

THE TWO-KINGDOMS-DOCTRINE OF MARTIN LUTHER AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR US TODAY

1. Introduction

Martin Luther did not write a concrete essay on the Two-Kingdoms-Doctrine (TKD) as such, but treated the subject as needed, whenever the situation required it during his time. His aim was to give the church a Bible centered answer concerning questions dealing with certain situations in daily life. Thus, the TKD is not a *theoretical* essay by Luther, but has a *spiritual* and *grown* structure: *spiritual*, in as much as the answer comes only from the word of God with regard to Christian faith in daily life; *grown* in the sense that these answers developed exegetically in dealing with the developments of the Reformation and were not previously established as a dogma of faith. Thus, this subject matter also flowed into his life's work.

This spiritual and mature structure of the TKD was unfolded by Martin Luther *only* from the Word of God, especially in contrast to the scribes of his time, the so-called Sophists, who derived their teaching by constantly comparing God's word with philosophy. Theologically, this was the »Babylonian captivity« of theology in the middle Ages, since all theological research at that time was always conducted by comparison with philosophy. This approach was called scholasticism which was primarily shaped and consolidated by Thomas Aquinas (see my article on the Influence of Scholasticism, STT 4 [2009], 97–111). Luther tried to free his theology or rather the »doctrine of faith« from the shackles of philosophy. But

this required many questions of society to be illuminated anew from the perspective of the Gospel and, where necessary, correct the answers with the help of the Word of God.

Today it is often said that Martin Luther was a revolutionary who criticized the Bible and freed man from the wrong understanding of God. But exactly the opposite happened: he criticized the dogma of the Church, wherever it did not conform to the Word of God and rather followed philosophy. For him only the Word of God is central and hence the biblical doctrine was freed from the theological dogmas of scholasticism. This is the true legacy of Reformation.

As was the case with Martin Luther, this lecture does not serve to investigate a *theory* about the TKD in Martin Luther's work. There are many scientific studies on this subject; some are good, but most go beyond this target. Rather, we want to examine in this lecture, in what contemporary situation Martin Luther unfolded this doctrine and from which Bible Word he took this teachings.

This lecture aims, just as in the time of Reformation, at deriving support through the Word of God that will allow us in the turmoil of our times - even 500 years after Reformation nothing has changed with regard to this matter - to both spiritually and practically deal with the social tasks of mankind objectively. Only the Word of God can give us the wisdom and guidance to deal with these

problems in life. Even today, 250 years after the age of Enlightenment, we have become prisoners again of philosophical ideologies that drive us far away, so that we can only think in post-factual terms and no longer face the realities which God has created in an objective manner. Only Scripture can enlighten man both, to lead a rational life here on earth as well as securing a true hope for life eternal. Therefore, also today we need to critically review all ideologies and facts and let ourselves be guided by the Word of God to understand how to deal with today's realities.

As in the time of Luther, also today the spiritual life and the answers to the challenges of life must be derived from the Word of God. And again, it's not about defining a new dogma, but rather enabling the church of Christ to grow spiritually in a healthy manner. Luther's elaborations on this subject serve this purpose, both exegetically and dogmatically, because, like almost no other writings, they help us to look back on our Protestant heritage of the Reformation, to refuel and then to look forward at our time. All this happens in full trust in our Lord Jesus Christ, whose word remains unchanged!

2. When did Martin Luther Begin to Work on the TKD?

The earliest treatise on the subject in relation to the TKD can be found in Martin Luther's work *On Secular Authority, How Far One Owes Them Obedience* from the year 1523.¹ In the face of the abuse of their status and power Luther pronounces with all resoluteness against the presumptuousness of noblemen (Junkers) and sovereigns (Fürsten) of his time, who have extended their political power also to spiritual matters when he says: »[...] thus they presume to sit in God's chair and control the consciences and the faith, and according to their great brain to lead the

Holy Spirit to school.«² Because this action of the authorities equals him a lèse majesté of God, he now wants to sit down and resist with »words« this abuse.

With this justification Martin Luther made his first exegetical and systematic treatise on the TKD. It was not the papacy or the citizens who caused it, but the abuse of power by the noble and sovereigns in the Reich of that time. Nevertheless, Luther does not write his theses as though he were teaching the authorities, but as if he wants to teach the Christians. One can only speculate about the reasons why he wrote this in this way. Presumably, in those days it was not up to a normal citizen to »teach« the upper class; thus, he had only the opportunity to address the general public with his doctrine and make his voice heard among the noble and sovereigns through this detour. Nevertheless, the speech is addressed directly to us, the »true« Christians. Because Martin Luther very well knew that »spiritual« matters can only be understood by those who also have the Holy Spirit, as we shall see later on. Thus, in this detour, Luther sharply criticizes the »crazy« sovereigns in their actions, and at the same time gave the »pious« Christians a clear view of their spiritual life.

In his late years, Martin Luther wrote further writings dealing with the topic of TKD, such as in 1526: *Whether Men of War Can Also Be in the Blissful State*, or 1529: *Of the War Against the Turks*. In order to keep this lecture manageable, I confined myself specifically to the above mentioned work of Martin Luther, because on the one hand this writing was his first on this Subject and on the other hand both the exegetical and the systematic basis for all his later explanations about the TKD was deployed in it. In the second lecture, »Luther and the Turks«, the peculiarities or additions to this doctrine, which occur in his mentioned work of 1529,

are noted. This approach will allow a basic contemplation on his understanding of the TKD and will provide the basis to consider and compare his other records of TKD in the light of this basic work.

3. On What Biblical Basis Did Martin Luther Build His TKD?

In his first treatise on this subject, Martin Luther bases his TKD primarily on the following two biblical pericopes:³

(1) Romans 13:1-5: ¹ *Let everyone be subject to the authority which has power over him. For it is not an authority except from God; but where there is authority, it is decreed by God.* ² *Whoever opposes the authorities, he repudiates God's order; but those who resist it will judge themselves.* ³ *For the rulers are to be feared not because of the good works, but because of the evil works. But if you do not want to be afraid of the authorities, do good; so you will have praise from her.* ⁴ *Because she is God's servant, good for you. But if you do evil, be afraid; for she does not carry the sword in vain; she is God's servant, an avenger for punishment over the one who does evil.* ⁵ *Therefore it is necessary to subordinate oneself, not only because of punishment, but also for the sake of conscience.*

(2) 1 Peter 2:13-14: ¹³ *For the sake of the LORD, subject to all the human order, be it to the king, as the ruler, ¹⁴ or to the governors, to those sent by him to punish the evildoers, and to praise those who do good.*

A third pericope from the Sermon on the Mount is also mentioned throughout in his remarks and repeatedly serves as a »counterpart« to the first two pericopes:

Matthew 5:38-41: ³⁸ *You have heard that there is said, »An eye for an eye, a tooth for*

a tooth.« ³⁹ But I say to you that you should not resist the evil; but, if someone gives you a strike on your right cheek, offer it to the other too. ⁴⁰ And if anyone wants to argue with you and take your coat, let him also take the cloak. ⁴¹ And if someone compels you a mile, go with him two.

4. The Two-Kingdoms Doctrine of Martin Luther in His Writing »On Secular Authority, How Far One Owes Them Obedience«

In this work, Martin Luther formed six theses on the question of secular and spiritual sword (or regiment) from the biblical testimonies mentioned above:

Thesis 1: In this exegetical context, Martin Luther thinks that the law of the temporal sword is given to uphold the fear of killing and to punish the murderer, just as God has defined this law after the flood (Gen. 9:6): *»Whoever sheds human blood, the blood of which is to be shed by men again.«⁴ The fact, that the sword serves for judgment, is, according to his opinion, also confirmed in the New Testament, when John the Baptist tells the soldiers, who asked him for advice concerning this question (Luke 3:14): *»Do not do violence to anyone, and let it suffice with your salary.«⁵**

Thesis 2: Now we know the commandments of love for the enemies Jesus set up in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:44): *»Love your enemies, do well to those who hate you«* and others which are similar and seem to contradict the law of the sword. This, according to Luther, has led the sophists to say, that Jesus instituted these laws of »faultless love« in order to repeal the laws of Moses in the Old Covenant. Luther vehemently disputes this and denies the opinion of the Sophists, which states that the laws of the new covenant are for the *faultless*, whereas the laws of the old

covenant are for the *imperfect* Christians.⁶ According to Luther, *faultlessness* does not consist in »works« of the law, but »[...] in the heart, in faith, and in love.«⁷ Thus, this distinction does not apply to the law, but rather they are all valid and for all

Thesis 3: From the second thesis Luther concludes that Adam's descendants must be divided into two categories: the ones who belong to the kingdom of God and the others who belong to the kingdom of this world. All who truly believe in Jesus belong to the kingdom of God, for Christ is the King in the Kingdom of God.⁸ These need no worldly sword, because »[...] they have the Holy Spirit in their hearts, who teaches and makes them, that they do no one wrong, love everyone, and gladly and happily suffer injustice from everyone, including death.«⁹ They do all this, »because the righteous does everything willingly and even more than is demanded by justice.«¹⁰

Now one might ask, according to Luther, »[...] why has God given so many laws [...] and why does Christ also teach (the law) in the Gospel [...]?»¹¹ To which he answers: »Since no man is by nature a Christian or pious, but all are sinners and wicked, God forbids them all through the law [...]«¹² Thus, the law of the Old Covenant has »[...] an office (a task) [...] that teaches us to know our sins and become humble in order to receive grace and faith in Christ«¹³. In this same office is also Christ (Mt 5:39) »[...] when he teaches us that evil should not be resisted, by which he explains the law and teaches how a true Christian should deal with this matter favorably.«¹⁴

Thesis 4: To the »kingdom of the world« or »under the law«, according to Luther, belong »[...] all who are not [true] Christians.«¹⁵ Because only a few believe, God »[...] gave another regiment and made them [the non-Christians] subject to the sword«¹⁶. He did this so that, even if they wanted, they

could not do their wickedness or at least not without fear. If this wouldn't have been the case, »each one would be eating up the other [...]«¹⁷ Because this is the situation [of the fallen world], »that is why God has ordained two regiments: the spiritual, which creates Christians and the pious through the Holy Spirit in Christ, and the worldly regiment, so that they [the evil ones] must retain peace outwardly and keep quiet [...]«¹⁸

Martin Luther concludes that if someone thinks that he can have the gospel in this world without »justice or sword,« because there are only »baptized Christians,« he will soon be taught a lesson: because this would mean »breaking the bonds and chains of the wild beasts [...]«¹⁹ and »the wicked would misuse the protestant freedom under the Christian name [...]«²⁰ So, if someone wishes that Christians are not subjected to any form of justice or sword, according to Luther, he would first have to make sure that all the world would be »full of true Christians.«²¹ To rule a country under a »Christian Regiment« would be like a shepherd who »keeps wolves, lions, eagles, and sheep [...] in one stable«, living together freely. Here [...] »the sheep would probably keep peace [...] but they certainly would not live long [...]«²² Because of this problem, there is no other solution for Luther but that »[...] the two regiments must be carefully distinguished from each other and both must be kept installed; one that makes people pious, the other that externally creates peace and opposes evil works. No one [sword] suffices without the other in this world.«²³

Now Luther explains the goal of »love your enemy« which Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:39-44): »[...] that Christians should neither quarrel nor use the secular sword among themselves«²⁴. That is why the Sermon on the Mount applies only to his *dear Christians*. This is also the reason why »[...] Christ did not have a [secular] sword, nor did

he institute any in his kingdom, since he is a king over Christians and governs without law, *only* through the Holy Spirit. For it does not serve his kingdom, in which only the pious live.«²⁵ Luther now cites David as the counterexample, who had shed much blood [in wars] and hence was denied the right to build a temple for God. Only his son, Solomon, German Friedrich or Friedsam (English: peace keeper, the peaceful), was allowed to build it.²⁶ Therefore, the testimonies of the prophets (e.g. Isa 2:4) cannot be »[...] applied wherever Christ's name is called [...],« otherwise one would »[...] turn the Scriptures around altogether; rather, they apply only for true Christians, who will certainly implement them among themselves«²⁷.

Thesis 5: Now the objection could come: If the argument is true, that »[...] Christians do not need the secular sword nor [worldly] justice«, why then did Paul say to all Christians (Rom 13:1f): »Everyone is subordinate to the power and authority,« and similarly Peter?²⁸ In his answer to this argument, Luther points out to the following fact: Although the [true] Christian »[...] does not need neither [secular] justice nor sword«, yet he may use it »[...] because a true Christian on earth does not live and serve himself, but rather his neighbor; so, according to the nature of his [serving] spirit, he also does that which he does not need [for himself], but which is of use and necessity for his neighbor«²⁹. As a confirmation of this, Luther lists the fact that a Christian does all the following: he »[...] pays taxes, honors the authorities, serves [others], and helps [others] [...] even though he needs nothing of this for himself, nor is it of necessity to him. For he sees to what is beneficial and good for the other (Eph 5:21ff).«³⁰

Luther continues his reasoning on the basis of the *imperative* of love, when he deals with the submission of the Christian under the secular sword: »[...] such service does no harm

to him and yet it brings a great benefit to the world. And was he not to do it, he would not act as a Christian, but against [the imperative of] love [...]«³¹ Thus, a Christian would act against the Gospel if he neglected the earthly regiment and did not act according to the commandment of love. For according to Matthew 17:17, Luther continues, Christ gave »the tithe-penny so that he would not annoy them, although he did not need to do so.«³² Although Christ teaches in Matthew 5:39ff that there is neither »secular law nor sword« [in the kingdom of God] but »he does not forbid that one serves and be subjected to those who have the worldly sword and [the authority of secular] justice«³³, because this »serves« your needy and »sick neighbor«. Luther continues this line of reasoning and justifies it from the previously mentioned pericope from the Gospel according to Matthew: »Thou shalt not resist the evil«. It's as if Christ meant to say: »Do keep yourself so that you suffer everything and need not the help of Justice [...] and be the other way round: do help, serve, and be useful to [secular] justice whenever necessary.«³⁴ »Because Jesus Christ wants to hold me up higher as a true Christian, so that I myself do not need its services, but it should need my services.«³⁵

Thesis 6: Finally, Martin Luther addresses the counter-question to the previous thesis: »Whether a Christian may hold the secular sword and punish the wicked, because Christ's words are so strict and unambiguous: Thou shalt not resist the evil.«³⁶ Luther's answer to this question is quiet clear: Among the righteous Christians, the sword need not be [upheld]. Therefore, this question can only be related to the »other group«, i.e. to those who are not true Christians. Here the Christian is »obliged«³⁷ - according to the previous theses - to serve the sword. »For it is a work which you do not need [for yourself], but which is entirely useful and necessary to the entire world and your neighbor.«³⁸

Luther explains the cause for this as follows: In this case we have to distinguish between public service and private matter. In public service you are »entirely in foreign service and work [...] which is not for your own benefit or honor, but only for your neighbor and society, and has nothing to do with the intention of avenging yourself or avenging evil with evil [...]«³⁹ Luther believes that one can reconcile both, to exercise in private under God's regiment and in public service under the secular regiment: »at the same time [in private] not resisting the evil but in public service resisting him.«⁴⁰ Because in the service for »your neighbor and his affairs, you behave according to the commandment of love and do not accept that he suffers any wrongdoing - which the Gospel does not forbid [to serve], but rather commands elsewhere.«⁴¹ Luther cites here many passages from the Old Testament that support this reconciliation of the two regiments in one person: e.g. Samuel, when the holy prophet slew King Agag, whom King Saul should have liquidated by order of God, but did not do so for political reasons (1 Sam 15:33).⁴²

Now if an objection was raised, that the Old Testament had been abolished, and these examples are no longer valid, Luther answers with 1 Corinthians 10:3f: »They have eaten the same spiritual food and drunk the same cup, from the rock which is Christ, just like us.«⁴³ Because they have the same »spirit and faith« as we do, therefore, »in what they have done right, all Christians do right.«⁴⁴ The fact that actions in the Old Covenant are also valid under the New Covenant, Luther explains with the argument that Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 17:19: »[...] neither foreskin nor circumcision is something, but a new creature in Christ.« Since this is the decisive factor, thus the Christian is free to do both foreskin and circumcision, as long as he »[...] does so, but does not mean to become pious or saved through this action.«⁴⁵ So we

should deal with everything that is written in the Old Testament, as long as it serves one's neighbor »for his salvation.«⁴⁶ For according to 1 Corinthians 12:13, Luther continues: »[...] love goes through everything and above everything and sees only what is beneficial and necessary for the other.«⁴⁷ Thus it is up to you, which example from the Bible you follow, as long as one does not believe that one is saved thereby, but to leave that *alone* to faith [in Christ], which makes one without works a »new creature.«⁴⁸ Luther also uses examples from the New Testament, which confirm this view, such as John the Baptist, who confirmed in Luke 3:14 the »Office of the War People«,⁴⁹ or the apostle Peter, when he preached to the Centurion Cornelius about Christ in Acts 10:34,ff, »[...] he did not command him to give up his office,« but on the contrary, the Holy Spirit came upon him.⁵⁰ »What the Holy Spirit accepted from Cornelius and did not blame him for it, we should be also fair enough and not blame him, but accept it.«⁵¹

Now Luther goes back in his argument to his basic text in Romans 13:1ff, where it says: »The authority is *ordained* by God,« and further: »The authority does not bear the sword in vain, it is God's *servant* [...]« If the Christian, Luther argues, carries out all the other orders of God, such as eating, drinking and marrying, why shouldn't he also be able to carry out this order of God? All this is »God's work and [his] creation, [and therefore] it is good [...] and everyone can use it in a Christian and a blessed manner.«⁵² Since carrying the secular sword is a special »service unto God,« Luther is of the opinion, that it is therefore »to be mastered by Christians more than anyone else on earth.«⁵³

One might ask then, »Why did not Christ and the apostles use it?« Luther's answer is simple: »Tell me, why did not Christ also take a wife, become a shoemaker or a tailor?

Should any position or office [in life] not be good, because Christ himself did not take it?«⁵⁴ According to Luther »Christ had his [own] office and his [own] responsibility; but with this he did not reject any other position [...] but rather he was to uphold only the office through which his kingdom was to be instated [...] Now to his kingdom belongs [...] only God's Word and Spirit. With this [office], all who belong to him will be governed inwardly«⁵⁵. Luther goes on: Since the apostles also had to follow him in this office, thus they had »[...] probably so much to do with the spiritual sword, which is the word of God [...] that they had to leave the secular sword to others [...]; although it would not have contradicted their position to use it.«⁵⁶ Thus, the fact is established that even if Christ himself did not carry the secular sword, he did neither forbid nor abolish it.⁵⁷

From this argument, one can conclude the correct understanding of Matthew 5:39 (You shall not resist the evil): A [true] Christian is constituted »that he suffers all evil and iniquity and does not avenge himself [...] But for the sake of others he can and should seek [secular] revenge, justice, protection and help [...]«⁵⁸ And this teaching of Christ, according to Luther,» is not an advice for the faultless [...], as in the blasphemy of the sophists [...], but a universally valid, strict commandment for all Christians.«⁵⁹

Here, we can see, Luther continues, »that Christ does not abolish the law [...] but he [correctly] interprets the meaning of the law [...]«⁶⁰ Even so Moses, who gave these laws only to the evil ones, those who do not belong to the kingdom of God, »so that they do not avenge themselves or carry out more evil actions, but are compelled by such an external [ecclesial] law to avoid evil and hence be subjected by force to an external justice and regiment.«⁶¹ »But you, the right Christians«, Luther goes on: »[...] should neither seek it

for your cause nor use it for your benefit, for yours is the kingdom of heaven.«⁶²

This shows us, that according to Luther, »Christ does not interpret his words as a repeal of Moses' law forbidding secular power, but rather pulls out his true followers [from this law] so that they do not need it for themselves [...]«⁶³ Since they [the true Christians] love their enemies [and do not resist the evil], they are, as Christ said, faultless like their Heavenly Father. As such, they do not require the law.⁶⁴ On the other hand, they do not hinder the non-Christians, who do not love their enemies, and want to use it [the law], to do so; on the contrary, they [the Christians] even help, that »[...] such laws bind the wicked so that they cannot do more evil«⁶⁵. In this way, the commandment to uphold the secular sword can be reconciled with the message of Christ, which says: »No Christian should uphold the [secular] sword for his own benefit and cause [...] but for the benefit of the other he should uphold and call upon it.«⁶⁶

5. The Two-Kingdoms-Doctrine of Martin Luther and Its Significance for Us Today

Studying the TKD in this book and in the other writings of Martin Luther, two facts stand out which served him as a basis for his theses:

1. The environment that Luther considers for his teaching is a Christian environment

This can be seen from the fact that the laws which Luther speaks of in this context always refer to the laws of the Old Testament, which in the political society of his time were regarded by all sides as the »sacrosanct« Word of God. Thus, we have here an environment where the laws of God are considered absolute and are not challenged by any side, since most citizens called themselves Christians and were under the rule of a »Christian«

emperor. Thus we must consider the TKD of Martin Luther as a doctrine »within« a Christianized world order.

Of course, looking at this fact, we must ask ourselves how Luther's theses of the TKD would apply today, where neither the law of the Old Covenant nor the content of the Gospel are respected in our politics; or even exaggerated, when living in a non-Christian environment, such as in an Islamic state?

Living as a Christian in a non-Christian environment - I am not talking about churches or closed spiritual communities or rites, but about the political world - then the question is legitimate, as to how far the laws of the Bible are compatible with the laws of society? At the latest by now, Luther's TKD would collide with the realities of the laws under which we live in our society today.

If I look around myself nowadays, I have to recognise that in our pluralistic society many laws have been changed so that they are considered incompatible with the laws of the Bible. For Example, in Scripture an incest or homosexual »marriage« would not be compatible with the law of God. Yet in the case of divorce, the situation would differ, because corresponding laws were given by Moses. But incest or a homo »marriage« is absolutely forbidden. Thus, a public marriage registrar who is a staunch Christian would have massive problems reconciling his faith in Jesus Christ and in the Word of God with such an action. He may be able to deliver the wedding ceremony once or twice as a public responsibility. But ultimately there will be a break up with his »office« if he wants to remain under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, because you cannot keep on suppressing this matter on the long term.

The same would be true for abortion. Here too, a »believing« physician must deliberate about whether he can take responsibility for his

action in view of God's word. Because from the perspective of Scriptures, there is no justification for this action, except perhaps when it becomes a matter of death or life for a mother giving birth. Though enshrined in our society by law, these facts speak against the law of God. This, of course, differs when a Christian follows pluralistic »opinion«. Then he must »deny« the message of the Gospel, which would inevitably lead to his »spiritual« death.

If I, as a Christian, get into one of these situations mentioned above, I will have to decide against God or against my own »office«. Hence, these are serious questions that cannot be easily decided upon and also cannot be easily clarified with Luther's theses on TKD. But for a Christian who decides against his earthly office, this is ultimately associated with a lot of sacrifice. And such a decision would require a great deal of trust in God.

2. Law and Gospel

Luther sees no contradiction between the Mosaic Law and the Gospel, as long as the »true« Christian »only« lives up to the Gospel in his personal life and allows the law of God to be implemented in the world, so that evil will be stopped. In absolute terms - idealistically, this may be the proper interpretation. But if we realize that societies or even Christian communities are shifting the boundaries between the true Gospel and the Mosaic Law, then it would be appropriate to ask, to what extent does Luther's TKD apply (today), or, where must a »true and sensible« Christian draw the line?

Unfortunately, most of us have been wronged by one or more »true believing« Christians and felt how the boundaries between Law and Gospel, especially among Christians, are »easily« shifted. And the more our Christian and spiritual communities shatter, the more this phenomenon applies! Whereas the bad thing happening in this fragmentation, is the theological dogmatism that is taking place in

this process, so that persons are repeatedly catapulted out from their community and/or »office« (i.e. employment) with the excuse of some incomprehensible »sin«, and suddenly they find themselves standing »between chairs«. A new employment is not in prospect and you could never have envisioned such an action to the best of your knowledge and belief.

Now strictly spoken, Luther tells the true Christian, that according to Matthew 5:39 »One should not resist the evil,«⁶⁷ since this is the Gospel of love. Thus, at the first glance, a true Christian is deprived of his opportunity to resist, and for spiritual reasons, it is difficult for him to defend himself. Also, he is often encouraged by the spiritual community he lives in, not to defend himself, but to leave it to the Lord, for he will judge it.

Well, but there are two aspects to this case which Luther has emphasized. The first aspect as we already know is: you shall not fight back! But the other fundamental aspect of this law given by God, which one must not transgress, and certainly not as a Christian, is the right that applies to both sides: the side that has forced one brother or sister out of its community, as well as the brother or sister who has been forced out of this community. For both, the law of respecting one another and respecting the laws in society is valid, especially those that are not contrary to God's order and are supposed to protect the brother or sister from distress or danger. Now if these »laws of love« even apply to the enemy, how much more do they apply to an employee who has been removed, for whatever reason? Should not you part in a benevolent way? The self-righteousness of many, who only blame the other, easily overlooks the great commandment of God, which says, »Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.« How can we fulfil the law of the love of Christ, if we cannot even fulfil the Law of Moses which stands above all differences of opinion? Here, as Christians, we have to be very careful

not only to invalidate the Gospel, but also the Law of God that applies to all people.

As true Christians, we must prove courage and not remain silent. Also Abraham did not remain silent but hastened after his nephew Lot to free him, when he was taken away as a prisoner of war.⁶⁸ The Bible is full of such examples, showing that it is not right to neglect the right of one's neighbour. God will demand his right from us all. Therefore, we must not remain silent. This is our duty as watchmen.⁶⁹ We have all the legal and God-given means at our disposal to demand the right of God for our neighbour.

This is not a question about revenge; it's all about the Justice of God which requires from me that I have to make sure that my neighbour, if he has not wilfully committed a capital crime, is well looked after. This is fundamental justice which God demands from all of us and which all of us should exercise towards our neighbour. That is why it is always better to part ways with one another in a benevolent manner rather than possibly sinning against your neighbour. God will definitely avenge this sin and scrutinise me, whether I am a true Christian or not.

So in summary we can say, the TKD in Martin Luther's writings gives us as Christians a basic understanding of how to deal with the question of secular law and spiritual law. The true Christian is driven by the Holy Spirit, and every citizen of this world is under the law which is meant to protect him. As spiritually guided Christians, we have a duty to protect our neighbour and even demand justice for him, according to the law of love. As true Christians, we can and may renounce the earthly laws, because the guidance of the Holy Spirit is superior to secular law, which only has the purpose of putting an end to evil. The law of Christ, however, is love; and there is no limit in loving my neighbour.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Luther, M. *Von weltlicher Obrigkeit, wie weit man ihr Gehorsam schuldig sei* (1523). WA 11, 245–281.
- 2 WA 11, 246,8–30.
- 3 WA 11, 247,21–30.
- 4 WA 11, 248,3–7.
- 5 WA 11, 248,25–28.
- 6 WA 11, 249,17–18.
- 7 WA 11, 249,18–21.
- 8 WA 11, 249,24–28.
- 9 WA 11, 250,2–4.
- 10 WA 11, 250,10–11.
- 11 WA 11, 250,21–22.
- 12 WA 11, 250,26–28.
- 13 WA 11, 250,29–31.
- 14 WA 11, 250,32–34.
- 15 WA 11, 251,1–2.
- 16 WA 11, 251,5.
- 17 WA 11, 251,13–14.
- 18 WA 11, 251,15–18.
- 19 WA 11, 251,22–25.
- 20 WA 11, 251,28–30.
- 21 WA 11, 251,34–35.
- 22 WA 11, 252,4–10.
- 23 WA 11, 252,13–15.
- 24 WA 11, 252,25–26.
- 25 WA 11, 252,34–36.
- 26 WA 11, 253,1–5.
- 27 WA 11, 253,14–16.
- 28 WA 11, 253,17–19.
- 29 WA 11, 253,21–26.
- 30 WA 11, 253,28–32.
- 31 WA 11, 254,2–4.
- 32 WA 11, 254,9–10.
- 33 WA 11, 254,13–14.
- 34 WA 11, 254,20–23.
- 35 WA 11, 254,24–26.
- 36 WA 11, 254,27–30.
- 37 WA 11, 254,33–35.
- 38 WA 11, 254,36–37.
- 39 WA 11, 255,6–8.
- 40 WA 11, 255,12–15.
- 41 WA 11, 255,18–21.
- 42 WA 11, 255,22–30.
- 43 WA 11, 255,34–35.
- 44 WA 11, 255,35 – 256,1.
- 45 WA 11, 256,8–12.
- 46 WA 11, 256,12–16.
- 47 WA 11, 256,18–20.
- 48 WA 11, 256,20–25.
- 49 WA 11, 256,30–32.
- 50 WA 11, 256,34–36.
- 51 WA 11, 257,3–5.
- 52 WA 11, 257,16–24.
- 53 WA 11, 258,1–3.
- 54 WA 11, 258,13–15.
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- 57 WA 11, 258,31–33.
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- 63 WA 11, 260,5–7.
- 64 WA 11, 260,11–13.
- 65 WA 11, 260,13–15.
- 66 WA 11, 260,16–19.
- 67 WA 11, 253,27–30.
- 68 Gen 14:13–16.
- 69 Ezek 3:17–19.

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