

Global Justice in Lutheran Political Theology

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The purpose of this article is to examine the contributions that might be given by Lutheran political theology to the discourse on global justice. The article offers a critical examination of three different theories of global justice within political philosophy. Contractarian theories are criticized, and a thesis is that it is plausible to argue that justice can be understood as liberation from oppression. From this perspective the article gives an analysis of an influential theory of justice within Lutheran ethics. According to this theory justice is not an equal distribution but an arrangement where the subordinate respect the authority of those in power. This theory is related to a sharp distinction between law and gospel. The main thesis of the article is that Lutheran political theology should take a different approach if it aims to give a constructive contribution to theories of justice. This means that Lutheran ethics should not be based on Creation and reason alone – it should also be based on Christology and Eschatology.

Different theories of global justice have been elaborated both within political philosophy and theological ethics. Several of these theories take their starting point within the social contract tradition, and often justice is understood to mean an equal distribution of liberty, power and welfare. In this article the purpose is to examine the contributions that might be given by Lutheran political theology to this discourse on global justice. Is there any particular perspective on global justice that can be derived from Lutheran political ethics?

The first part of the article will critically examine three different theories of global justice within political philosophy. Thomas Pogge and Charles Beitz have elaborated such a theory from a contractarian perspective. An important critique of this contractarian theory is given by Martha Nussbaum who argues that we need an alternative approach to global justice. This is the capabilities approach. My thesis is that an even more plausible alternative is proposed by Iris Marion Young. She argues that global justice can be understood as liberation from oppression and domination.

What then might be a Lutheran contribution to this ongoing philosophical discourse on global justice? The second part of the article will give a critical examination of previous theories of justice within Lutheran ethics. Political ethics in Lutheran tradition has mainly been characterized by a patriarchal principle, according to which those who are subordinate should respect the authority of those in power. A conception of justice which is in accordance with this hierarchical view of society is developed by Helmut Thielicke. He argues that justice is not an equal distribution but a social

arrangement where the differences between superiors and subordinates are respected. This is a patriarchal interpretation of justice that is related to a sharp distinction between law and gospel, which means that the gospel does not give any contribution to political ethics.

If Lutheran political theology aims to give a reasonable contribution to theories of global justice it is necessary to take a different approach. The third part of the article will give a proposal for such an alternative interpretation of Lutheran ethics. My main thesis is that Lutheran ethics cannot be based upon Creation and reason alone, in order to avoid a legitimizing position. It should also be based upon Christology and Eschatology. This means that we should abandon the sharp difference between law and gospel within ethics. From a Christological perspective it would be possible to develop a plausible perspective on global justice. God's sacrificial love in Christ can inspire a political practice that supports those who are marginalized and suffer from poverty. From this perspective it is possible to argue that global justice means liberation from oppression.

Theories of Global Justice

The discourse on global justice within political philosophy often takes as its starting point an awareness of a widespread poverty and a global inequality. This inequality makes it necessary to develop a theory of justice that is relevant for human relations across national borders.¹ Most efforts to elaborate such a theory have been based on a social contractarian approach. This is the approach elaborated by John Rawls in his important work *A Theory of Justice*, where he argues that principles of justice are justified if they are accepted by free and rational persons in an original position of equality. According to this approach the principles of justice are chosen behind a 'veil of ignorance', where no one knows his place in society.²

In his book *The Law of Peoples*, John Rawls proposed some principles of rights and justice that can be applied to the global world order. They include that peoples are free and independent, that the peoples should respect human rights, and that the peoples should assist other peoples who are suffering from bad conditions. However, they do not include the 'difference principle', according to which a just distribution of welfare should be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged.³

More promising efforts to elaborate a theory of global justice from a contractarian perspective have been made by Thomas Pogge and Charles Beitz. They think of the original position as applied directly to the world as a whole and argue in favor of a distributive principle applicable to the global economic system. According to them the difference principle is important within a theory of global justice and there are strong

¹ Thomas W. Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), pp. 144, 172, and 176. See also Göran Collste, *Global Rectificatory Justice* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 17f. and 23f.

² John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 11f.

³ John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 37.

reasons in favor of social equality. We need a global redistributive system with transfers from the wealthy part of the world to those suffering from poverty.⁴

These proposals for a theory of global justice are based upon a contractarian theory, according to which a principle of justice is justified if it would be chosen by rational persons behind a veil of ignorance. In a global approach to justice the hypothetical device of a social contract should be transferred from a nation to the world as a whole. Representatives of the world's population should deliberate upon principles of justice behind a veil of ignorance. They would then agree upon principles of justice which are relevant not only to national governments but also to international institutions.⁵

However, this contractarian theory is controversial. It presupposes a liberal view of human beings, according to which we could reach a universal agreement upon what justice means by making ourselves free from our social position and making a choice as individuals behind the veil of ignorance. The problem is that we can never make such rational and independent choices. We are always formed by the particular social and cultural contexts to which we belong, and dependent on our social position we will have different perspectives upon what justice means. This is particularly true if we are regarded to be representatives of a people or a cultural tradition in a global deliberation.

A sharp critique of theories of global justice within the social contract tradition is given by Martha Nussbaum in her book *Frontiers of Justice*. She finds grave difficulties both with John Rawls's approach and the global contractarian theories of Thomas Pogge and Charles Beitz. One difficulty with this proposal is according to Nussbaum its vague and speculative nature. Pogge and Beitz do not give us clear information about the design of the global original position and about the circumstances under which the social contract is made. If the point of the contract should be mutual advantages among rough equals, this seems difficult to reconcile with the fact that there are vast inequalities in basic life chances among individuals in a global perspective.⁶

The conclusion of Nussbaum is that we need an alternative approach to global justice than the ones elaborated within the social contract tradition. This is the capabilities approach. According to Nussbaum this is an account of core human entitlements that should be respected and implemented by all nations, as a minimum of what respect for human dignity requires. She proposes a list of central human capabilities and argues that each of them is implicit in the idea of a life worthy of human dignity. The principle of human dignity means that we should always treat every human person as an end in herself and never treat her as only a means to another end. An implication of this principle is that there is a threshold level of capabilities, beneath which it is held that truly human functioning is not available to citizens.⁷

⁴ Thomas W. Pogge (ed), *Global Justice* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), pp. 15ff. and 106ff. For a critical discussion of these theories of Rawls, Pogge and Beitz, see Göran Collste, *Globalisering och global rättvisa* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2004), pp. 119ff. and 151ff.

⁵ Göran Collste, 'Economic Globalisation and Global Justice', in Carl-Henric Grenholm and Normunds Kamergrauzis (eds), *Sustainable Development and Global Ethics* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2007), pp. 122f.

⁶ Martha Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice. Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 265f., 266f. and 268ff.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 70f.

According to Nussbaum, there are some central capabilities which should be secured to each and every person. They include being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length, being able to have a good health, and being able to move freely from place to place. They also include being able to participate in political choices. It is possible to achieve an agreement upon these universal values by cross-cultural discussions. The central human capabilities can be the object of an overlapping consensus, among people with different comprehensive ethical or religious conceptions.⁸

The capabilities approach, as interpreted by Martha Nussbaum, is in many ways similar to the international human rights approach. She describes it as one species of such a theory of human rights. One similarity is its universalism, which means that a cross-national agreement on capabilities is assumed. Another similarity is its starting point in the idea of human dignity. According to Nussbaum this idea means that all human should have the capability for central functionings in human life, and therefore the capabilities should be sought for each and every person. At the same time this is not an egalitarian theory of justice. She argues that individuals vary greatly in their need for resources.⁹

The capabilities approach gives an interpretation of global justice that is fruitful in many respects. Its starting point is not a contractarian theory but a principle of human dignity. However, there are at least two shortcomings with Nussbaum's theory. One is that it does not challenge the basic power structure in the global and political order. She argues that economic redistributions, in the form of international aid, are called for in order to reduce some of the global inequalities. However, a reasonable theory of global justice should also deal with those political and economic power structures that make these inequalities possible.

Another shortcoming is that her theory of human dignity is non-egalitarian. In her interpretation human dignity is respected if all humans have capabilities to realize a good human life, but this does not mean that we should strive for an equal distribution of resources and welfare. However, a more reasonable interpretation of the principle of human dignity is that it includes a principle of equality. The idea of human dignity means that all humans should always be treated as ends in themselves, but it also means that all humans are entitled to the same concern and respect. We should treat every human being as an equal, and this means that justice is an equal distribution of freedom, power and welfare. It is not enough that all humans attain a minimum of the good life.¹⁰

A more plausible theory of global justice is proposed by Iris Marion Young. In her book *Justice and the Politics of Difference* she argues that justice refers not only to a distribution of social goods but also to the institutional conditions necessary for the development of individual capacities and collective cooperation. According to Young, it is a mistake to reduce social justice to a distribution of wealth, income, and other material goods. Thereby we tend to ignore the social structure and institutional context which often determine distributive patterns. However, justice concerns the degree to which a

⁸ Martha Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development. The Capabilities Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 41ff. and 76ff.

⁹ Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice*, pp. 78 and 292; Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development*, pp. 70ff. and 86. A clarifying analysis of Nussbaum's theory is given in Jenny Ehnberg, *Globalization, Justice, and Communication* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2015), pp. 94ff.

¹⁰ A similar critique of Nussbaum's theory is given in Ehnberg, *Globalization, Justice and Communication*, pp. 122ff.

society contains the institutional conditions necessary for the realization of a good human life.¹¹

According to Young, there are two values that constitute the good life. One is self-development, which means developing and exercising one's capacities and expressing one's experience. The other one is self-determination, which means participating in determining one's action and the conditions of one's action. Justice is the institutional conditions necessary for the realization of these two values. To these values correspond two social conditions that define injustice, namely oppression and domination. They are the institutional constraints on self-development and self-determination.¹²

From this perspective justice can be understood as liberation from oppression and domination. According to Young, domination consists in institutional conditions which inhibit or prevent people from self-determination and participation in decision-making. There are five faces of oppression; that is, systematic processes which prevent people from developing their capacities. They include exploitation, marginalization and powerlessness, which means a lack of authority, status and respectability. They also include cultural imperialism and violence.¹³

This is a conception of justice that seems to be a fruitful alternative to contractarian theories and the capabilities approach. It takes seriously the idea that justice is not only an equal distribution of social goods but also a revision of existing power structures in the global political and economic order. Liberation from domination and oppression seems to be an adequate interpretation of what global justice would mean. This theory gives a relevant perspective for a critical evaluation of the global market economy and the global institutional order. The globalization processes today seem to be associated not only with economic inequalities but also with exploitation, powerlessness, marginalization, cultural imperialism and violence. To promote global justice we should not only strive for an equal distribution of welfare and freedom but also for liberation from oppression and domination.

Justice in Lutheran Political Ethics

What then might be a Lutheran contribution to this ongoing philosophical discourse on global justice? Is there any particular perspective on global justice that can be derived from Lutheran political ethics? If we accept the analysis of Martha Nussbaum and Iris Marion Young we can argue that a reasonable theory of global justice should fulfill three conditions. First, it should give a plausible alternative to contractarian theories, and at the same time it should give a tenable justification of an egalitarian conception of justice. Secondly, it should be related to a theory of human dignity that includes a principle of equality. Thirdly, it should give a relevant perspective for a critical evaluation of existing political and economic power structures.

¹¹ Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 15ff. and 39.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp 48f., 53f., 56f., 58f. and 61f.

Would it be possible to elaborate such a theory of global justice within the framework of Lutheran ethics? One main problem is that the conception of justice in Lutheran ethics often has been non-egalitarian, and that Lutheran theology seldom has given resources for a critique of prevailing social structures. Instead, Lutheran political theology has often defended an interpretation of justice that is hierarchical and patriarchal. Justice has often been interpreted to mean that the subordinate should respect the authority of those in power.

Political ethics in Lutheran tradition has often been related to the doctrine of God's two kingdoms. This doctrine, with its sharp distinction between law and gospel, has often been interpreted in such a way that it has legitimized existing social structures. According to the doctrine, God is acting in the secular realm through the law and the sword in order to promote political justice. The state should be governed by reason and the natural law, which anyone can understand independent of God's revelation in Christ. This means that the gospel does not inform the content of political ethics.¹⁴

The distinction between the two kingdoms is closely related to three characteristic ideas in Luther's political ethics. First, it is based upon reason and the natural law, as it is expressed in the Decalogue. The gospel does not give any contribution to the content of ethics. Secondly, Luther defends an ethical dualism according to which the content of political ethics is different from the Christian ideal of love, which is relevant only within private morality. It is necessary that political authorities use violence and coercion in order to protect humans from evil, and this means that sacrificial love is not an ideal in political ethics. Thirdly, his view of society is patriarchal, which means that it is our duty to obey superiors. There is equality between humans before God, but this is of no relevance for the meaning of social justice.¹⁵

Luther's patriarchal interpretation of Christian ethics is obvious in his treatise *Von den guten Werken*. Here he argues that good works are in accordance with the commandments in the Decalogue. These commandments are interpreted in such a way that they clarify the virtues we should try to develop, such as faith, obedience, purity and generosity. To love one's neighbor means above all to respect the Fourth Commandment, which prescribes that we should obey all those who are our superiors. Children should obey their parents, women should obey their husbands, and citizens should obey their political authorities. The father who cares for his children and expects obedience from them is a model for those in political and economic authority.¹⁶

The analysis of political ethics in Lutheran tradition that is given by Ernst Troeltsch in his classical study *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* is clarifying in at least two respects. First, he argues that Lutheran ethics is of dual origin. On the one hand, there is an ideal of self-sacrificing love, but this is relevant only within individual ethics. On the other hand, natural law as summarized in the Decalogue is the norm which is guiding the state, economics and the family. Secondly, Troeltsch demonstrates that the law of nature is interpreted in such a way that it demands an unconditional respect for

¹⁴ An analysis of Luther's ethics and political ethics in Lutheran tradition is given in Carl-Henric Grenholm, *Tro, moral och uddlös politik. Om luthersk etik* (Stockholm: Verbum, 2014), pp. 41ff. and 71ff.

¹⁵ These three ideas are expressed quite clearly in Martin Luther, *Von weltlicher Oberkeit, wie weit man ihr gehorsam schuldig sei* (1523). WA 11, 251:1-31; WA 11, 253:17-32; WA 11, 254:27-255:21.

¹⁶ Martin Luther, *Von den guten Werken* (1520). WA 6, 204:13-24; WA 6, 250:22-28; WA 6, 263:5-28.

authority as such. Lutheran social ethics is characterized by a patriarchal principle, according to which the authorities should care for the subordinate and those who are subordinate should respect the authority of those in power.¹⁷

From this perspective it is easy to understand that justice in Lutheran tradition has seldom been interpreted to mean an equal distribution of welfare and power. Instead it has often been regarded to be a respect for the differences between the subordinate and the authorities in society. The doctrine of justification by grace alone means that there is equality between humans before God, independent of our merits and social position. However, this equality has not been regarded to have any relevance for the meaning of social justice. The reason is that we should make a sharp distinction between law and gospel.

There are different interpretations of political ethics within Lutheran tradition. However, one of the most influential forms of Lutheran political theology was elaborated in Germany in the beginning of the twentieth century. This was the 'theology of orders', developed by such leading Lutheran theologians as Friedrich Gogarten and Paul Althaus. They were influenced by the Luther renaissance and had an ambition to clarify an ethical position that was in accordance with Luther's own theology. Their ambition was also to elaborate political ethics and a theory of the state in dialogue with the surrounding society.¹⁸

This theology of orders had a great impact on Lutheran ethics also after the Second World War. One of the most influential Lutheran ethicists in the middle of the twentieth century was Helmut Thielicke, who was professor in Hamburg during 1954-1978. In his impressive work *Theologische Ethik*, published in four volumes, he argues that God has given us orders that are frameworks for human life. Marriage is given by God in Creation and state, economy, law and culture are given by God after the fall, in order to protect human beings from the evil that is a result of sin. In this theology of orders ethics is based on the doctrine of Creation and the gospel does not give any substantial contribution to political ethics.¹⁹

Helmut Thielicke emphasizes the sharp distinction between law and gospel. According to him, the capacity to understand this distinction is the criterion of a good theologian. A consequence of this distinction is that ethics is not based upon Christology. He is criticizing the ideal of *imitatio Christi*, which means that we should try to follow Christ and regard his life as an ethical ideal. To believe that Christology can give a contribution to ethics is to transform the gospel into law.²⁰

In his political ethics Thielicke instead develops the doctrine of the two kingdoms. He argues that the main idea in this doctrine is that social ethics should be based upon reason and human experience. In the secular realm there is no particular Christian ethic. Here Christians should cooperate with persons without a Christian faith,

¹⁷ Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches. Volume II* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), pp. 523ff., 526f., 529ff., 532ff., and 540ff.

¹⁸ A critical analysis of Gogarten's and Althaus's political theology is given in Grenholm, *Tro, moral och uddlös politik*, pp. 81ff. and 87ff.

¹⁹ Helmut Thielicke, *Theologische Ethik*, I. Band (Tübingen: JCB Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1951), pp. 693f., 701 and 709; Helmut Thielicke, *Theologische Ethik*, II. Band, 2 Teil (Tübingen: JCB Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1966), pp. 21ff., 135ff. and 173f.

²⁰ Thielicke, *Theologische Ethik*, I. Band, pp. 189f., 203f. and 307f.; Thielicke, *Theologische Ethik*, II. Band, 2 Teil, pp. 710ff.

and they have to argue in such a way that their reasons can be understood by all humans.²¹

Three ideas are important within the political ethics of Helmut Thielicke. First, he argues that the power of the state should be limited in order to avoid the risk for a totalitarian state.²² Secondly, he argues that the state should be regarded as an authority (*Obrigkeit*) – even in a democratic society. This idea, that the state has a particular authority, is an important part of the doctrine of the two kingdoms. As an order, given by God after the fall, the state has got the task to preserve human life against the evil, and therefore it should be respected as an authority.²³

Thirdly, Thielicke has a conception of justice which is in accordance with the patriarchal principle. He argues that justice should take into consideration the equal worth of human beings and the similarities before God. At the same time justice should also consider the actual differences between humans in society. Justice as *suum cuique* means according to Thielicke that everyone gets her due considering that all humans are different.²⁴

Thielicke makes a distinction between ‘arithmetical justice’ and ‘geometrical justice’. The arithmetical justice means absolute equality, that is an equal distribution of goods. This kind of justice treats all humans equally and does not consider their individual differences. However, geometrical justice takes these differences regarding qualities and position into consideration. Therefore justice is not an equal distribution but a social arrangement where the differences between superiors and subordinates are respected. According to Thielicke we should promote this kind of geometrical justice.²⁵

Thus, it is obvious that Helmut Thielicke defends a hierarchical view of society, according to which the state should be regarded as an authority and equality should not be promoted. This patriarchal ideal is justified by an ethical theory which takes its starting point in a theology of orders. A sharp distinction is made between law and gospel, which means that ethics is based on the doctrine of Creation and not on Christology. Political ethics is a matter of reason, and the gospel does not give any substantial contribution to ethics. This kind of Lutheran ethics does not give resources for a critique of existing power structures.

It is also obvious that this kind of Lutheran political theology does not give any fruitful contribution to the current philosophical discourse on global justice. I have argued that a reasonable theory of global justice should fulfill three criteria. It should give a plausible alternative to contractarian theories, it should include an egalitarian conception of justice, and it should give a relevant perspective for a critique of political and economic power structures. However, the conception of justice elaborated by Helmut Thielicke is quite different from that. This is a non-egalitarian interpretation of justice related to a hierarchical view of society. Here justice does not mean liberation from oppression but that the subordinates should respect the privileges of the superiors.

²¹ Helmut Thielicke, *Theologische Ethik*, II. Band, 1 Teil (Tübingen: JCB Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1959), pp. 371ff.

²² Thielicke, *Theologische Ethik*, II. Band, 2 Teil, pp. 173f., 216ff., 228ff., 302ff., 308f. and 314.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 5ff., 8ff., 20ff., 27ff., 31ff. and 68ff.

²⁴ Thielicke, *Theologische Ethik*, III. Band. (Tübingen: JCB Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1964), pp. 330ff. and 333ff.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 340ff. and 342f.

A Christological Perspective on Global Justice

Does this mean that there is no plausible Lutheran contribution to the ongoing discourse on global justice? Would it not be possible to elaborate an understanding of Lutheran political ethics that can give a more reasonable perspective on what justice means? As we have seen a patriarchal interpretation of justice is related to the idea that ethics is based upon reason alone and the doctrine of creation. Today there is a sharp critique of the theology of orders, even among Lutheran theologians. However, several Lutheran ethicists argue that there is a sharp distinction between law and gospel, which means that the gospel does not give any contribution to political ethics.²⁶ If Lutheran political theology aims to give a constructive perspective on the meaning of global justice it is necessary to take a different approach.

My thesis is that Lutheran ethics cannot be based upon Creation and reason alone, if it would like to avoid an uncritical support of existing power structures. A more reasonable ethical theory should also be based upon Christology and Eschatology. Ethics is related to Creation, which means that all humans have a capacity to get at least a partial moral insight through rational considerations. But ethics is also related to Christology and Eschatology, which means that we need the guidance of God's revelation in Christ to get a comprehensive moral insight. Ethics is based upon both reason and revelation. We have moral insights that are based on reason, but Christology and Eschatology can give new perspectives on morality.²⁷

Christology can contribute to ethical reflection in several ways. The message about God's love in Christ is related to an idea of equality, according to which all humans have an equal worth before God independent of their merits. Justification by grace alone means that all humans are loved by God independent of their race, gender, social position and moral value. This trust in God's love implies a principle of human dignity that includes an ideal of equal concern and respect. It is an idea of equality that also should be applied in political ethics.

The gospel includes an image of God's sacrificial love in Christ, which gives a new perspective upon what love between human beings means. In its care for others it is prepared to give up its own good if that is necessary. It is even prepared to suffer and die upon a cross in order to promote what is good for others. This sacrificial love, as it is expressed in the life of Jesus, means that he is on the side of those who are marginalized and oppressed in society. Thereby it is relevant not only within individual ethics but also within political ethics. The ideal of sacrificial love is often combined with a sharp critique of the established authorities in society, as we can learn from the stories about Jesus Christ.²⁸

In his book on *The Scandalous God* Vitor Westhelle gives a constructive interpretation of the theology of the cross that has had an important position in Lutheran tradition. He argues that the cross gives an image not only of God's suffering but also of the conditions of all humans who are oppressed. It is necessary to get a deep

²⁶ This is the position of the influential Swedish ethicist Gustaf Wingren. See my analysis in Grenholm, *Tro, moral och uddlös politik*, pp. 137-174.

²⁷ Carl-Henric Grenholm, *Bortom humanismen. En studie i kristen etik* (Stockholm: Verbum, 2003), pp. 257ff.

²⁸ Duncan Forrester, *Theology and Politics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), pp. 117ff. and 121ff.

understanding of these conditions in order to make possible a hope for liberation. The cross gives us knowledge about the meaning of suffering and why Jesus and human beings have to suffer. It also gives us the hope that it is possible to overcome the cause of suffering.²⁹

What implications would Christology then have for our reflection on global justice? From a Christological perspective it would be important to support those who are social outcasts and marginalized. Our aim should be a justice that is characterized by equality, with an equal concern and respect of all human beings. It would also be liberation from different forms of oppression, like marginalization, exploitation and powerlessness. The doctrine of justification by grace alone can thus be a resource also for a critique of ideologies and political practices that support hierarchical and unequal structures. In our relationship to other human beings we should strive for a social justice that is similar to justification before God by grace alone. It means to treat all human equally independent of their merits or social positions.

This is a different approach to Lutheran political ethics than the one proposed by Svend Andersen in his study *Macht aus Liebe*. He is also critical towards Luther's patriarchal principle, his hierarchical view of society, and his lack of an egalitarian theory in social ethics. At the same time he argues that three ideas in Luther's political theology still are reasonable. One is that the love commandment is important also in political ethics. Another one is that there is a difference between God's two kingdoms. A third one is that there is a natural law and a common morality for humans with different worldviews.³⁰

From this perspective Andersen argues that there is a resemblance between Lutheran ethics and John Rawls's political liberalism. The two principles of justice that are proposed by John Rawls can be interpreted as a political application of the love commandment. The content of natural law is also similar to the normative basis of political liberalism. The theory of overlapping consensus can be understood as an important reconstruction of the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms. This means that we can agree upon some basic principles of justice even if we have different comprehensive doctrines.³¹

This proposal for a reconstruction of Lutheran political ethics is not quite convincing. The reason is that Svend Andersen does not admit that there are serious problems with the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms. An implication of the difference between the spiritual and the secular realm is that Christology does not give any contributions to political ethics. Andersen agrees that there is a particular Christian contribution to ethics, but he argues that this radical ideal of love is not relevant within the political sphere. This is a serious reduction of the content of Christian ethics. The idea of God's sacrificial love in Christ is an important argument in favor of an egalitarian interpretation of justice.

Another problem with the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms is that it seldom has inspired a critique of prevailing social structures. Lutheran theologians have

²⁹ Vítor Westhelle, *The Scandalous God. The Use and the Abuse of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), pp. 74f., 81ff. and 90f.

³⁰ Svend Andersen, *Macht aus Liebe. Zur Rekonstruktion einer lutherischen politischen Ethik* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co, 2010), pp. 298ff.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 301f. and 304ff.

often been too uncritical to prevalent social morality and political ideologies. Today it is obvious that political liberalism is the main ideology in Western societies, and Andersen does not deliver any critique of this political theory. This means that he does not admit that the Christian ideal of love can inspire an understanding of justice that is a critical alternative to mainstream liberal theories.

My proposal is a different one. I argue that Lutheran political theology should develop a Christological perspective on global justice. From this perspective it would be possible to challenge John Rawls's political liberalism and contractarian theories of justice. The idea of God's sacrificial love in Christ gives strong arguments in favor of a principle of equal human dignity. This principle is not only justified by enlightenment philosophy and a liberal view of humans. At the same time the theology of the cross gives arguments in favor of an understanding of justice as liberation from oppression. Global justice is not only an equal distribution of welfare and liberty, it is also a radical change of existing power structures.³²

In my proposal not only Christology but also Eschatology should be the basis for ethical reflection. Eschatology is also an obvious resource for a critique of prevailing political and economic structures. Its primary focus is the image of an ideal human community in the future Kingdom of God. This is an ethical ideal, where the needs of the poor are satisfied, there is no oppression and all humans are living in a community shaped by peace and justice. The relationships between humans are the ones characterized by Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount. This ideal can never be realized in this temporal society, but from this perspective every prevailing social structure is regarded to be imperfect. Thus Eschatology is an inspiration to continuous social critique.³³

Christian ethics should thus be developed within a Trinitarian framework. Ethics should be based upon not only the doctrine of Creation but also Christology and Eschatology. As a consequence the sharp distinction between law and gospel should be challenged within Lutheran ethical reflection. This distinction can be accepted as a way of clarifying the doctrine of justification by grace alone. According to this doctrine, humans cannot deserve justification before God by acting in accordance with the law. The only thing required from humans is faith and trust in Christ.

However, the distinction between law and gospel should be abandoned as a starting point for ethical reflection, if it means that the gospel about God's love by grace alone does not have any implications for the content of ethics. The consequence of this separation between law and gospel has been a political theology that has failed to criticize social injustice and a hierarchical society. Self-sacrificial love has not been regarded to be relevant in political ethics and the equality between humans before God

³² This Christological perspective on political ethics is further elaborated in Grenholm, *Tro, moral och uddlös politik*, pp. 252-286. On the role of Christology in political ethics, see also Elena Namli, *Human Rights as Ethics, Politics and Law* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2014), pp. 147ff., 159ff. and 164ff.

³³ On the role of Eschatology in ethics, see Enrique Dussel, *Ethics and Community* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988), pp. 13ff., 27ff., 47ff. and 51ff.

has not been applied to the secular realm. Thereby Lutheran ethics has taken a legitimizing position in its relationship to hierarchical societies and existing authorities.³⁴

Today it is necessary to challenge this sharp distinction between law and gospel in Lutheran ethics. This also implies that we should question the doctrine of the two kingdoms. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer argued in his *Ethics*, it is important to question the division of reality into a sacred and a profane sphere, a Christian and a secular sphere. This means that there is no secular existence which can claim autonomy for itself, independent of the spiritual existence. It is necessary to avoid thinking in terms of two spheres, since there is only one reality, and that is the reality of God. There are not two spheres, but only one sphere in which the reality of God and the reality of the world are united.³⁵

An important idea in Lutheran theology is that God acts through the Word and not through the law in order to promote justification before God. Human deeds are not relevant when it comes to our salvation, since we are justified by grace alone. However, it would be reasonable to admit that God is using not only law and the sword in the political life. The gospel about God's love in Christ is relevant also within political ethics. It will inform us about the meaning of equality and the importance of sacrificial love. This means that our understanding of justification before God informs our interpretation of political and economic justice.

From this perspective the justice we should strive for is not a patriarchal relationship between authorities and subordinates. Instead our aim should be a justice that is characterized by equality, with an equal concern and respect of all human beings, independent of their merits or social positions. Our aim should also be a justice that means liberation from different forms of oppression and domination. Sharing the perspectives of those who are marginalized and suffering from poverty we should also challenge prevailing political and economic power structures. This would be an important contribution to the discourse on global justice from a Christological perspective.

Conclusion

In this article my purpose has been to examine the contributions that might be given by Lutheran political theology to the philosophical discourse on global justice. In the first part of the article I have critically examined three different theories of global justice within political philosophy. I have criticized contractarian theories like the ones proposed by Thomas Pogge and Charles Beitz. I have also argued that the capabilities approach of Martha Nussbaum has some serious shortcomings. A more plausible alternative is proposed by Iris Marion Young, who argues that justice can be understood as liberation from oppression.

In the second part of the article I have given a critical examination of previous theories of justice within Lutheran ethics. Political theology in Lutheran tradition has

³⁴ This is also my argument in Carl-Henric Grenholm, 'Law and Gospel in Lutheran Ethics', in Carl-Henric Grenholm and Göran Gunner (eds), *Justification in a Post-Christian Society* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2014), pp. 91-106.

³⁵ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (London: SCM Press, 1978), pp. 169f.

mainly been characterized by a patriarchal principle, according to which the subordinate should respect the authority in power. A conception of justice which is in accordance with this hierarchical view of society is developed by Helmut Thielicke. He argues that justice is not an equal distribution but a social arrangement where the differences between superiors and subordinates are respected. This interpretation of justice is related to a sharp distinction between law and gospel, which means that the gospel does not give any contribution to political ethics.

In the third part of the article I have argued that Lutheran political theology should take a different approach. My thesis is that Lutheran ethics should not be based on Creation and reason alone – it should also be based on Christology and Eschatology. This means that we should abandon the sharp difference between law and gospel within ethics. From a Christological perspective it is possible to argue that all humans have an equal dignity before God, and this equality should also be applied within political ethics. God's sacrificial love in Christ would also inspire a political practice that supports those who are marginalized and suffers from poverty. From this perspective global justice would mean both an equal distribution of welfare and liberation from oppression.

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