THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

LIBERATED BY GOD'S GRACE

2017 - 500 YEARS OF REFORMATION

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Liberated by God's Grace

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Preface

Martin Junge

The year 2017 marks the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. Churches in the Lutheran tradition take 31 October 1517 as the starting point of the Reformation. It was on that date that Martin Luther is said to have nailed his Ninety-five Theses opposing the sale of indulgences and what he perceived to be clerical abuses attached to this practice on the door of All Saints' Church in Wittenberg. Since then, the Reformation has made an impressive journey. Today, Lutheran churches can be found in all four corners of the globe, with a steadily growing number of Lutherans living in the global South. The Lutheran World Federation, a world-wide communion comprising 144 churches, today represents over 70 million Lutherans in seventy-nine countries.

The churches' diverse formative experiences, social and cultural backgrounds make it virtually impossible to talk about "the" Lutheran identity. For some churches, the year 1517 does not necessarily have special significance since they associate different dates with the beginning of the Reformation. For several LWF member churches, for instance, the introduction of Christianity in their local context represents the key date that is being remembered as constitutive of their self-understanding and identity. However, the commemoration of this quincentennial anniversary offers an excellent opportunity for all Lutheran churches to reflect on the ongoing relevance of the questions that triggered the Reformation and to discern its societal impact.

The four booklets included in this collection aim to contribute to such an in-depth review. The discussion is shaped around the overarching theme of the 500th Anniversary and the Twelfth Assembly, "Liberated by God's Grace," with its three sub-themes that help to elaborate different aspects of the main theme: "Salvation— Not for Sale," "Human Beings—Not for Sale,"

and "Creation—Not for Sale." The booklets include essays by bishops, pastors, academics, members of the LWF Council, representatives of different LWF networks and ecumenical partners from all LWF regions. The wide range of authors and topics gives the reader a glimpse of the wide variety within the communion and some aspects of the LWF's programmatic work. The three questions at the end of each essay seek to encourage further reflection and discussion.

It is our hope that these booklets can be used in bilateral discussions between partner churches to trigger a dialogue on the message and role of churches in different contexts. Furthermore, they will hopefully provide significant impulses for our deliberations as we prepare for the Twelfth Assembly that will take place in 2017 at Windhoek, Namibia.

Last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to all those who have contributed an essay to this publication and for making these comprehensive and meaningfully diverse. I would like to encourage readers carefully to study these booklets and hope that they will lead to meaningful and worthwhile conversations on their content.

Introduction

Anne Burghardt

"Liberated by God's Grace"—the Lutheran World Federation's main theme for the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation—is closely linked to the doctrine of justification by faith which, in the Lutheran tradition, has also been called "the doctrine by which the church stands or falls" (*articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*). The central insight of this doctrine, namely that in Christ God's grace is given to us as a free and unconditional gift, evokes a response of gratitude, expressing itself in the loving and caring engagement with human beings and the whole of creation. This understanding is as pertinent today as it was in Luther's times and continues to impact all aspects of theology. The essays in this booklet explore the topicality and influence of this Reformation insight from different perspectives.

In his article "Liberated by God's Grace—From What, To What?" Gottfried Brakemeier argues that in today's world the concept of grace/mercy is becoming increasingly suspect. A world without grace would end up being an inhumane world. A theology centered on justification by faith holds on to the concept of grace since, in biblical terms, justification promises God's unconditional acceptance of human beings. Showing love is the response to God's abundant love for human beings, not an attempt to "earn" God's love by "good deeds." Referring to Luther's writing "On the Freedom of a Christian, 1520," Brakemeier shows how Luther's two sentences, "A Christian is a free lord of all, and subject to none" and "A Christian is the most dutiful servant of all and subject to everyone"[1] belong closely together.

[1] Martin Luther, "The Freedom of A Christian, 1520," in Helmut T. Lehmann, *Luther's Works*, vol. 31 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), 344

> "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none."[2] This is his [Luther's] first sentence. Anyone who has God as lord cannot serve other lords (cf. Mt 6:24). Serving God frees us from serving humans. All pressures fall away as soon as people entrust themselves in faith to God's grace. However, this freedom would be thoroughly misunderstood as arbitrariness. So Luther adds: "A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all and subject to all."[3] That is his second sentence. The two belong together. Freedom destroys itself if it is not in a position to take on obligations. Above all, however, love is betrayed. It is essentially "serving the neighbor." Without diakonia, faith also becomes false as there is no "Christian" faith that does not take action in love (Gal 5:6).[4]

The rediscovery of the gospel's liberating message, which Luther discovered through his profound study of the Holy Scriptures, was at the center of the Reformation. This powerful and liberating message needs to be heard anew at different times and in different contexts. In his essay, Hans-Peter Grosshans, a member of the LWF's hermeneutics network, points to the diversity of human life and the fact that through the medium of the Holy Scriptures God speaks to individuals' and communities' concrete lives.

> Hearing God's Word is therefore not followed by some sort of imperial anti-individuation process but by a song praising the manifold grace of God (1 Pet 4:10), expressed in the diverse and many-hued lives of Christians and churches—in "the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Rom 8:21).[5]

The fact that the significance of hearing and understanding the Word of God has been highlighted since the beginning of the Reformation gave rise to many new translations of the Bible which, in several cases, noticeably impacted the further development of certain national languages. Comprehending the actual meaning of the text has a lot to do with the hermeneutical key that is being used. Elżbieta Byrtek describes the importance of education in Lutheran churches throughout the centuries, which originated in the desire more widely to engage with the Scriptures and their meaning. True engagement with the Scriptures implies posing questions, listening to different "readings" and voicing one's concerns and doubts.

> Faith that is not afraid of posing questions, seeking answers and staying in dialogue with those who do not share one's own opinion, is a living faith, one that

[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Gottfried Brakemeier, in this publication, 24.
[5] Hans-Peter Grosshans, in this publication, 58.

> will be able to survive in today's multilateral and complex world. A world where "right" answers given by external authorities do not necessarily speak to people but where Christians, liberated by God's grace, have a responsibility to talk about this grace to others and to be ready to engage in difficult dialogues.[6]

The Reformation was a catalyst for the renewed understanding of the church's role in society. Luther valued ordinary work, both in- and outside the home. Thus everyday work acquired a new dignity since he explicitly considered it to be an essential part of serving both God and the neighbor. This perception laid a fruitful basis to the later concepts of active citizenship. In his article about the church's calling in society, Kjell Nordstokke points out that, according to Luther, God has called the church to be a "living word" in the world.

> The call to be "a living word" is an exhortation to active citizenship. Luther radically changed the understanding of Christian vocation, shifting the focus from the internal life of the church, to serving in the world—being Christian citizens who love and care for their neighbor.[7]

Using the example of Norway, Norstokke identifies four areas of action for diakonia: loving one's neighbor; creating inclusive communities; caring for creation; and struggling for justice.

In 2013, the LWF approved the Gender Justice Policy (GJP), a document that helps to raise awareness about questions pertaining to inclusiveness and gender roles in the churches. Using the example of the Murut people of Sabah, Malaysia, Au Sze Ngui describes how the liberating power of the gospel has brought about a change in the perception of gender roles among the Muruts. In her article, she also draws on the theological argumentation and methodology outlined in the GJP. Ngui explains how the Christian understanding of the equality of all human beings before God has empowered Murut women in the church to take on responsibilities that traditionally would have been within the male domain. She refers to the gospel's liberating power when it comes to revisiting certain traditions, which despite the rhetoric that is sometimes being used, do not correspond to the actual message of the gospel.

> Liberation from the bondage of sin is the beginning of our striving for justice: we are free; we are forgiven; we are the recipients of God's grace. We are free to

[6] Elżbieta Byrtek, in this publication, 77.
[7] Kjell Nordstokke, in this publication, 33.

> change and to change the world. There are many examples of how Christianity has been an agent of change by supporting the revision of some "traditional" practices.[8]

"Freed by God's Love to Change the World" is the motto of the LWF's Global Young Reformers Network that was formed within the framework of the commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. Inspired by this motto, Monica Villarreal picks up the question about faith's liberating power from the perspective of youth. Being liberated, being freed by God always implies the question what we are actually liberated or freed from and to. Villarreal quotes Caroline Huth from Argentina, a member of the steering group of the Global Young Reformers Network, who expresses the idea of an ongoing reformation by explaining how her faith has freed her for creating new space:

> As Lutherans we believe that while traditions are not necessary for salvation, they are sometimes good for order, tranquility and common practice. But when they do not serve their purpose, when people are uncomfortable and the church is no longer inviting and God's message does not reach everyone, then we may need to consider reorganizing the pews.[9]

The ecumenical voice in this volume belongs to Tim Harris who, in his article, refers to both the profoundly personal as well as ultimately global character of Martin Luther's discovery of God's grace. This rediscovery

> not only addressed his own need for personal assurance from his spiritual angst, it sparked a movement of ongoing reform, the heart of which must always be shaped by and draw us back to a deeper appreciation of the great gospel message of grace and peace. [10]

The rediscovery of the gospel's greatness nonetheless also reminds us of our own limitations in understanding the gospel as our cultural blinkers and blind spots sometimes tend to make the gospel smaller than it is. "The gospel is bigger than any and every culture, and no ethnic grouping, nation or culture can claim any supremacy in their particular expression of the gospel."[11] In the spirit of ongoing reformation, there is thus always the need to "translate" the gospel "into the many and varied expressions of gospel articulation, proclamation and lived realities that are part and

[8] Au Sze Ngui, in this publication, 66.
[9] Monica Villarreal, in this publication, 82
[10] Tim Harris, in this publication, 96
[11] Ibid., 89

parcel of human life,"[12] keeping thereby in mind our own limitations in understanding it.

In his contextual Bible study on Isaiah 55:1–2, Zephania Kameeta addresses the pressing issues of poverty and hunger in Africa and Namibia in particular and unfolds the liberating message of Isaiah in this context.

> The text of this Bible study does not say, Come so that you can be counted or registered or so that research can be done why you are thirsty; but just simply, come and drink. This is what is needed in this hour of need. Those in need want help now before they perish. Now is your hour and your moment. Budgets and money is now not in question, come, eat and drink, so that you can live.[13]

The three sub-themes: Salvation—Not For Sale; Human Beings—Not For Sale; Creation—Not For Sale

The three subthemes elaborate the various "not for sale" dimensions of the main theme, "Liberated by God's Grace," and question practices and theological concepts that stand in the way of the gospel's liberating message. Attempts to commodify salvation differ widely, ranging from prosperity gospel to attempts to "guarantee" salvation by following certain practices, rituals etc. The salvific aspect of consumerism as well as questions regarding from where and under what conditions "salvation" is expected in the secular context, are also crucial.

The renewed relationship between God and human beings inevitably provides a deeper insight into the creation of human beings in God's image and the understanding that human beings will be renewed through God's grace. Human beings cannot therefore be regarded as commodities whose value can be measured in terms of profit only.

Today, in light of the massive exploitation of natural resources, it is vital that we pay attention to God's creation beyond human beings. We read in Genesis that God considered creation to be "good" and entrusted it into human care. The notion of "dominion" in Genesis 1:26 has often been misused and it has been overlooked that God declares all creation to be "good," quite apart from its usefulness to humans. The renewed relationship between God and human beings therefore also has implications on how humans relate to the rest of the creation since creation primarily belongs to God and is only entrusted into our hands.

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Zephania Kameeta, in this publication, 103.

Diverse reflections on different aspects of the three sub-themes can be found in the respective booklets included in this collection. Hopefully they will help to trigger conversations around the liberating message of the gospel as together we journey towards the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation.

Liberated by God's Grace—From What, To What?

Gottfried Brakemeier

A concept in crisis

Grace and mercy (German: *Gnade*) have become rare words occurring only in exceptional cases, such as in the "plea for mercy" of those condemned to death. Or we say that the sun is beating down "mercilessly," drying out the land and ruining the harvest. Above all, wars are "merciless." They are unrelenting; the enemies' vengeance fearsome, raging without regard for guilt and innocence, believing it does not need to worry about right and wrong. Destruction, rape and murder are rife. That is repeated in the "law of the street." Many young delinquents have long forgotten the word "mercy," if they have ever heard it at all. Even if the victim has already been knocked down, they keep on beating and kicking—"mercilessly."

It is significant that we only become aware of mercy when it has disappeared. The term only carries weight in the negative meaning of "merciless." Whoever knows no mercy is thus "merciless," is regarded as ruthless, unscrupulous and brutal. Otherwise the concept has disappeared from everyday life. Gone are the days when rulers understood their authority as being their divine right and legitimized their rule as being by the "grace of God." In a democracy all state power emanates from the people. The ballot paper decides on how the government is formed. Parliamentarians are "representatives of the people." That has nothing to do with God's grace. Also God has become superfluous. During their installment ceremony, many politicians have even stopped using the phrase "So help me God." A secular world is uneasy about the term "mercy" and does not know what it is good for.

What is more, the very word is suspect. No one wants to depend on anyone else's mercy. Anyone needing mercy is a weakling. We want to stand on our

own feet, earn our own living and owe no one anything. People strive to steer clear of grace and mercy. It is ultimately a question of prestige. Children do not want to be a constant burden on their parents and depend on them for their keep. As soon as they can, they move out and take their lives into their own hands. It is a disgrace if that does not work out. The same applies to the relationship with the state. Long-term unemployed people suffer from feeling superfluous and having to live at the expense of the community. Many consider them to be parasites. The jobless do not want to be beggars and live on handouts all their lives. Who could condemn that? It is better to manage without mercy.

After all, mercy makes slaves of us. There are countless examples of this. The generosity of the masters creates a crowd of humble servants who do not dare to object to unreasonable requests. Favorites and lackeys are not free. "He who pays the piper calls the tune," says the proverb. That has always been the way dictators have cemented their power. They have granted privileges and thereby guaranteed loyalty. That is no different even under "democratic" conditions, since voters can often be bought. Politicians can win supporters by making promises to the electorate. Gifts create an obligation, even those given only at Christmas. The concept of "mercy" is unattractive because it sounds hierarchical. It would seem to establish dependencies. There remains a gap between giver and taker, between them ("up there") and us ("down here"), with the former always setting the tone as benefactors and patrons.

It appears that mercy is an obstacle to the human striving for freedom. Unfortunately, the church has often understood it that way as well. Movements committed to freeing people from undignified bondage have not always received the necessary support. In this respect, "liberation theology" highlights unusual elements, although they are not entirely new. God is on the side of the oppressed and leads them out of the house of slavery, as God led the people of Israel out of Egypt. God is in solidarity with the poor and sides with them in the struggle for justice. Many view this theology with suspicion and accuse it of being an inadmissible politicization of the gospel. However you react to this charge, the fact is that Latin American liberation theology and its related currents on other continents have starkly outlined the old question about how mercy relates to freedom. How can we talk about God's liberating mercy without disempowering people and plunging them into new dependencies? And how can we represent human autonomy without making it seem that talking about mercy is superfluous?

A world without mercy?

It does not call for much imagination to envisage a world without mercy. This is already reality on a large scale. The horrific news from our imme-

diate neighborhood or from distant countries testifies to this, as does the social inequality in society. No animal can be crueler than the human being. Bestial murders, blind destruction or the distress of millions of refugees in areas of hunger and crisis are illustration enough. The nation responsible for the Holocaust had always been proud of its culture. Civilization is no guarantee for protection from genocide, as is shown by other examples from the past and the present. We only need to remember the history of suffering of the indigenous population in the Americas. Native Americans were brutally decimated and eradicated except for a small remnant. The wrong done to the slaves imported from Africa is just as tragic. The list of crimes committed by the human race is long. It began with Cain and Abel and found a shocking expression in the crucifixion of Jesus. Violence has been the trademark of humanity from time immemorial. "[T]he inclination of the human heart is evil from youth," says Genesis 8:21. A world without mercy is cold, inhumane and murderous.

Besides the above, there are less spectacular types of brutality, such as economic exploitation. Anyone who falls into the debt trap will find it hard to get out. Banks know no mercy; they are about profit, bonuses and return on investment. Many people have been stripped of their assets due to speculation and false promises. In a thoroughly capitalist system life is commodified. Everything can be bought or sold, including religious goods. Stock prices determine business activity and, again, there is no room for mercy. Social concern, compassion and goodness disappear with it. Greed displaces consideration of the neighbor. Selfishness becomes a virtue. A struggle for jobs begins, often resorting to bullying and similar methods. You have to be "clever" and on the side of the winners. A well-known proverb aptly sums up this spirit: "Everyone for themselves and God for us all." Social considerations are pushed into the sole responsibility of God. That is convenient and at the same time cruel. Such behavior can occur in many guises and yet they are all equally inhumane.

In addition, people do not see that a world without mercy exposes us to fatal dangers. The decline of compassion does not remain without consequences. It provokes hatred of those who were not able to hold their own in the general competition, those who were excluded or oppressed. The "survival of the fittest" is a principle unsuited to the human community. After all, the losers are still able to take terrible revenge on their opponents. A match is enough to start a huge conflagration. Being indifferent or even hostile toward socially vulnerable milieus, religious and ethnic minorities and other national groups means risking serious social conflicts. It is no surprise when children who have always vegetated on the margins of society and never experienced affection develop a cynical attitude to life and turn to crime.

The precondition for peace is inclusion, not exclusion. But being inclusive presupposes looking favorably at the neighbor. I must grant them a place in society even if they are different and do not match with my ideals. You do not necessarily have to have the same opinions as your partners to extend them the hand of friendship. Mercy is capable of a tolerance that recognizes the right to exist but must not slip into arbitrariness. Crime cannot lay claim to the principle of tolerance. Yet mercy, rightly understood, does not limit people's living space. On the contrary, it protects and extends it. Only those capable of compassion belong to the peacemakers blessed by Jesus (Mt 5:9). Without mercy, humanity is likely to be crushed by its conflicts.

Finally, we must admit that imagining a world without mercy would be a gross delusion. Everything that the concept "mercy" stands for—kindness, acceptance, gratuity, readiness to forgive, etc.—can be suppressed and betrayed. And yet mercy remains part of reality. Human beings are inconceivable without mercy. Anyone who disputes that is blind. In his "Small Catechism," Martin Luther puts this in masterly fashion in his explanation of the first article of the creed:

> I believe that God has created me together will all that exists. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses; reason and all mental faculties.[1]

We do not owe ourselves to ourselves. Nor are we the product of a genetic accident or biological manipulation. All of that may have played a role. But it is not enough to explain the mystery of a person. People are not manufactured, they are created and therefore have an inviolable dignity. Their life is a gift, as is every new day. Mercy is present at the beginning of life and thereafter remains a basic need. Every person has to be supported in their own way with their own errors, weaknesses and guilt. They need consideration, forgiveness, love. Who could do without that?

The faculty of reason that characterizes human beings has been perceived to be their distinguishing feature. We differ from other living beings in that we can think, speak, plan and shape the world. For Martin Luther reason is also "in comparison with other things of this life, the best and something divine."[2] It is a force that shapes culture, he adds. Although reason is not protected from entering the service of evil, it raises us above

[1] Martin Luther, "Small Catechism," in Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert (eds), *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 354.
[2] Martin Luther, "The Disputation Concerning Man, 1536," in Helmut T. Lehmann, *Luther's Works*, vol. 34 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960). 137.

all other creatures. It would still be wrong to make reason the exclusive criterion of the human. Rationality is linked to irrationality, spirituality, the emotions. And they are unpredictable. It has been proven that decisions are more frequently emotional than rational; human beings are complex and cannot be explained on the basis of simply decoding their genome.

Precisely for that reason, the Christian faith will insist on the fact that mercy is part of our humanity. That was always clear to Martin Luther and he emphasized it often. It is empathy that makes a person a person. We would remain a machine if we could not show compassion, sympathy and love. The apostle Paul said this most clearly. "[...] and if I have not love" all my abilities, however great, are worth nothing (1 Cor 13:1f.). Jesus himself recalled that God prefers mercy to burnt offerings (Mt 9:13f.). Religious ceremony is just as worthless as intellectual brilliance if it bypasses other people and their needs. If we sum all that up in the concept of mercy we find that human nobility basically consists in being merciful. All else is secondary.

God's humanity

Jesus knew he had been sent in the name of a God who is love in person (1 Jn 4:16). This God differs from all gods that legitimize murder and killing, allowing—or even requiring—violence in their name. Gods are not all the same. You have to have a good look and distinguish between the gods. They are recognized by their demands, their commands and their works. Some of them are real tyrants, placing heavy burdens on their worshippers and taking away their reason. They sow hatred and strife, and insist on crusades and holy wars. Religions can be as barbaric as any person. Terrible crimes have been committed in their name, and still are. Frequently religion has blocked progress and development and believers have clung to obsolete behavioral patterns. Religious people are often backward, old-fashioned, suspect. Religion has therefore fallen into discredit among many of our contemporaries. Some dream of abolishing it. It is not only superfluous but downright harmful. Religious fanaticism with its typical disposition for violence has become one of the greatest sources of danger in the global world. Who will curb this religious madness?

At a time when talk about God is losing plausibility, faith has to be accountable for its discourse. Christianity believes in the God whom Jesus called his father and whom his congregation may also address as Our Father. The name stands for a trusting relationship. God could just as well be called mother, as the Bible indicates at some points. Unlike earlier prophets up to John the Baptist, Jesus does not preach an angry God, whose retributive justice will soon descend on the world, but a merciful God, who turns to the lowest, the outcast and the guilty.

In so doing, Jesus caused offence to those who held themselves to be righteous and therefore claimed privileges. The table fellowship Jesus kept with tax-collectors and sinners (Lk 15:1f.), is a scandal in their eyes. It reverses their view of the world, which values only merit and performance. If God is what Jesus proclaims, they will have to change. Yet they are not willing to do so. They react to the patience of the rabbi from Nazareth with the "unworthy" as though it were an act of aggression. Jesus has eyes for the sick and the vulnerable, for those living on the margins, for the poor and despised. They are the ones he tries to bring back into the community of the children of God. His attention and concern are unconditional. Gratuity is the main feature of his actions. That means that Jesus understands himself to be an advocate of a gracious God, who does not reject sinners and gives the lost a chance.

It is well known that the Reformation started with a change in the understanding of God. Martin Luther discovered the merciful God who accepts human beings without regard for merit and worthiness. Justification, biblically speaking, means just this: promise of the right to life without proof of performance, unconditional acceptance, showing love. Martin Luther had been tormented by scruples because of his repeated defeats in the fight against evil in himself; these doubts were suddenly overcome when he discovered that God justifies the sinner "by grace and faith alone." His frightened question, "How can I get a merciful God?," was thereby answered. It would be wrong to interpret this as a time-bound expression of a bad conscience. It is the human question *par excellence*. Where is there mercy in this world? A merciless God is more of a Moloch than a father. Such a God threatens infernal punishment and spreads fear and terror. No consolation can be had from such a god. Denying God is also no solution. Atheism is just as "dismal" as a cynical religion. With the father of Jesus Christ things are different. This God offers shelter, refuge, protection from meaninglessness.

> With these words God wants to entice us, so that we come to believe he is truly our Father and we are truly his children, in order that we may ask him boldly and with complete confidence, just as loving children ask their loving father." God would thereby tenderly urge us to believe that he is our true Father and that we are his true children, so that we may ask him confidently with all assurance, as dear children as their dear Father.[3]

If you ask where this conviction comes from, the reply is easy. It originates in Jesus Christ, in whom God came the closest ever to human beings. "No

[3] Op. cit. (note 1), 356.

one has ever seen God" (Jn 1:18), but God is revealed in Jesus. The congregation confesses him as the revelation itself. There are signs of God in nature and history, but they are not unequivocal. Anyone speaking of God's love cannot bypass Jesus of Nazareth. This love is expressed in his words and deeds, and also in his suffering. Jesus dies on the cross as a victim of his enemies. All the evil in the world pours down upon him, but even in this hell, Jesus remains true to his mission. Instead of cursing his tormentors, he prays for their forgiveness (Lk 23:34). He prefers to die himself than to wish the death of others. Jesus consistently refrains from seeking reprisals. For the Christian community, this story allows the behavior of the heavenly father to shine through. God forgoes vengeance on his enemies (Rom 5:10). Instead he forgives their debt. He gives reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18ff.). No peace can grow from revenge.

Jesus witnesses to the God who seeks human salvation, including that of the godless and "unbelieving." The New Testament speaks of his love of humanity (Titus 3:4). In Jesus Christ God shows solidarity with suffering creatures, in order to wrench them out of their hardship. The God of Jesus Christ is "human," knowing "compassion" and thereby showing mercy. The latter comes to a head at Easter. Sin, suffering and death do not prevail. The Crucified One is experienced as living, and in possession of the key to death and hell (Rev 1:15). The resurrection of Jesus Christ frees us from the captivity of transience and gives us a future, even in the face of death. The end of all things is not just nothing, meaninglessness, absolute annihilation, but a new beginning (Rev 21:1ff.). The kingdom of God becomes the all-defining reality.

The imperative of the gospel

Under such circumstances it is not surprising that the will of God is best expressed in the command to love. God sets the standard with divine action and God's own being. Again we must point to Jesus Christ, in whom this love appeared (Rom 8:39). "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful," says Jesus (Lk 6:36). And when asked about the supreme commandment he replies "[...] 'you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart [..] [and] your neighbor as yourself'. There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mk 12:29ff.). They are two commandments in one. Loving God and the neighbor is not the same. Loving the neighbor is not loving God or vice versa. These two cannot be confused. Loving God is shown in the fact that God alone is worshipped. The liturgy belongs to God alone (Mt 4:10). Any human "personality cult" is reprehensible. By contrast, diakonia is for the neighbor. They need assistance, solidarity, attention. The principle is: "Bear one another's burdens" (Gal 6:2). So we need to differentiate. Love has

many faces. And yet there is ultimately only one single command—about love, i.e., the attitude that can only want what is good.

This command is not just one among many, but a criterion for ethics in general. "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Mt 22:40). And Paul will say, "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom 13:10). If a precept contradicts the command to love, it must be reworded or abolished. We can observe this in the discussion between Jesus and the Pharisees on observing the Sabbath. But that is only one example among others. At any rate, God wants a humane world. And this is not to be had without a minimum of "love." Although "love" is an over-used word, it cannot be done without. Indeed, it needs to be protected from abuse. Biblically speaking, love is not primarily a feeling but rather an intention. Whether I love my neighbors or not, ultimately depends on my intentions in their regard. I can also feel the best for my enemies, without actually liking them. We owe salvation to God's love of the enemy. God's mercy is addressed to all people without distinction. It calls the sinners back into God's community.

That happens without pressure and coercion. Love creates no dependences, if it is authentic. It grants freedom. It must almost amaze us that the father in the parable of the prodigal son raises no objections when his son decides to leave his father's house and demands his share of his inheritance (Lk 15:11f.). His father lets him go. Similarly, Jesus does not bind his disciples to himself. He leaves it up to them to turn away if they do not agree with him (Jn 6:66f). Genuine discipleship is based on a free decision. Mercy without love serves its own purposes and is thus humiliating for the recipient, unlike mercy that comes from love. It wants the neighbors to be its partners, not subordinates. It refrains from patronizing them and telling them what to do. "Legalism" contradicts the command of love. It establishes religious dictatorship and turns mercy into coercion. Love, by contrast, gives greater value to human beings and allows them to take responsibility. To do so, they have to be able to think, and to practice recognizing "whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable [...]" (Phil 4:8). Love needs guidance but no regulations; coercion destroys it.

Above all, however, it needs motivation. Love does not spring up by order. That is why the New Testament explains the imperative to act with God's action. We are to love because we were loved by God."We love because he first loved us," says the first letter of John (4:19). Jesus himself puts it similarly in the parable of the unforgiving servant (Mt 18:21f.). The duty mutually to forgive one another arises from God's forgiveness of debt. That applies to ethics as a whole: each time the command is preceded by the memory of God's merciful action. Experiencing mercy inspires us to do good. Here is the source on which the imperative draws. "You wicked

slave!" says the lord in the parable, "I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?" (Mt 18:32f). Any benefactor must feel foolish if the recipient remains hard-hearted. That is precisely what the Apostle Paul asks: "Or do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?" (Rom 2:4). The issue is how to draw the right conclusions from this goodness.

Anyone who refuses to do that suffers considerable losses. Naturally you can argue that you owe something to God. Who or what is "God"? A modern trend wants religion without God. Apparently the concept is no longer appropriate. People want to believe but to do so differently than in the past. Indeed, we will have to be sure that mercy is not catapulted out of the world at the same time as God. Who, or what, do people want to believe in, if God disappears from life? There is a great danger that, in this case, one has to accept the meaninglessness of the world, likewise the general lack of love and the tragedy of a finite life. God is the decisive force that makes it possible to resist the negativity of life and the power of evil. The experience of preservation in difficult situations, even at the risk of death, becomes impossible under the conditions of the modern eclipse of God, wherefore combating God's reality must be seen as a major "risk factor" for successful life.

In addition, denying God's grace runs the risk of losing the sense of wonder, a feeling for the extraordinary. It therefore normally sees no grounds for gratitude. Everything threatens to go under in platitudes and, at the same time, to run automatically according to well-known laws. Who is responsible for the wonders of creation? You do not need to give thanks to "evolution." The very idea is absurd. Becoming dulled toward God's mercy leads to blindness toward dimensions without which life would be insipid. So remembering it can set a huge liberation process in motion. It opens our eyes to the justification of a prayer such as the Lord's Prayer. You have to be clear about what you are doing when you press the "delete" button on God's mercy.

Freedom

The Reformation understood itself as a freedom movement. "For freedom Christ has set us free," writes the Apostle Paul (Gal 5:1). That lent dynamic to the movement. It dared to rise up against foreign domination and appeal to the gospel as the sole standard. Accordingly, at the Diet of Worms in 1521, Martin Luther defied the Pope, emperor and the concentrated power

of the church. He had already developed the theme in detail in "On the Freedom of a Christian, 1520." "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none."[4] This is his first sentence. Anyone who has God as lord cannot serve other lords (cf. Mt 6:24). Serving God frees us from serving humans. All pressures fall away as soon as people entrust themselves in faith to God's grace. However, this freedom would be thoroughly misunderstood as arbitrariness. So Luther adds: "A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all and subject to all."[5] That is his second sentence. The two belong together. Freedom destroys itself if it is not in a position to take on obligations. Above all, however, love is betrayed. It is essentially "serving the neighbor." Without diakonia, faith also becomes false as there is no "Christian" faith that does not take action in love (Gal 5:6). That is the litmus test of faith.

It is worth reflecting at length on the two sentences of the Reformer. Martin Luther aroused the anger of the papal church because he denied its role as mediator in the salvation process. Faith alone suffices for justification. The church is witness to the gospel and thereby fulfills an essential task. But salvation comes exclusively from Jesus Christ. Humans do not need to work for their salvation anymore or strive to perform meritorious works. Instead, they are invited to accept it in confidence. Luther was able to appeal to Paul, who had stated "[...] no one will be justified by the works of the law" (Gal 2:16). Luther had personally experienced what that meant. It took a load off his mind when he realized that his sin did not disqualify him from the kingdom of God. He could again go through life with his head held high. God's mercy had freed him from the pressure to perform acts of religious merit. That pressure was not only strong in the medieval church. It is also present today, not least in non-Christian religions. Anyone who does not bow to the regulations is regarded as a "non-believer"' and is treated with hostility.

Even under altered conditions, the message of justification has no less relevance. Each person needs the experience of being accepted. It is a condition for mental health and finding identity. An undesired child has a hard time in life. Without the protection and care of mother and father the child cannot grow up. Later, too, recognition is vital—by a small group if not by the public at large. Everyone strives for praise, applause and approval. People must have the feeling of being someone, having some significance, having a place. But what happens if society rejects its own members including its own parents? I myself can belong to this society if I

[4] Martin Luther, "The Freedom of A Christian, 1520," in Helmut T. Lehmann (ed.), *Luther's Works*, vol. 31 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), 344.
[5] Ibid.

start to hate myself and develop an inferiority complex. Then I imagine that I am not worth much, I am a failure, I bear a stigma. That is a dangerous development that may end in suicide or outbreaks of violence.

God's mercy puts it differently. When everyone teases and humiliates you, driving you crazy, you remain God's beloved creature. You are no less important than anyone else. Do not envy the success of others. Justification means emancipation from social judgment. "Who will bring any charges against God's elect? It is God who justifies" (Rom 8:33), says the Apostle Paul. A person is always more than the sum of their actions or non-actions. What others think of me continues to be important. The image they spread cannot be indifferent to me. No one is immune to denigration and aggression, and defamation of character is rightly a crime. And yet, human judgments have lost their absolute validity. They have become "relative." The key thing is what the gospel says about me. Then I will manage better, with all my deficiencies. I will learn to accept myself with my errors and weaknesses without apologizing for them. The promise of justification has extraordinary psychological effects. It teaches us to recognize sin without plunging into despair.

Of course, justification resists pride. It thwarts the illusion of being able to manage everything and calls for a realistic image of what it means to be human. The Apostle Paul chastises the pride of the Corinthians with cutting words. He wants to know, "For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?" (1 Cor 4:7) The message of justification pricks the bubble of arrogance. It brings people down to earth with a bump and teaches them modesty. God's mercy is a stumbling block for the proud, the strong, the righteous, for those who think they do not need to be grateful for anything. Yet without God's mercy they would also be nothing. It is advisable not to deceive yourself. Society as a whole sets limits on God's mercy. Yet if the last judgment on a person is God's responsibility, all human judgment is subject to reservation. Society is thereby deprived of the final right of decision about its members. Human beings are God's property and as such enjoy God's protection. No one is an exception. All are invited to accept God's mercy in faith. Nevertheless the gift precedes human response. In a further sense, the message of justification is thus part of the grounds for human rights. Divine law focuses on respect for human dignity and the integrity of the human person.

This makes it clear that God's mercy towards human beings is not situated in a vacuum. It places individuals in fellowship with others. Hence the second clause of Luther's treatise on freedom has to follow the first one. There is no contradiction. We can learn that from Jesus Christ. The one who was free and felt exclusively responsible to his Father in heaven

"emptied himself, taking the form of a slave" (Phil 2:7). He was not forced to do this, it was voluntary. In his own words, he "came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45). That is why: "Whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all" (Mk 10:44). Only the one who can serve is really free. "Freedom from" must correspond to "freedom to." Only then will it receive the seal of quality. Mere independence can be just as despotic as pure arbitrariness. It needs to be bound to what is good.

It is thus a tragic misunderstanding when people think that a Protestant does not need to do good works. While Catholics have to score well, Protestants can fold their hands in their laps. This is a popular misunderstanding one still comes across now and then. Anyone arguing like that has not read the confession the Lutherans published in Augsburg in 1530 that has retained its validity to this day. The Sixth Article reads, "Likewise, they teach that this faith is bound to yield good fruits and that it ought to do good works commanded by God [...]."[6] However, the Lutheran tradition distinguishes between works of love and works of the law. The latter are not just for the sake of the neighbor but to fulfill the law. However, that means performing an action that we can count as merit, which contradicts the spirit of love not concerned for its own glory but for the welfare of the neighbor. Jesus himself demonstrated time and again that it is the practice of love that counts, not formally fulfilling the commandments. Love does not boast of its good works; it does them without thinking of its own advantage.

Because love is service, Christians can subordinate themselves. They know that every community needs rules and depends on its members respecting them. For that reason there are ordinances, offices and authorities. The New Testament recognizes the state as a good institution of God and calls for obedience towards it (Rom 13:1f., 1 Pet 2:17). Every church is committed to its national constitution. Social peace is not possible without a basic social consensus. The church itself needs administrative and leadership structures. A Christian is not an anarchist. However, the required obedience is restricted by the higher principle that: "We must obey God rather than any human authority" (Acts 5:29). So a Christian can go into opposition. That will always be the case if the laws are not just. Liberation theology has correctly recognized that sin can take the form of unjust social structures, an insight that cannot be abandoned again. It is part of the church's task to name and denounce abuse. That happened for instance in 1977 at the Lutheran World Federation's Sixth Assembly in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The delegates declared that the system of apartheid was incompatible with the Lutheran confession; those who still clung to it

[6] "The Augsburg Confession—Latin Text—Article VI: Obedience," in op. cit. (note 1), 41.

placed themselves outside the community; racism was sin. But there are also other, less dramatic cases of structural criticism. Wherever necessary, the church will press for a change in prevailing laws. For love "does not rejoice in wrongdoings" (1 Cor 13:6). Christians can call for resistance on grounds of conscience. In any case, ministering to suffering people also includes a readiness to take political action.

Martin Luther himself is an impressive example of this. He was by no means an "unpolitical" person. The ills of his age provoked his displeasure and gave occasion for critical positions. The Reformer appealed to those responsible for his age and called for measures to improve social conditions in his "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate, 1520."[7] But he spoke up resolutely on other occasions, as well. There is no such thing as a nonpolitical church. As long as Christians live in this world they are part of society, i.e., the polis, and co-responsible for its weal and woe. Certainly, church and state have their respective tasks. While the state is to look after law and peace, the church is entrusted with working for God's will and God's law. Precisely for that reason, the church cannot be indifferent to whether and how the state observes its mandate. It has to raise its admonishing voice and protest if injustice and violence become endemic ills. If ethical questions are up for discussion the church must not be silent. Conversely, the state should be interested in the church properly sowing faith, love and hope, and ensure that they are disseminated among the citizens. It has to guarantee the appropriate infrastructure.

The distinction between church and state means an unmistakable rejection of the idea of theocracy. Jesus himself clearly spoke out on this. We should neither give the emperor what is God's nor vice versa (Mk 12:17). Worldly power has its own law, although it is never released from its responsibility before God. Consequently, Lutheran theology does not want a theocracy but a state based on the rule of law. Theocracy is by its nature authoritarian and basically anti-freedom. It allows only one faith and forbids legitimate diversity. Instead we must expect that society can agree on a legal system that guarantees its members a maximum of freedom, peace and prosperity. Such consensus is also possible with non-Christians. Justice is a generally human postulate and is binding in religious and secular ages. The state based on the rule of law is not a Christian invention and yet it is a project the church must promote.

[7] Martin Luther, "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate, 1520," in Helmut T. Lehmann (ed.), *Luther's Works*, vol. 44 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 115ff.

Naturally, the church of Jesus Christ must beware of being co-opted by party politics. It would lose its freedom and be incapable of critical distance. While individual Christians cannot avoid making their political choice and voting for a party, the church as an institution is prohibited from doing this. It has to commit all parties equally to promoting the common good and thus to press for them to be publicly accountable for their respective programs. The church should resist the temptation to want to control the state. But it has the duty to remind the state bodies of their responsibilities. That is part of its "political diakonia"' and proof of the freedom given them by God.

Questions

In the global world of the twenty-first century, tolerance is becoming a central condition for peace. Is it right to claim that the gospel ultimately liberates us from intolerance? How far may Christian tolerance go without becoming arbitrariness?

The church should not interfere in political matters. That is a frequent demand. It is grounded in the fact that people say the church has to care for people's salvation and the state for their welfare. Can salvation and welfare be separated so neatly?

Why must we actually talk of God's mercy? Is a humane world not possible without God? Many say that we should abolish religion in order to create peace in the world. What needs to be said in this regard?

The Church and the Public Space. A Lutheran Interpretation

Kjell Nordstokke

The Reformation and the understanding of being church

The core message of the Lutheran Reformation is that justification by faith is the doctrine by which the church stands or falls. This position builds on Luther's reading of the Bible and his interpretation of the ministry of Jesus. It has often been presented as the five so-called *solae* or guiding principles of Lutheran theology: by Scripture alone (*sola scriptura*); by faith alone (*sola fide*); by grace alone (*sola gratia*); through Christ alone (*solo Christo*); and glory to God alone (*soli Deo gloria*).

At first sight these principles make no reference to the church. This may give us the impression that ecclesiology (the theology of the church) was not an important issue for Luther and his followers. This was clearly not the case; the Reformation started as a reaction against the late medieval model of the church and its concentration on economic and political power. According to Luther's view, the consequence of this way of being church was a silencing of the proclamation of the gospel. The church was therefore in great need of being reformed. It is the proclamation of the gospel that forms the church's being and sending into the world, and not the other way round. The church exists and has its mandate by Scripture alone, by faith alone, by grace alone, through Christ alone and to God's glory alone.

The state of the fifteenth-century church was such that many longed for reform. The Pope had become a political leader with his own army; bishops were local rulers and in control of enormous economic resources. The problem, however, was not only how the church exercised its political power. Rather, the Reformers criticized the way in which the Pope and the

bishops used religious power in order to legitimize their position as worldly rulers. For instance, they would excommunicate political adversaries and in some cases impose an interdict on a country. This meant that a whole people were denied access to the sacraments and to a Christian funeral. The struggle for political power thus severely impacted ordinary people and their religious life. They feared for their salvation if they could not attend mass and use the sacraments as prescribed by the church authorities. In a similar manner, people adopted practices that the church had established with the purpose of increasing the church's income, such as for instance the selling of indulgences. Having observed how poor people, driven by fear, wasted their money on buying indulgences in order to escape the torments of purgatory, Luther wrote his Ninety-five Theses "on the power and efficacy of indulgences" in 1517. As we know, this was the start of the Reformation. On the one hand its point of departure was a reaction against the church that abused its power to exploit the poor; on the other, it questioned a church that instead of proclaiming the gospel offered believers confidence in a piece of paper that could be bought. Salvation in not an article that can be commodified; salvation is not for sale.

Luther did not only criticize such practices. Motivated by his theological conviction, he radically questioned this model of being church and challenged the political leaders of his time to take back the power that he believed the church to have wrongly usurped. The church's mandate is not to exercise power as a political ruler, he claimed. The "power of the sword," in Luther's words, belongs to those who God has rightly installed as kings and other worldly rulers. All citizens, also the church, should acknowledge their authority in obedience. The church has a different mandate: God has called it to exercise the "power of the word," the public proclamation of gospel in word and deed.

The Word as a powerful public word

This discernment between the power of the sword and power of the Word has led to the formulation of the teaching of the two kingdoms in Lutheran theology and to an intense discussion on how to interpret this teaching in times that politically and socially are very different from the context in which Luther lived.

First, it is important to note that the issue here is discerning, not separating. Luther emphasized that both kingdoms (Luther would rather say governments) are subject to God's will and judgment. All rulers are therefore responsible to God and, as good Christians, they should consider their task as a divine vocation and diligently use Word and sacrament to

strengthen them in their duty as governors. This made sense in times when all citizens belonged to the church. Kings and other rulers were expected to be good Christians who regularly attended church and therefore were exposed to the "power of the Word."

Clearly, this doctrine must be applied differently today when in most places the church represents a mere section of society, perhaps only a minority, who are members of or go to a church. In addition, only very few political leaders today would consider their position as having been ordered by God; their mandate and power are regulated according to secular procedures with regard to selecting and performing leadership. How does this challenge the church to contribute to fostering responsible government and a social and political order that corresponds to God's will for creation and for human life?

A second point to be noted when interpreting the doctrine of the two kingdoms relates to another huge difference: the scandalous political and economic power that the church had accumulated at the time. The fact that such abuse of power may have been instrumental in the formulation of this doctrine may have contributed to an interpretation that warned against any mixing of church and politics. This was the position held by many church leaders during the time of Nazism. They claimed that the secular government should act according to its own legislation and should be recognized as the social order established by God and that therefore it needed to be obeyed. In a similar manner, a fair number of people rejected the idea that churches should involve themselves in the struggle against apartheid, maintaining that this was a political question, beyond the mandate of the church. Some would argue that dealing with these kinds of political issues could cause divisions within the church, as if that were a more serious sin than the kind of division apartheid had caused in the South African society.

It is quite clear that the doctrine of the two kingdoms does not foresee a withdrawal from the world. Rather, it urges the church to discern the basis for its public mandate. Today, the church no longer accumulates political and economic power—at least not in most parts of the world. The issue is therefore not so much to warn the church about the risks of striving for "the power of the sword," but rather of withdrawing from the world and limiting its concern to spiritual matters.

Luther did not interpret the "power of the Word" as a withdrawal from the world. On the contrary, he clearly understood it as a public word. According to him, the pulpit was a public arena from which to address the whole community, not only the inner circle of believers. In addition, his words were spread all over Europe thanks to the newly developed methods of printing. We can observe that Luther's concern when preaching and writing

was not limited to spiritual matters, but very often related to politics and the economy. He advocated for the establishment of schools for all children, for services for the poor and helpless and severely questioned the practice of usury declaring it unethical. When reading these texts today, his ability to interpret the signs of the time impresses us, especially his courage to address public issues, even if we have to admit that some of his writings were most unfortunate, i.e., his statements about the Jews and his call to stop the rebellious farmers.

The third point requiring our attention is the fact that Luther had confidence in the power of the word. This follows his theological interpretation of the gospel as a living word (*vox viva evangelii*) and the church as a reality created by the word (*creatura verbi*). God created by words, "For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm" (Ps 33:9). In a similar manner, the gospel has the power to create what it names. Such power does not depend on political position or the use of arms in order to be effective. Nevertheless, the power of the word is strongly resisted by the "powers and authorities," an expression that not only refers to the worldly rulers, but even more to the power of evil, which according to the Apostle Christ was triumphed over "by the cross" (Col 2:15).

Luther believed God to have called the church to be "a living word" in the world. The proclamation of the Word on the one hand envisages faith in God's care and mercy in our daily life, and confidence in God's lordship and providence in whatever happens to us, as individuals and society. On the other, it calls us to be stewards of the gifts with which God has endowed us, as responsible citizens caring about the well-being of others.

In the following, we shall take a closer look at the ways of being "a living word" in the world. The first perspective will be the individual, how each Christian is called to serve God and the neighbor. This has often been presented as the Lutheran ethics of vocation and is today very much interpreted as a vocation to active citizenship. The next perspective relates to the church as a collective body—especially as a local community—to assume roles in the public arena. We shall present diakonia as one basic task within this mandate of being a public church, with advocacy as a specific focus area of this mandate. Finally, we shall reflect on the role of the church being a sanctuary in today's post-modern world as a new and challenging role, with roots that go back to the first centuries of Christian life and public service.

The vocation to be active citizens

The call to be "a living word" is an exhortation to active citizenship. Luther radically changed the understanding of Christian vocation, shifting the

focus from the internal life of the church, to serving in the world—being Christian citizens who love and care for their neighbor. Luther sharply questioned the religious orders of his time and the idealizing of the vocation of monks and nuns who had distanced themselves from normal life and instead lived a secluded life in a monastery, devoted to religious practices. From his own experience, Luther knew that such understanding of vocation would often be self-centered. But, even more important, it would ignore the call to serve the neighbor.

Luther understood Christian vocation from the perspective of being in Christ, and the two basic directions this organic relation brings with it. First, in relation to God, in Christ we are saved from the power of sin and death. By God's grace we are liberated and set free, also from the law and the fear that God will reject us and exclude us from God's love and care. This is one dimension of being in Christ: the adoption to childhood in our relation to God, enjoying with Christ free access to our heavenly Father. There is, however, another dimension of being in Christ: as Christ was sent into the world, so we are sent for the sake of our neighbor. This is the main message in one of Luther's most important writings "The Freedom of a Christian, 1520," with its famous statement: "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all."[1]

The simultaneous relation to God and to our neighbor is fundamental in this understanding, as it is in Jesus' teaching on the greatest commandment of loving God and one's neighbor. Crucial to Luther's understanding is that out of our own strength we are not able to love God nor our neighbor as our vocation claims, but in Christ and empowered by God's Spirit this is not only possible but is what in fact it means to be a Christian. Luther sums up his reflections on the freedom of a Christian as follows:

> We conclude therefore that 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. By faith he is caught up beyond himself into God. By love he descends beneath himself into his neighbor. Yet he always remains in God and in his love [...].[2]

Luther expressed this view on being a citizen according to the way in which society was conceptualized at his time. It implied that every citizen should be faithful to their social role, as farmer, tailor or merchant, without any ambition of changing the way in which society was structured. If Luther would

[1] Martin Luther, "The Freedom of a Christian, 1520," in Helmut T. Lehmann (ed.), *Luther's Works*, vol. 31 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), 344.
[2] Ibid., 370.