and guidance of

¹¹ I love the saying of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: "True unity differentiates; it does not confound." Where uniformity can be external, internal oneness makes us free to be as different as we can be. The Future of Man, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1964), pages 55-57.

God's law by the church's neglect of any corresponding social ethic: "love seeking justice."¹²

Mark describes the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Galilee in a way that definitely includes a social ethic:

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God and saying, "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand, repent, and believe the good news." (Mark 1:14-15)

That Gospel represented quite a challenge in that day, and without a translation for our day, it sounds quite quaint and couched in the obscurities of yesteryears. The challenge to the kingdom and empire of that day needs to translate into a challenge of our government and the empire that our country tries to control today. Usually the "gospel" in that day was proclaimed by Caesar, who promised the good news his administration would bring about. Jesus Christ was proclaiming that God's rule was near and at hand on earth with an order that was based on life, a life that is new and abundant. The Roman order was sustained by the threat of inflicting torture and death. Jesus Christ proclaimed trust, while the emperor and kings of the day wanted control. In the words of Stalin, "Trust is good; control is better!" Jesus counters with some control may be necessary, but trust is better.¹³ He does not mobilize armies to conquer an empire with Roman blood baths in one country after another. He sheds his own blood for us. As you already can see, only God can bring this heavenly

¹² Lazareth, A Theology of Politics, page 20.

¹³ This is of course an understatement, because Jesus challenged everyone to increase their faith.

new order into existence. Luther notes that "it will come even without our prayers, but we pray that it come to us."¹⁴

In the words of Bishop Lazareth,

Though responsible for the proclamation of whole Word of God, Lutherans have traditionally been much stronger on the personal appropriation of the gospel (for politicians and statesmen) than on the social demands of the law (for politics and the state). What is desperately needed today is a prophetic counterpart to the priesthood of all believers.¹⁵

The trouble with "the priesthood of all believers," a slogan which was very effective in Luther's day, is that clericalism has been replaced by secularism. There is no longer a powerful so-called spiritual estate governing and oppressing the laity that the slogan confronts and challenges. There is, however, a dominant White, privileged society with an ideology of superiority using racism for its unjust advantage. Lazareth defines secularism and clericalism as two approaches that do not maintain the tension in which a Christian lives "in this world but not of it."¹⁶

Secularists are generally those who live as if the new age in Christ had not yet begun; clericalists are most often their opposites who live as though the old age in Adam had been completely abolished.¹⁷

Both positions have allowed the tension to deteriorate into a rigorous dualism. So the secularists live as though they were in the old age, that is, as if Christ had never come proclaiming the rule of God near

¹⁴ From Luther's Small Catechism, the explanation of the second petition of the Lord's Prayer.

¹⁵ Lazareth, A Theology of Politics, page 20.

¹⁶ Romans 12:2: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God - what is good and acceptable and perfect."

¹⁷ Lazareth, A Theology of Politics, p. 4.

and at hand. In that way racism and oppression is accepted as part of the worldly order, and the teachings of Christ are reduced to a personal, individual, and private sphere of life.

Often Luther is thought to have represented only a personal ethic and a very inadequate social and political ethic.¹⁸ But "Justification by faith itself for Luther results in spontaneous personal and social change."¹⁹ The Reformation of the Church was also brought about by the Word of God that justified it by grace through faith on a social level.

In his Bondage of the Will, Luther writes: "For the Word of God comes, whenever it comes to change and renew the world."²⁰ Luther could have also said, "For the Word of God comes, whenever it comes to change and renew the church," because that is what the Reformation was all about. Furthermore Luther's slogan, the priesthood of all believers, is a social ethic more than a personal one. The pamphlet of

¹⁸ Max Weber: In my words, whether the state dominates the church [caesaropapism] or the priesthood dominates the state and society [hierocratic rule] depends on several factors. "Especially important is whether a religion has a divinely ordained ecclesiastic institution that is separate from the secular power....[which] is not at all [true] of Lutheranism." Page 1174. Weber does not understand the internal tension that the Kingdom of Christ brings about within the society and the way consciences need to be informed as worked out by Luther in his dialectical theology.

Weber continues later in the paragraph: "Luther was completely indifferent toward the organization of the church as long as the Word could be spread in its purity. The indifference, deriving from the individualist nature of his piety and from an eschatological streak in his personal faith, in effect surrendered his church to the caesaropapism of the secular power." Page 1175. Caesaropapism is the state's rule over the church. Luther did not have an individualist piety, as can easily be shown from his writings in "The Freedom of a Christian." But because the internal tension is so difficult to maintain, because of its requirement to speak truth to power, the second part of Weber's diagnosis is historically true. Max Weber, Economy and Society, Volume Two, edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968, 1978), pages 1174 and 1175.

¹⁹ Peter D.S. Krey, Sword of the Spirit, Sword of Iron, (Berkeley: GTU Dissertation, 2001), page 352.

²⁰ WA 18:626 and LW 33: 52.

1520, in which he features this slogan, is entitled, To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation *for the Betterment of the Christian Estate*. (The italics are mine for emphasis.) He knew that the so-called spiritual estate claimed a superiority and privilege that belonged to all Christians, whether peasants, burghers, or nobility. There was a time when the three estates of peasants, princes, and priests had provided food, protection, and prayers for all.²¹ But in his day the priesthood, especially the aristocracy in it, had used the church to usurp power and wealth at the expense of the other estates. Thus Luther proclaimed the priesthood of all believers, thereby dissolving the spiritual estate in the society of his day and promoting every believer into the Christian estate.

I wonder how Max Weber would explain all the social as well as institutional change brought about by Luther's experience of being justified by faith if it is true that he reduced the whole Word of God to a mere personal and individualist ethic? Luther's proclamation of the Word of God brought the turbulence of social change comparable to the Civil Rights Movement of his namesake, Martin Luther King, Jr., namely: the Wittenberg student disturbances, (1521-22) the Knights Rebellion, (1522) and the Peasants' War, (1524-25) but most importantly, of course, the Reformation of the Church itself.

²¹ Max Weber defines estates versus classes: "With some oversimplification, one might thus say that classes are stratified according to their relations to the production and acquisition of goods; whereas status groups are stratified according to the principles of their *consumption* of goods as represented by special styles of life." Max Weber, Economy and Society, Vol. Two, page 937.

In terms of institutional change: Luther's throwing the canon law into the flames on December 10, 1520 caused a veritable legal revolution, shutting down two ecclesiastical court systems, the old archidiaconal and episcopal courts, after which the civil law of the land prevailed where the Reformation took hold. Monasteries emptied and in Germany many were converted into schools. Luther declared that the spiritual and political office were not compatible.²² In those days they were prince bishops and abbots and the pope was, of course, a territorial monarch of the Papal States, the King of the Patriarchy of Rome, and the *Pontifex Maximus*, i.e., the universal pope, who had untold wealth and wielded power as great or greater than the emperor's. Like the pope, the emperor did not have a spiritual estate guarding and advancing his interests in every one of his countries. But in those days many of the popes were trained in canon law and lacked real spiritual and theological integrity. Those members of the spiritual estate who wanted to join in the Reformation had to give up their high office and powerful positions to teach, preach, and counsel believers with humility.

²² Article 21 in "Why the Books of the Pope and His Disciples Were Burned," (1520), LW 31:390: Criticizing the pope for boasting to be the heir of the Roman Empire, he writes: "Although everyone well knows that the spiritual and secular realms do not get along well with each other. And St. Paul enjoins that a bishop should serve the word of God."

Toward a Lutheran Social Ethics Developed
Mostly from the "Freedom of a Christian"

My assertion bears repeating: "Justification by faith itself for Luther results in spontaneous personal and social change."²³ For example, his social ethic becomes very pronounced at the end of his popular version of "The Freedom of a Christian." He organizes his most popular pamphlet²⁴ into 1/ the inner self or inner person, 2/ the outward self or the body, and 3/ the body externally related to other bodies,²⁵ where discipline of the outward body is required to match the inner person, i.e., the internal self that is fashioned by the Word. In Luther's words, "One who hears the word becomes like the word, pure, good, and just."²⁶ So in terms of his social ethic, the external order therefore also requires justice to match the kingdom of heaven within. There is discipline in the personal sense and justice in the social and political sense. Personal love transcends itself in justice and justice transcends itself back into love.

The Kingdom of Heaven is within and I believe that it is through the internal dimension of the institutions of that day that the Word brought about so much social change. In this way going into the innermost heart or core of the person as Luther does, I believe brings about an explosive advance in social justice. Luther was often very

²³ Peter Krey, Sword of the Spirit, Sword of Iron, page 352.

²⁴ The Latin version of "The Freedom of a Christian" includes a fourth section on ceremonies, making the popular version only $\frac{3}{4}$ the length of the Latin version. Its translation into English is only available in our previously cited book, Philip and Peter Krey's Luther's Spirituality.

²⁵ The third section of the "Freedom of a Christian" is the roundabout way Luther is referring to sociology, three or four centuries before sociology became a discipline of the humanities.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, page 268: This Kenneth Hagens's wonderful translation of this Luther passage. This sentence is not in the Latin version: LW 31:350.

verbose, but he could also pack whole summations into single words. For example, "gospel" and "testament" are words that contain the whole world of Christian meanings for Luther. For him "not only meanings, but social change is envisioned to flow spontaneously out of such intensified, theological words."²⁷ And "Justification by faith itself for Luther results in spontaneous personal and social change. That a remnant [of believers] overflows with the justice of faith could be developed in terms of social spontaneity."²⁸

That development could be argued along the following lines: With the aspiration to become the priesthood of all believers, the mediation of the priests and the spiritual estate was eliminated, bringing immediacy or spontaneity to a believer's personal and social response.

In Luther's pamphlet, "The New Testament, that is, the Holy Mass," he is referring not to the New Testament in the Bible, but to the last will and testament of Jesus, the night before he was crucified, making us the heirs of all God's promises in the continuing marvelous exchange. The words of institution in the mass were "This is the new *testament* in my blood." Luther understood it as the last will and testament making us the heirs of all the spiritual possessions of Christ. The change to "This is the new covenant in my blood" tries to overcome the possible individualism received in Luther's words.²⁹ But

²⁷ Sword of the Spirit, Sword of Iron, p. 352.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ This reception of Luther confuses our individualist ideology with his position. He never argued that a believer was his own priest, but always his neighbor's priest.

when Luther goes to the innermost person, to the core,³⁰ I would submit, the internal dimension, that is, the thought, ethos, reasoning, and purpose of the structures and corporate institutions of society, then, they also experience the tension that Luther always maintained. The Church proclaims the Kingdom of Christ, which is internal to the political and corporate structures of our society³¹ -- in a tension that is challenging and reforming them to ever greater approximations of the just and peaceful rule of God in Christ's Kingdom.

Thus to discover how so much social and institutional change took place in Luther's time through the Word of God, the tension between the old age and the new, this order and the new divine order proclaimed by Christ, need to be considered³² - along with the tension of the other opposites usually mentioned: between love and faith, law and gospel, sovereign and slave, sinner and saint, sighing and groaning in the spirit, etc. "God's continuous creation is not only natural and personal, but also social."³³ Thus the coincidence and tension of opposites and the growth and development or reformation it implies also pertain to the tension between the kingdom of heaven and those of this world.

³⁰ To enter the internal depths, rather than philosophy, Luther wanted to study theology. "I mean that theology," he wrote, "which searches out the meat of the nut and the kernel of the grain and the marrow of the bones." In a letter to John Braun, March 17th, 1509 (It's not in Luther's Works, vol. 48.) It can be found in Preserved Smith, Luther's Correspondence and Other Contemporary Letters, Volume I, (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Publications Society, 1913), p. 24.

³¹ Luke 17:21: "For the Kingdom of God is within you."

³² Although this presentation of his Two Kingdom Theory is not explicit in Luther, it is proposed in order to explain all the social and institutional change that occurred with the Reformation.

³³ Sword of the Spirit, Sword of Iron, p. 358-9.

In the third part of the "Freedom of a Christian," in his "sociological" section, Luther describes the internal Kingdom of Christian Freedom in terms of the circulation of grace for the common good in the joyful economy of abundance. The following are excerpts from my dissertation:

Luther delves into the spontaneity internal to God for the source of common wealth, coming down from on high or coming up out of the depth, and replacing an economy of scarcity with the joyful one of abundance. As in the Mass where the fountain of all good things from God, both spiritual and material, overflowed upon all the worshipers, the servers of God, here Luther is describing the joyful economy (*frohliche wirtschafft*) overflowing with divine gifts, coming out of the internal kingdom of Christian freedom.

The kingdom of Christian freedom, which overcomes the Babylonian Captivity, provides social and personal gifts beyond material goods and possessions. An infinite, personal giving of the self and forgiving of others also overflows all boundaries for the sake of the love of neighbor. Luther writes that God's gifts have to flow to those who need them.³⁴

In "New Testament, that is, the Holy Mass," see how all in need would be provided for: "There should be no beggars amongst us." The joyful economy of abundance can be seen in these lines, where everyone places the other first, and those in need foremost, so that all things, inherited from the new testament become [shared in] common.³⁵

In order to have the joyful economy of abundance the economy of scarcity needs to be overcome. After citing verses in Philippians: "Let each of you not look to your own interests, but to the interests of others and let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus..." (2: 2-3) Luther writes,

³⁴ Peter Krey, Sword of the Spirit, Sword of Iron, pages 358-359.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, page 261.

Look how clearly St. Paul depicts a Christian life to us, [showing us that] all works should be directed toward the good of the neighbor, for each and every person has enough by having faith, and all such a one's works and whole life are left over to be able to serve the neighbor freely in love.³⁶

Through faith, which is the work of God in us, we receive enough from God to cover our material needs with many spiritual gifts and blessing besides. Luther is saying that in being baptized into the death of Christ, we become like those who have died so that all our possessions are left for others, which is a prerequisite for the economy of abundance. Luther writes,

Why should your remaining possessions and good works, which provide for you, rule over you, if through faith you have enough; for in faith God gave you all things? Look, in such a way God's goods must flow out of you into others and become [held in] common. Everyone must so accept his or her neighbor as if the neighbor were the self. Out of Christ [all good things] flow into us, who accepted us himself into his life, as if he were what we are. Out of us they shall flow into those who have need of them.³⁷ (WA 37.16-36, LW 31:371)

Those sentences from the "Freedom of a Christian" describe the circulation of grace and the way the economy of scarcity is overcome and replaced by the joyful economy of abundance. Obviously Luther cannot be described as thinking on a personal and individual level only.

"The gracious action of God is not limited to the personal, it is social as well."³⁸ The sociological level of description must be taken

³⁶ Peter and Philip Krey, Luther's Spirituality, page 86. Cf. LW 31:367 of the Latin version. The popular version is not in the LW. It is in WA 7: 20-38.

³⁷ Ibid., page 89. Directly quoted from my translation, Sword of the Spirit, Sword of Iron, pages 357-58.

³⁸ Sword of the Spirit, Sword of Iron, page 367.

seriously in order to respect the individual and protect him or her from social forces beyond individual control. Individualism³⁹ is blind to the "vast realm of corporate structures and institutional life" not operating under the "guidance of God's law" - to use the words of Bishop Lazareth.⁴⁰ Although the person as an individual is the edge and very important advance in modern society, individualism, which disregards community, is a very anti-Lutheran ideology.

Thus justification by faith did not remain a personal ethic for Luther, but a social one as well by bringing the reformation of the whole church. By arguing that priests should not be in the government, the secular civil order came into its own. In this way the reformation of the church also spelled reformation of the government, which of course still had a great deal of reform outstanding, but so does the Church as well. The Reformation principle of a church *ecclesia semper reformanda*, continually reforming, even continuously reforming, when it is repenting, has significance for the injustice of racism as well, because love needs to overcome that injustice.

Governmental development and reform has come a long way. Ours is neither like that of the tyrant Herod in the Roman occupation of Palestine in Jesus' day, nor like the Holy Roman Empire and the Principality of Ernestine Saxony in Luther's day. The historical periods of antiquity, Luther's early modern times and our own modern times are very different. A century and a half after Luther, John

³⁹ I am not referring to 18th century individualism combined with rationalism, but merely thinking that only individuals are real and refusing to take the sociological level of description into account, e.g., referring to the corner "drugstore pharmacist" in order to ignore the whole pharmaceutical industry.

⁴⁰ See footnote 12.

Locke (1632-1704) taught us that our government is not established by divine right, but by the consent of the people. Checks and balances among the three branches of our government prevent a centralization of too much power on top. We have the freedom of religion, because the government is not allowed to establish one. Then we have freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, even the freedom to protest actions by the government. We also still have freedom for workers to join unions and strike against their employers. Herod was a tyrant who killed people at will and Jesus was not the only person crucified, sometimes the Romans lined hundreds of crosses on both sides of a road that entered a city. Any kind soul who helped those poor brutalized and tortured and dying victims was nailed to another cross beside them.

We have come a long way from that kind of tyranny. But just because we have come a long way does not mean we are really "a government of the people, by the people, and for the people" as described by Abraham Lincoln. Even if our government were, we the people can be selfish, corrupt, and quite comfortable with racial injustice. Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom. Bishop Lazareth notes that it is our concern as Christians to make our "vast realm of corporate structures and institutional life" operate under the "guidance of God's law."

While Bishop Lazareth is concerned with love seeking justice in general, we are concerned with Luther's theology and the specific injustice of racism. For example, Tim Scott was recently nominated by the governor of South Carolina as an American of African Descent to the senate in Washington. He is the only Black senator, of whom there

have been a mere six in our history. He is the first senator who will represent a southern state since Reconstruction, and sadly, he stands against most of the issues that Americans of African Descent hold dear. If about 15 percent of our population is Black, then there should of course be approximately 15 Black senators, because as we learned in elementary school, taxation without representation is tyranny. But then in 1999 "about one half of the 1.8 million people in federal and state prisons and jails [were] African Americans."⁴¹ In 2009 over 40 percent of the 2.1 million men in federal and state prisons are Americans of African descent, while White men have 33 percent, and meanwhile Whites make up 78 percent of the total U.S. population!⁴² That is blatant injustice. Talk about the wrong way to deal with our White shadow side!

Although at its founding 25 years ago, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America wanted to increase not just its African American, but its total minority membership to 10 percent, it is still below three percent, which is not that much better than the one percent representation in the U.S. Senate.

To be true to our Lutheran theology today, like Luther we have to declare the freedom of the Christian from the racial and cultural Babylonian captivity that has hold of our Lutheran church. In the same way that Luther challenged the clericalism of his day, we have to

⁴¹ Manning Marable, "Race-ing Justice: The Prison-Industrial Complex," Sept. 30, 1999, <http://www.csub.edu/~mault/race-ing.htm>

⁴² "Incarceration in the United States," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incarceration_in_the_United_States And "U.S.A. Quick Facts from the U.S. Census Bureau," <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html>

challenge the racism of our day. We have to hunger and thirst for greater approximations to justice. The way the so-called spiritual estate in Luther's day shaped the society for its own privilege and advantage, our society has been shaped to provide that for White people at the expense of the people of color and other minorities in our midst.

Luther took the stand of faith before Emperor Charles V and the legate of Pope Leo X against the Babylonian Captivity of the church in his day. Where are the Lutherans who are standing up against the Babylonian Captivity of racism for White privilege in our society today? Luther declared the freedom of the Christian and in the words of St. Paul, "For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand fast therefore and do not submit to the yoke of slavery again." (Gal 5:1)

The Lutherans following Luther should be able to get out from under the captivity of racism and White privilege. Judgment begins in the House of the Lord. (1 Peter 4:17) The words of institution spoken in our worship service can reform all the institutions of this country in order to overcome their racism and White privilege.⁴³ Our true possessions come from our faith. "Those who believe receive and those who don't won't." *Glaubstu so hast tu, Glaubstu nit, so hastu nit!* to quote Luther's German.⁴⁴ "Faith is the possession of things hoped for,

⁴³ "This is my body given for you" can be understood as the body of Christ or the church, which as an institution can become the source of many other institutions like schools, hospitals, and others.

⁴⁴ In order to rhyme Luther's expression, I used "receive" to rhyme with "believe." In German it is "If you believe then you have" i.e., all things, the divine inheritance; not to believe is not to have these possessions.

the conviction of things unseen."⁴⁵ It is through faith that believers receive all good things from God. We are heirs because of the last will and testament of Christ and we receive a divine inheritance and do not have to court White privilege and bank on the injustice perpetrated by racism.

This paper has taken the personal ethics involved in racism and conspiracy theorists seriously by the analysis of the shadow side of individuals and its projection onto others. It was also biblically reinforced by the rationale of vicarious suffering as opposed to what could have been called scapegoating. The Biblical witness included a social ethics and should not be interpreted on a merely individual level, which was also found to be true of Luther.

The upshot of Luther's Theology and Racism is that the priesthood of all believers was a social ethic and not only an individual, personal ethic. Luther was up against clericalism in his day and in our day we are up against secularism, as though the new age in Christ had not yet begun, in the words of Bishop Lazareth. Luther's theology taken seriously has a unique internal way through the tension of opposites to bring about untold social and institutional change, the change we call reformation. Christ declared the rule of God near and at hand. Luther envisioned it as the Kingdom of Christian Freedom that circulated God's grace in the joyful economy of abundance. That is a far cry from our culture of violence, racism, and other injustices in our flagging economy of scarcity. The tension between these opposites

⁴⁵ Hebrews 11:1. "Substance" in that verse referred to possessions, as in the hemorrhaging woman spent all her substance on physicians and no one could cure her. (Luke 8:4)

needs to bring about ever greater approximations of justice, because faith becomes active in love and love seeks justice. The present cultural and racial Babylonian Captivity of the Lutheran Church needs to declare the Freedom of Christians once again in order to overcome the injustice of secular racism which has taken hold of our churches. We are saved and justified through faith by grace and not by race - for Christ's sake.

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