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Martin Luther's Theology of the Cross, the Two Kingdoms and Its Application to Conflict in Nagaland

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Thesis

MARTIN LUTHER'S THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS,
THE TWO KINGDOMS AND ITS APPLICATION
TO CONFLICT IN NAGALAND

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CHAPTER ONE

A MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

Statement of the Problem

This thesis is an attempt to study Martin Luther's theology of the cross, his theology of the two kingdoms and how these affect our callings as peacemakers in a violent world. More importantly this project is being undertaken to explore and see if the application of Luther's theology of peace and reconciliation would be relevant to the conflict and violent history of Nagaland in its context.

This thesis will also try to discuss how Luther's theology of two kingdoms supports the theory of Track Two Diplomacy: while it is the role of the state (the government) "to make the peace," it is the role of civil society (the church) "to keep the peace."¹ This project is also a sincere attempt to foster the need for the involvement of the church and the religious community of Nagaland in the ministry of peace building in a context that has experienced cycles of violence and oppression for over half a century.

¹Rodney L. Petersen, extract: *Religion and Multi-Track Diplomacy* eds. Gh. Simion and Illie Talpasanu Proceedings: *The 32nd Annual Congress of the American Romanian Academy of Arts and Sciences* (Montreal: Polytechnic International Press, 2008) 527- 532.

Scope and Limitations

Lack of contemporary Naga writings in the area of religious peace building in Nagaland makes it difficult to start on a certain theological premise in my pursuit to develop a theology of reconciliation/hope for Nagaland. Therefore this research is based on the historical experiences and lived realities of Naga people in our struggle for political freedom and human rights abuses along with other social evils. This project is being undertaken with a desire to develop a hopeful plan for the social reconstruction of Nagaland. This will also hopefully inspire the Naga Christian community to be aware of our roles in peace building and enable us to develop a contextual theology of the cross to offer hope to Naga's in the midst of violence and fear. However a master's level thesis will not be able to do justice to the vast array of problems and social evils in Nagaland that need to be addressed with the appropriate understanding of Christian theology. Therefore my sincere hope in undertaking this small research project is that, it will spark off an interest in other Naga researchers, religious leaders and theologians to explore the possibility of starting a theological discourse of developing a theology of peace and reconciliation in Nagaland.

Methodology

Luther's understanding of the cross as the good news/gospel for humanity that is in need of being reconciled to God provides a methodology and content that supports my desire to address the need for Christian peace makers in Naga churches and society. Luther's theology of two kingdoms also provides a framework for investigating the

nature of personal conflicts and communal conflicts and its theological implications in the context of Nagaland where there is a certain divide between the church and state. All of these investigations will be made in the light of Luther's understanding of *grace* and his *theology of the cross*.

The Nature of Oppression and Violence in Nagaland: A Historical Narrative

Politically, Naga's have been undergone untold sufferings on abuses of human rights violations due to the our struggle for political independence from India for the past six decades. Geographically, the Naga's occupy a geo-political strategic region where three great nations of India, China and Burma intersect.² Nagaland also shares a close physical, social, cultural affinity and habits with South East Asian cultures. Economically, the Naga society has been plagued with all kinds of corruptions, injustices and exploitations, leading to a class conflict between the haves and and have-nots.³ This unfortunate class divide has been a relatively recent phenomenon after Nagaland was made a part of the Indian union in 1975 when the historic Shillong Accord was signed by a few national workers without the consent of Naga people in signing the agreement with India.⁴ In the light of all the information above, a discussion on the nature of conflict and violence in Nagaland would be appropriate before the formulation of the theology of reconciliation.

Publications by the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN - IM) sheds

2 NSCN (IM). *Their Pilgrimage for Self-Existence And Quest for Dignity and Peace* (Nagaland: Oking Publicity & Information Department, 2006), 2.

3 V. K. Nuh, *In Search of Praxis Theology for the Nagas* (Delhi: Regency Publications, 2003), v.

4 NSCN (IM), 4- 10.

some light into the history of Naga resistance and protests to the incorporation of its land into the Indian union which began in 1947.⁵ An article published by the *Center for Development and Peace Studies* in Assam, an immediate neighboring state of Nagaland mentions that, “the mobilisation by the Naga separatists to establish an independent land for the Nagas began before India’s independence.”⁶ The idea of an independent Nagaland is based on the premise that Nagas have been historically independent, conquered by none and therefore India has no right to subjugate them. Naga representative organizations, during the British rule over India, petitioned the government to address their concerns of being subjugated to an alien culture after the departure of the British.⁷ Though the British made special provisions for the administration of the hill tribes, it was clearly short of endorsing their demand for independence. Subsequently, during India’s independence, Nagas, under the Naga National Council (NNC) appealed to the Indian National Congress to set them free. Faced with a rejection, the NNC under Angami Zapu Phizo declared independence of Nagaland on August 14, 1947, and sought to endorse it with what he claimed a plebiscite held on May 16, 1951 in which 99 per cent of the population had voted in favor of independence.⁸

However, in 1955 the Indian army occupied the Naga areas and martial law was declared. Violence quickly escalated and the Indian army engaged in massive destruction, destroying entire villages and sending families into the jungles where many starved.⁹

5 Ibid,

6 http://cdpsindia.org/nagaland_insurgency.asp (accessed March 15, 2010).

7 Ibid,

8 Ibid.

9 Daniel Buttry, <http://www.peoplebuildingpeace.org/thestories/print.php?id=92&typ=theme> (accessed March 15, 2010).

Naga church and human rights officials estimate that over two thousand Nagas have died in the conflict since 1955 and every Naga can tell a story of personal loss from the war.¹⁰ The famous Shillong Accord was signed in 1975 when Nagaland was placed under “President’s Rule” which was followed by the declaration of the “National Emergency” over the whole sub-continent of India.¹¹

According to reports by the current NSCN members, it was during this precarious political scenario in India during this time, India launched a continuous series of military operations and pressured known relatives of Naga political leaders of the resistance movement with threats and undemocratic means.¹² It was under these extreme compelling circumstances, with no formal international intervention or support of any kind, that Naga National Council (NNC) members belonging to the Federal Government of Nagaland, under duress, signed the Shillong Accord on November 11, 1975, which states whereby “on their own volition, they accept, without condition, the Constitution of India.”¹³ The Nagas, who had only one political organization up to that point, the NNC, split into factions supporting and opposing the Shillong Accord.¹⁴ The new opposition faction was the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN). The factions began fighting each other over issues of distrust, leadership and fears of secret agreements with India. Since 1975 as many Nagas have been killed by other Nagas as have been killed by Indian military forces.¹⁵

10 Ibid.

11 *Nagas: Their Pilgrimage for Self-Existence And Quest for Dignity and Peace*, 16 (accessed March 15, 2010).

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Daniel Buttry, <http://www.peoplebuildingpeace.org/thestories/print.php?id=92&typ=theme> (accessed March 15, 2010).

15 Ibid.

In the midst of all the violence and confusion, Rev. V.K. Nuh, a prominent Naga Baptist leader writes about the great challenge that lies before the Naga churches today and to develop a praxis theology to actively participate in the suffering struggle of the people.¹⁶ However, Naga churches have not been able to formulate its theological stance to address this complex situation. Therefore Rev. Nuh argues that the church cannot be neutral. It must clearly demarcate between what is true and what is false. However he also mentions that Naga theology is still in cradle and still have a long way to go to find its rightful place.¹⁷ As we proceed to the next chapter, we will look at Luther's theology of peace and reconciliation that could perhaps be helpful in helping Naga churches and christians delineate our own theology of peace and reconciliation.

¹⁶ http://www.bagchee.com/en/books/view/6883/in_search_of_praxis_theology_for_the_nagas (accessed March 16, 2010).

¹⁷ Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO

MARTIN LUTHER'S THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

Suffering and Victory

In the course of the Disputation of Heidelberg in April of 1518, a new phrase was added to the vocabulary of Christendom by Martin Luther – ‘the theology of the Cross’ (*theologia crucis*).¹ Explaining the *theologia crucis* of Luther, Allister E. McGrath states that “Luther’s theological insights of the Cross crystallized into one of the most powerful and radical understandings of the nature of Christian theology which the church has ever known.”² McGrath argues that for Luther, “Christian thinking about God comes to an abrupt halt at the foot of the cross.”

Walter Altmann states that Luther’s Christology depicts the self emptying of Jesus which is dramatized in his battle against tyrannical powers.³ That “in a battle of historic and cosmic dimensions Jesus enters into the situation of captive humanity by going into the depths of hell in order to free the imprisoned.” According to Luther, Jesus becomes “at the same time cursed and blessed, at the same time alive and dead, at the same time grieving and rejoicing, so that He might absorb all evils in Himself and bestow all blessings from Himself.”⁴ However the result of this struggle is that Christ is victorious over satan and evil is defeated. Therefore “the provisional sign of the new life is not glory

¹Allister, E. McGrath, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther’s theological breakthrough* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1985) 1.

²Ibid.

³Walter Altmann, *Luther and Liberation: A Latin American Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1987), 20.

⁴Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works* 52. ed, Hans J. Hillerbrand (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974) 12.

but the cross” according to Luther.⁵ As Luther was struggling with his disappointment with the Catholic church five years even before the Reformation officially began, he said, “with Christ, everything can be overcome.”⁶ The emptying of Jesus has as its counterpart transformation of the situation in a human being although in the opposite direction: from slavery to freedom.⁷

During the time of Luther, the Augustinian Order and the Catholic Church believed that grace was achieved through some sort of action on man’s part. In other words, it was commonly believed that to receive grace required something of man. Luther however moved toward a more personalized concept of grace, which was the personal appearance of the Holy Spirit within the believer. Luther not only moved away but also expanded this concept of personal grace into his theology of the cross.⁸ In expanding the concept of personal grace, Luther said that it was not meritorious works, but a prepared condition that allowed one to receive grace. That prepared condition, according to Luther, was one’s admitting of one’s need for grace and an appeal to God, in His mercy, to bestow it.⁹

⁵ Walter Altmann, 21.

⁶ Martin Luther, *Christo autem praesente omnia superbilia*, in *D. Martin Luthers Werke Kristische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: Hermann Bohlaus Nachfolger, 1883-) 1, 16.

⁷ Martin Luther, *Martin Luther's Large Catechism* (1530) trans., F. Bente and W.H.T. Dan. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921). 414.

⁸ “Martin Luther Project,” http://www.secureonlineorder.net/tpepublic/terms-papers/15270_Theology_Cross_Luther.pdf (accessed March 3, 2010).

⁹ Ibid.

The Cross: The Abode of Radical Reconciliation

To Martin Luther, Jesus Christ is the only moderator between God and humans.¹⁰ In Luther's exegetical work of Isaiah 53 he mentions that verse 3 "surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted" states the purpose of Christ's suffering on the Cross.¹¹ Even though this text is from the Old Testament, Luther is of the view that he delights in this text as if this is a New Testament text.¹² He elaborates that Christ's suffering was nothing else than our sin and mentions that those words, OUR, US, FOR US, must be written in letters of gold and that, he who does not believe this is not a Christian.¹³ Paul Althaus also argues that Luther's understanding of Christ's suffering on the cross was determined primarily by the biblical texts, particularly the fourth word from the cross, "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?" (Mtt. 27:46) and Galatians 3:13, "cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree."¹⁴

Luther also however admits in a lot of his writings that he was also influenced by his personal experience of the temptations which a Christian experiences. Paul Althaus argues that, "First for Luther, the Christian's experience of his own temptations gives him a concept of Christ's personal agony. Second, Christ's sufferings must be understood also in terms of his entering into the deepest inner needs of men – otherwise, Christ could not

10 "Augustana," *The Luther Project*, <http://www.augustana.edu/religion/lutherproject/HEIDELBU/theology%20of%20the%20Cross.htm> (accessed March 4, 2010).

11 Martin Luther, *Christo autem praesente omnia superbilia*, in *D. Martin Luthers Werke Kristische Gesamtausgabe*, 74.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 203. The main sources are: *Treatise on Meditating on the Holy Suffering of Christ* (WA 2, 1519), 136ff.

be our Savior in these specific needs.”¹⁵ In trying to explain Luther’s understanding of Galatians 3:13, “Christ was made a curse for us . . . cursed is everyone who hangs on the tree,” Althaus argues that we should take this verse in their radical seriousness and not explain them away.¹⁶ He continues that Christ has thus “fully endured the horror of the anxiety of death, of being forsaken by God, and for being under God’s wrath . . . Christ’s suffering is, however, distinguished from our experience of wrath and of being forsaken by God by the fact that he does not suffer all this for himself but for us.”¹⁷ The reason being that “He lovingly entered into the entire need of the sinner under God.” In Luther’s words: “He was moved both by his own desire and by the will of the Father to be a friend of sinners.”¹⁸

Gerhard O. Forde on the other hand argues that Luther’s theology of the cross however is not about sentimentalism. Rather, “a theologian of the cross is one who looks at all things through suffering and the cross.”¹⁹ Forde points out that we cannot ignore the fact that “our suffering comes about because we are at odds with God.” He continues that even in his death “God and Christ are the operators and not the one’s who are operated upon (thesis 27 of Heidelberg Disputation).”²⁰ The reason for Forde’s argument is that a “sentimentalized theology gives the impression that God in Christ comes to join us in our battle against some unknown enemy,” that Christ is “victimized and suffers just like us.” Thus we sympathize with Jesus like the daughters of Jerusalem.²¹ However for Forde, a

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid, 205

17 Ibid.

18 Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 26, 278.

19 Gerhard O. Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther’s Heidelberg Disputations, 1518* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1997), viii.

20 Ibid, ix.

21 Ibid, ix.

true theology of the cross would place radical question marks over against sentimentality just as Jesus told the women of Jerusalem, “weep not for me but for yourselves and for your children.”²²

Toward the end of the Heidelberg Disputation, Luther offered some of these theses which basically led to the development of Luther’s theology of the cross and the doctrine of justification:

19. That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened [Rom. 1:20].

20. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.

21. A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.

22. That wisdom which sees the invisible things of God in works as perceived by man is completely puffed up, blinded, and hardened.²³

Heinrich Bornkam states that for Luther, “the cross confirms our conscience, corroborates our moral consciousness, and strengthens the human legal order of guilt and expiation on one hand.” On the other hand, however, “the cross is the irrevocable end of all our expiation before God; it is the abode of our reconciliation.”²⁴ It is through the death of Jesus Christ, reconciliation between God and man is affected.²⁵ The theology of the Cross is meant to destroy the self-confidence of humans so that they will allow God to do everything for them. Therefore, the theology of the cross leads a person from

²² Ibid.

²³ http://www.opc.org/new_horizons/NH05/10b.html (accessed Feb 8, 2010).

²⁴ Heinrich Bornkam, *Luther’s World of Thoughts* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1958) 174.

²⁵ “Augustana,” *The Luther project*, n.d. <http://www.augustana.edu/religion/lutherproject/HEIDELBU/Theology%20of%20the%20Cross.htm>. (accessed March 18, 2010).

moralistic activism to pure receptivity.²⁶ Also, the theology of the cross defines repentance as contrition and faith, rather than contrition and human determination.²⁷ Therefore the preaching of the law here is intended to produce contrition and sorrow over sin, while the preaching of the gospel is intended to produce faith in the redemption that Jesus offers. Repentance for sins is therefore not a single act that a Christian performs one time, but defines the totality of Christian life.²⁸ This is why the theology of the cross never gets a person past the cross. The preaching of the law therefore is not intended to provide one with a list of do's and don'ts for living a Christ-like life (as in the theology of glory). Instead the preaching of the law is intended to continually drive one back to the cross over and over again. Out of the gospel, one's faith is strengthened, and out of this faith the good works that define a Christ-like life are produced.²⁹

The question therefore would be to ask if Luther's theology of the cross would make sense to a society of Christian people that is in the midst of violence. At this point, it would be apt to discuss the history of Naga churches' involvement in peace work in the light of the theology of the cross. In February of 1957 the Naga Church Ministers' Mission for Peace (NCMMP) was formed. It was made up of a group of Naga church leaders.³⁰ This group was formed in the midst of violence and human rights abuses upon the Naga people by the Indian army in their fight against the Naga national workers. The NCMMP then made an appeal to the people through the Churches: "The vision of the

26 Ibid.

27 Don Matzat, "A Theology of Glory and a Theology of the Cross," *Issues, Etc.* 3, no.2 (1998) nd. <http://www.issuesetc.org/resource/journals/gloryvs.htm>. (accessed March 18, 2010).

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 O.M. Rao, *Longri Ao: A Biography* (Guwahati: Christian Literature Centre, 1986), 79.

crucified Lord has already become blurred to many Christians. How can we take up arms against one another when we know that we are standing under the shadow of the Cross on which the Prince of Peace was crucified?”

Luther’s perspective on faith and works would be helpful in helping us understand his theology of the cross. In the context mentioned above and the question by the NCMMP to the Naga Christians for taking up arms, perhaps giving up arms would be a step of faith. For Luther, therefore to believe and trust in the saving grace of God is also to receive the power authentically to address evil in the world.³¹ Luther also believed that love flowing from faith is powerful, spontaneous and realistic. Therefore the center of Christian life for Luther is the worship of God through the proclamation of the gospel and service to the neighbor.³² Therefore Luther’s *theologia crucis* places Christ as central in our relationship to God as well as with people. In this light we will further see Luther’s understanding of peace and the ministry of peacemaking.

Peace with God and Peace with Men

Luther understood “peace” in several ways: i) Peace with God (Rom 5:1) This peace is broken by sin. ii) Peace with oneself, which a person has through this joy in the Holy Spirit, through hope and patience, and iii) Peace with one’s neighbor, which a person has through the fulfillment and upbuilding of mutual love.³³ In relation to Peace with one’s neighbor Luther explains that “this peace is broken by contempt for the

31 Elizabeth L. Gerhardt, “Martin Luther’s Theology of the Cross: Cause or Cure for Domestic Violence?” (Th.D dissertation, Boston University School of Theology, 2000), 134.

32 Ibid.

33 Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works* 25, Trans Tillmanns, W. G. and Preus, J. A. O., Jr (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002), 108.

weakness of the other party and through the violation of the conscience of those who have peace with God and with themselves through faith and patience, but not with their neighbors.”³⁴ Thus for Luther, love is the underlying factor that helps a human being see the need to let others live in peace.³⁵

In his commentary on the epistle of Galatians 1:3: *Grace be to you, and peace, from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ*, Luther explains that “grace remits sin, and peace quiets the conscience.”³⁶ The death and resurrection of Christ has overcome the sin and conscience that torments us now and forever. Luther firmly believes that only Christians possess this victorious knowledge given from above. These two terms, *grace* and *peace*, constitute Christianity for Luther.³⁷ Grace is what brings about the “remission of sins, peace and a clear conscience.” Luther constantly mentions that sin is not canceled by lawful living, for no person is able to live up to the Law. In fact, for Luther, “the Law reveals guilt, fills the conscience with terror, and drives men to despair.”³⁸ Thus there is nothing that can take away sin except the grace of God. However he does mention that in actual living, it is not so easy to persuade oneself that by grace alone (in opposition to every other means), we obtain the forgiveness of our sins and peace with God.³⁹

Luther constantly draws upon his personal experiences of being frustrated at not being able to find peace and live with a pure conscience through good works and the

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid, 507

36 Martin Luther, *Project Wittenberg: Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*. Trans, Theodore Graebner (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1949) 9-18.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

established religious exercises'.⁴⁰ Luther wrote in his commentary on the epistle to Galatians that he had no rest for his weary bones unless he clung to the word of grace. Luther explains that the apostle Paul does not wish the Galatians grace and peace from the emperor, or from kings, or from governors, but from God the Father. He wishes them heavenly peace, the kind of which Jesus spoke when He said, "Peace I leave unto you: my peace I give unto you." This kind of peace is contrary to worldly peace which provides quiet enjoyment of life and possessions.⁴¹ But in affliction, particularly in the hour of death, the grace and peace of the world will not deliver us. However, the grace and peace of God alone will grant that peace in our hour of death. They make a person strong and courageous to bear and to overcome all difficulties, even death itself, because we have the victory of Christ's death and the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins.⁴²

The Gospel as a Promise of Reconciliation

The proper understanding of the gospel is of utmost importance to Luther in every aspect of life – personal as well as communal. For Luther, the gospel is most simply, “God’s promise of forgiveness, acceptance, and reconciliation.”⁴³ Luther explains that “God’s activity appears most unmistakably in the forgiveness, acceptance, and love that characterize the Christian gospel”. Early in his career Luther extended his law/gospel distinction to take up questions about the Church and Christian’s relationship to civil

40 Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (1535), “Project Wittenberg,” <http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/luther/gal/web/gal1-01.html> (accessed Feb 19, 2010).

41 Ibid.

42 Martin Luther, *Project Wittenberg :Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*. Trans, Theodore Graebner (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1949), 9-18.

43 Martin Luther, “The Smalcald Articles”, in *the Book of Concord*, trans. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959) 303.

authority. By including temporal affairs in the purview of his theology, Luther shifted the focus of the Christian life from churchly activity to the mundane aspects of everyday affairs.⁴⁴

For Luther, good works encompassed everything done in faith – whether in the church or out of it.⁴⁵ Thus Luther re-defined the traditional and medieval concept of *good works* which basically denoted specific acts of spiritual discipline or charity by which one earned or completed God’s grace.⁴⁶ Therefore for Luther, if Christians are confronted by a government that fails to execute its God ordained responsibilities, Christians are first to confess their own part in the failure and ask for forgiveness; second, to pray for God for justice; and third, to protest the abuses of the authorities, whether temporal or religious.⁴⁷ Luther interprets Genesis 3:15 in a Christo-centric manner and called this proclamation as the “earliest gospel” in the Old Testament that proleptically anticipates the gospel in the New: “I shall put enmity between you and the woman and your seed and her seed. And I will crush your head, and you will crush its heel.”⁴⁸ As biblical background for this gospel proclamation, Luther first takes with utmost seriousness the “enmity” and “crushing” that Genesis reveals about the cosmic strife between God and Satan.⁴⁹ William Lazareth makes an observation about Luther’s reading of the Old Testament more soberly in the light of its New Testament, rather than the traditionally interpreted allegorically in terms of a rebellious angel’s celestial banishment: “Satan has been hurled from heaven and has

44 Martin Luther, *Treatise on Good Works* (1520) *Luther’s Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehmann (St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia and Fortress, 1955-1986) 44:15-144.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Luther, “A Sincere Admonition,” *Luther’s Works*, 44:66-67

48 William H. Lazareth, *Christians in Society: Luther, the Bible, and Social Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001) 91.

49 Ibid, 92

been condemned because of this sin.”⁵⁰ Lazareth also adds that Scripture never reveals sin’s origin but only its divine defeat in line with Luther’s understanding that when we make statements about Satan, we should fall back on other Scripture proofs that are pertinent, sure and strong.⁵¹ Of this sort are John 8:44; ‘The devil is a murderer and the father of lies’; ‘He did not abide in the truth’; 1 Peter 5:8; ‘He goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour’; and John 16:11: ‘The prince of this world is judged.’⁵² Luther is of the view that God speaks to Satan for the benefit of Adam and Eve “that they may hear this judgement and be comforted by the realization that God is the enemy of that being which inflicted so severe a wound on man.” Lazareth observes that it is in this context of “grace and mercy beginning to shine forth from the midst of wrath which sin and disobedience aroused” starts the simultaneous interaction of God’s mercy and wrath that so fascinates the dialectical mind of Luther.⁵³

Luther uses the ancient military metaphor of *Christus Victor* in proclaiming a warring Christ who will deliver God’s children from Satan in a divinely led “victory against the enemy that deceived and conquered human nature.”⁵⁴ Lazareth therefore argues that amplifying the enmity between God and Satan, this patristic motif of God’s mighty victory by “the Crusher,” Jesus Christ, is afforded central place in Luther’s portrayal of Gen 3:15 as a “clear promise” and “a revelation of the depth of God’s goodness.” On the one hand, it trusts in the Son of God’s humble incarnation in Jesus the

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works I* (1535) ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), 189.

53 Lazareth, 92.

54 Martin Luther, *Luthers Works Vol I*, 189.

son. On the other hand, it anticipates the Savior's bloody atonement. According to Luther, in "bruising His heel" in our stead at Golgotha, as it were, "the Son of God had become a sacrifice to achieve these things for us, to take away sin, to swallow up death, and to restore the lost obedience. These treasures we possess in Christ, but in hope."⁵⁵

Luther ties the historically grounded gospel, centered in "Jesus Christ and him crucified," with Pauline opposition to the law as the sole way of salvation for sinners (2 Tim. 2:15). Luther describes the original state of humanity's pristine righteousness, "the Word which the Lord has spoken to Adam was, 'do not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil' and that for Adam, this Word was Gospel and Law; it was his worship; it was his service and the obedience he could offer God in this state of innocence."⁵⁶ However after their fall into original sin in Genesis 3, Adam and Eve were explicitly judged by God's law (the accusing form of God's will) and promised salvation by God's gospel (the redemptive form of God's grace). God's holy will was then paradoxically proclaimed and perceived as both hating sin while loving sinners. In God's mercy, Adam and Eve were enabled to live in the hope of the gospel: "Although their flesh must die for the time being, nevertheless, because of the promised Son of God, who would crush the head of the devil, they hope for the resurrection of the flesh after the temporal death of the flesh, just as we do."⁵⁷ Christians are therefore called to follow the examples of "Adam and Eve in living a life of faith and hope in Christ – they in the Christ to come and we in the crucified and resurrected Christ who has come – and thereby become truly

55 Ibid, 194,197.

56 Ibid, 146.

57 Ibid, 198.

holy and righteous. Without Christ the world has no final hope.”⁵⁸

In the light of Luther’s understanding of the gospel, as an answer to the broken relationship between God and humanity, and also the gospel as the answer to the sinful nature of man I would like to mention about “cheap grace” mentioned by theologian Miroslav Volf. He writes that the term “cheap grace” gained prominence in theological circles through the Kairos Document, written by theologians critical of the South African regime before dismantling of apartheid.⁵⁹ Volf in one of his articles defines cheap grace as “the readiness to receive love from God with no sense of obligation toward one’s neighbors.” Significantly, the term “cheap grace” was coined by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German theologian who for religious reasons participated in the resistance against the Nazi regime.⁶⁰ Volf argues that cheap reconciliation sets “justice” and “peace” against each other as alternatives. He continues that to pursue cheap reconciliation means to give up on the struggles of freedom, to renounce the pursuit of justice, to put up with oppression.⁶¹

Paul Althaus argues that Luther’s theology of the cross “transcends all earlier theology through the radical seriousness with which he allows Christ to suffer both hell and being totally forsaken by God,” that Luther consistently treats Christ’s passion in relationship to man’s suffering (*Anfechtung*) under the wrath of God; and from this viewpoint, he must be able to understand and recognize this passion as the completely

58 Lazareth, 94.

59 Miroslav Volf, *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy and Conflict Transformation*, ed. Raymond G. Helmick, S.J., and Rodney L. Petersen (Philadelphia & London: Templeton Foundation Press, 2002) 34-35.

60 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. R.H. Fuller (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 45-47, 59.

61 Volf, 34-35.

adequate help in his own distress.⁶² For Luther the hell is not just a future condition or place but also a present reality which a terrified conscience experiences under the wrath of God. Thus Christ who has experienced both hell and being forsaken by God is directly involved in the distress of all men under the wrath of God and their distress is directly involved in his passion.

Carl Trueman also argues that Luther does not ‘restrict the theology of the cross to an objective revelation of God’ but that Luther also sees it as ‘the key to understanding Christian ethics and experience.’⁶³ Foundational to both is the role of faith: “to the eyes of unbelief, the cross is nonsense; it is what it seems to be—the crushing, filthy death of a man cursed by God.” That is how the unbelieving mind interprets the cross—foolishness to Greeks and an offence to Jews, depending on whether our chosen sin is intellectual arrogance or moral self-righteousness. To the eyes opened by faith, however, the cross is seen as it really is. For Luther, God is revealed in the hidden ness of the external form. And faith is understood to be a gift of God, not a power inherent in the human mind itself.⁶⁴

Luther’s theology of the cross is governed by the apostolic gospel, which glories in the cross of the redeeming Lord.⁶⁵ Luther also wrote: “all that Jesus does in freeing us from captivity has a clear purpose: service in righteousness, innocence and blessedness” and added that “Christ is our abstraction and we are his concretion.”⁶⁶ Altman argues that

62 Althaus, 208.

63 <http://www.theologian.org.uk/churchhistory/lutherstheologyofthecross.html> (accessed Feb 27, 2010).

64 Ibid.

65 Martin Luther, *The Book of Concord* (1529) eds. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 435.

66 *Luther’s Works* 11 ed, Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), 318

Luther abandoned the medieval figure of the imitation of Christ and substitutes another much more radical expression: “Conformation with Christ.”⁶⁷ “Suffering,” according to Luther, “is the real and royal attire of the Christian.” The phrase, “conformation with Christ,” therefore signifies that” for ones who believe, he/she is free from sin and captivity, this new life expresses itself in conformation with the cross of Christ, in the same descending movement of the love of God to the depths of love and suffering, in the compassionate act of self-giving, in the disposition to carry other’s loads, and in shared loneliness.”⁶⁸

67 Altman, 21.

68 Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE

LUTHER'S THEOLOGY OF THE TWO KINGDOMS

God's Twofold Rule

In Luther's work on *Temporal Authority: To what extent it should be obeyed*, we see Luther's explanation on his paradoxical teaching on God's sovereign but highly dialectical response to all of this cosmic evil and human sin.¹ Lazareth argues that after Luther emulated the cosmic dualism of Paul and Augustine with his own early teaching on what later became identified as the "two kingdoms" (*Zwei Reiche*), Luther went on to complement this inaugurated eschatology with a very dialectical historical corollary. It is none other than God's twofold rule or governance/government (*Zweierlei Regimente*) both within and between the two intersecting realms of creation and redemption through Caesar and Christ with law and gospel for Christian service and salvation.²

Luther divides the children of Abraham and all mankind into two classes, the first belonging to the kingdom of God, the second to the kingdom of the world.³ In his own words, "those who belong to the kingdom of God are all the true believers who are in Christ and under Christ, for Christ is King and Lord in the kingdom of God," according to Psalm 2:6 and all of Scripture.⁴ Luther further adds that for this reason Christ came into the world, that he might begin God's kingdom and establish it in the world. Luther

¹Lazareth, 110 and *Martin Luther: Selected Political Writings*, ed., J.M. Porter (New York: University Press of America, 1988) 51-59.

²Lazareth 110.

³Luther, *Selected Political Writings*, 53.

⁴ Ibid.

quotes Jesus' answer to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of the world, but everyone who is of the truth hears my voice" (John 18:36-37). Luther also adds that Jesus calls the gospel a gospel of the kingdom of God; because it teaches, governs, and upholds God's kingdom.⁵

For Luther therefore God rules in a twofold way at least insofar as his rule are visible to the eyes of faith. But the ruling that is visible does not exhaust God's lordship. Luther distinguishes between the hidden and the revealed God.⁶ It is according to his majesty that God works all in all, but this omnipotent lordship – like majesty in general – cannot be comprehended by us men.⁷ To elaborate further, it is in this context, God has established two governments, the spiritual and the secular, or earthly, temporal and physical.⁸ The secular government serves to preserve external secular righteousness; it thus also preserves this physical, earthly, temporal life and thereby preserves the world. The spiritual government helps men to achieve true Christian righteousness and therewith eternal life; it thus serves the redemption of the world.⁹ This spiritual government brings the kingdom of God into being.¹⁰ This is "the kingdom of grace."¹¹

God's grace is present in Christ, and so this kingdom is Christ's kingdom and Christ is its "king and lord."¹² Christ exercises his government by bringing grace and the gospel to men who are in bondage to sin and death. This grace includes the forgiveness of sins and therewith the freedom of the children of God: freedom from the condemning

5 Ibid, 54.

6 Paul Althaus, *The Ethics of Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972) 45.

7 Martin Luther, *Martin Luther's Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar, 1883) 252.

8 Althaus, *Ethics of Luther*, 45.

9 Martin Luther, *Luther's Works* 46, p99.

10 For Luther's understanding of the Kingdom of God, further references can be made especially on *Luther's Sermon on Matthew 18:23ff* preached in 1524.

11 Martin Luther, *Luther's Works* 45:27.

12 Ibid 88; *Luther's Works* 14:19-23.

law, freedom from God's wrath, and at the same time freedom from all demonic powers of fate and of this created world.¹³

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

Luther explains that the forgiveness of sins comes to men through Christianity in the preached word, as well the sacraments and brotherly love which all comes under Christ's government.¹⁴ Christianity is thus both the place in which Christ exercises his government and the means by which he exercises it. The Holy Spirit works through preaching to move men to faith.¹⁵ When this occurs, the kingdom of God is present for and powerful in a man. Christ's government is thus nothing else than the lordship which he exercises in a man's heart through his Spirit.¹⁶ The only power at work here is the power of the Spirit which overcomes the heart and brings it to faith. Thus the constitutive element of Christ's lordship is freedom.¹⁷ Force is not used in this kingdom; rather everything takes place voluntarily through the compelling power of the Spirit which is inherent in the word of the gospel.¹⁸ This power is the "spiritual sword" of God's word.¹⁹

For Luther, secular includes much more than political authorities and governments; it includes everything that contributes to the preservation of this earthly life, especially marriage and family, the entire household, as well as property, business, and all the stations and vocations which God has instituted.²⁰ Therefore I am proposing

¹³ Paul Althaus, *The Ethics of Luther*, 46.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works* 45, 93; 100 – 1; *Luther's Works* 24: 228.

¹⁷ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works* 54, 199.

¹⁸ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works* 14: 55.

¹⁹ Paul Althaus, 46.

²⁰ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works* 21:109.

that Luther would have included the ministry of Reconciliation as one of the vocation/calling of a Christian. Luther distinguishes all other earthly calling and vocation from the spiritual reality of grace, of the word of God, and of faith and describes it as an “external matter,”²¹ that is, related to our bodies, and also as the “secular sword.”

Luther also points out that if we are children of God, we must show ourselves to be one and do what God our Father wants us to do towards our neighbors i.e., to love them just as Christ loved us enough to reconcile us to God and bringing us into His favor by His sacrificial love.²² On the same note Luther encourages the German Christians to be “a reconciler and a mediator between your neighbors.”²³ In the light of Luther’s writings on the calling of Christian to everything that God instituted, I would also like to make mention of Stanley S. Harakas who writes about forgiveness and reconciliation from an Orthodox perspective. Harakas describes that historically “the Sacrament of Reconciliation has been a continuing factor in the spiritual life of the Church and the locus for forgiveness in its life.” He states that while in the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox tradition and in Roman Catholic practice it has a “full sacramental status,” in some of the Protestant traditions such as the Lutheran and Episcopal churches the Sacrament of Reconciliation has existed and has been practiced as a “pastoral rite.” More informally, “prayer for forgiveness of sins confessed” – is present in many other church traditions.²⁴ However, the forgiving action of the Holy Spirit appears not to be limited to sacramental and pastoral practice. This thought seems to echo Luther’s thought on his

21 Paul Althaus, 49; *Luther’s Works* 30:76.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Stanley S. Harakas, *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy and Conflict Transformation*, 64.

expositions on the book of Romans where he writes that “the way of peace, of the heart is found in God alone.”²⁵ Harakas also elaborates that “forgiveness” has numerous less dimensions, which form the other pole of reconciliation, the Christian life as a whole and quotes John 3:8, “the Spirit blows where it will” and explains that “forgiveness is a good work that is an essential characteristic of Christian living, since the Lord’s Prayer indicates that our own forgiveness is a condition of our willingness to forgive others” (Matt 6:12). John Chrysostom, an early church father challenges believers “to assume a stance of forgiveness toward others who have injured them for the sake of their own forgiveness by God.”²⁶ For Chrysostom, “to have a human soul” necessarily implies a readiness for forgiveness. Though the sense of “justice abused” often makes forgiveness difficult, the thrust of this position is that granting forgiveness to others is the only way to foster the opposite pole of growth.²⁷

During the time of Luther, the Augustinian Order and the Catholic Church believed that grace was achieved through some sort of action on man’s part. In other words, it was commonly believed that to receive grace required something of man. Luther however moved toward a more personalized concept of grace, which was the personal appearance of the Holy Spirit within the believer. Luther not only moved away but also expanded this concept of personal grace into his theology of the cross.

²⁵ Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans in Luther’s Works: 25*, ed. Hilton C. Oswald (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972) 29.

²⁶ *On Matthew, Homily xix. Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994) 10:136.

²⁷ Harakas, 65.

Track Two Diplomacy: A Proposal for Nagaland

Before I discuss my proposal for track two diplomacy as a model for relational engagement in Nagaland, I would like to deliberate on a question that Rodney Petersen asks in one of his writings: “How do we find the courage to work for reconciliation, not in the abstract but where it is most meaningful, with those immediately around us?”²⁸ In the light of Luther’s thought that the church is called to act as a conscience to its civil leaders, I want to discuss the development of Track II diplomacy and how helpful it could be in the peace building process in Nagaland. This study will of course be done in the light of Luther’s theology of two kingdoms and his understanding of the theology of the cross to help Naga Christian leaders (political as well as religious) and its churches to be more effective in building a bridge between the state and the church in peace building efforts in Nagaland.

Rodney Petersen observes that Track II diplomacy has developed over the past quarter century, “as a part of the growing NGO movement and often in response to the unique regional conflict that have broken open since the end of the Cold War in 1989.”²⁹ Olga Botcharova argues for the critical role of track two diplomacy in dealing with contemporary conflicts in her article, *Implementation of Track Two Diplomacy*.³⁰ Authors Davies and Kaufman writes: “Second track, or “citizens” diplomacy maybe broadly defined as the bringing together of professionals, opinion leaders or other currently or potentially influential individuals from communities in conflict, without official

28 Rodney L. Petersen, “Developing a Theology of Reconciliation” (Lecture and a Chapter Handout, Boston University School of Theology, Spring 2009), 17.

29 Petersen, extract: *Religion and Multi Track Diplomacy*, 529.

30 Olga, Botcharova, extract: *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, eds. Rodney L. Petersen and Raymond Helmick, 303.

representative status, to work together to understand better the dynamics underlying the conflict and how its transformation for sustainable development might be promoted.”³¹

Olga Botcharova presents a particular approach to crafting and implementing peace-building initiatives from a track two perspective.³² She derives this perspective from an explicit recognition of the importance of “perceptual, social, psychological, and spiritual dimension of peace building.” This approach recognizes that attending to the relationships among the people ravaged by conflict is essential to achieving a peace that is sustainable. Olga further observes that religious leaders and laity are identified as having to play a central role in resolving conflicts in many parts of the world.³³ I see this approach as a more holistic approach to peace building because it involves a responsible group of people in the society and not just some policy makers or bureaucrats.

Luther uses the life of Jesus and the cross as the model for Christians to respond to our suffering and to our existential reality. It is in this light that we need to look at peace building efforts. The cross represents suffering but the result of Christ’s response brought about new life which would not have come about without the power of forgiveness. In his essay, *Holiness Become Generosity*, Walter Brueggemann argues for purity as relational holiness.³⁴ Even though Nagaland is very popularly known as a Christian state, our land has been filled with violence. Our people have certainly not related to each other in holiness, neither have our responses to each other’s suffering been in forgiveness. While the church has not been very faithful in being the prophetic voice to its leaders and

³¹ Petersen, extract: *Religion and Multi Track Diplomacy*, 529.

³² Olga Botcharova, 303.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Walter Brueggemann, *Vision for a New Church and a New Century*, Part 2: *Holiness Become Generosity*. *Union Quarterly Review*, Vol. 54: 2000, 45-64.

people, the state also has been guilty of participating in perpetrating violence and disunity amongst our own people. Perhaps the concept of relational holiness should be used as a model for politicians, religious leaders, professionals and academicians in the Naga society to collectively try to bring about a change in regards to violence, political dialogue with the Indian government and to mediate between the warring factions to practice forgiveness and non violence. While relational holiness is a theological and a biblical concept, it does correspond to the theory of track two diplomacy.

Stanely Harakas' thought on forgiveness in a non ecclesial setting is helpful in a situation like Nagaland. He mentions that "non ecclesial settings may not want to speak of sin, but that is what all those struggling for reconciliation encounter at every step of the process."³⁵ He mentions that it would be foolish to assume otherwise. While Luther sees God's love as the source of peace with oneself and with others, Walter Brueggemann begins relational holiness with biblical affirmation of the holiness of God: "Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy" (Leviticus 19:2).³⁶ Holiness therefore, according to Brueggeman is best understood as an "un-anxious and relational engagement which bears upon our effort to understand the nature of reconciliation."³⁷ Since reconciliation is the desired goal for a clergy or a laity who is committed to the work of peace building, the concept and practice of forgiveness should be emphasized for facilitators of track two diplomacy in their particular setting, even though we are keeping the case of Nagaland in mind in this paper. Olga mentions that without forgiveness, there is little hope for

³⁵ Harakas, extract: *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, eds. Raymond Helmick, S.J. and Rodney L. Petersen. 73.

³⁶ Brueggemann, 45-6.

³⁷ Petersen, extract: *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, 19.

sustainable peace, but achieving it is a formidable challenge.³⁸

It certainly has been a formidable challenge for few Nagas who have been relentlessly working towards a peaceful Nagaland for the past many years in the midst of violence, skepticism and chaos. After many decades of violence the Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR) has been instrumental in helping to bring the different factions of Nagaland that has been in conflict to sign the historic Covenant of Reconciliation in June 14-15, 2009 at Chiang Mai, Thailand. Along Longkumer, a naga journalist writes that, “one of the most positive political outcome of the reconciliation process in Nagaland has been the emergence of the Joint Working Group (JWG) comprising of members from the three Naga national factions NSCN (IM), NSCN (K) and FGN with the main task of facilitating a meeting at the highest level.”³⁹ Along also however observes that there is a need for synergy among all the different players that make up Naga civil society and polity. Olga Botcharova mentions a framework for the possibility of track two diplomacy that could help for a setting like Nagaland. She mentions that “forgiveness can be fostered through thoughtful, sensitive, facilitated dialogue among the parties to a conflict.”⁴⁰ Joseph Montville describes track two diplomacy as “an unofficial interaction between members of adversarial groups or nations to develop strategies, influence public opinion, and organize human and material resources in ways that might help resolve their conflict.”⁴¹ He notes that track two diplomacy is in no way a substitute for official, formal track one government-to-government or leader-to-leader relationships. Rather, it is

38 Olga, extract: Ibid, 303.

39 Along Longkumer, http://www.morungexpress.com/political_affairs/34234.html (accessed March 28, 2010).

40 Olga Botcharova, 303.

41 Ibid, 284.

designed to assist official leaders by compensating for the constraints imposed upon them by the understandable need for leaders to be strong in the face of the enemy.⁴² He insists that, “on a more general level, it seeks to promote an environment in a political community, through the education of public opinion, that would make it safer for political leaders to take risks for peace.”⁴³ Montville further notes that a series of⁴⁴ facilitated workshops that bring together representative of groups in conflict for dialogues that target relational transformation and the integration of the society makes it possible to undermine negative stereotypes and rehumanize relationships between the parties. The FNR in Nagaland has been doing its best to be a source of facilitating dialogues between the warring factions which I believe can be called a model for track two diplomacy.

The idea of “rehumanizing relationships between parties” by Montville echoes along the lines of Brueggemann’s idea of relational holiness and engagement. Echoing the thoughts of Brueggemann, Petersen argues that the emphasis in the New Testament is to be with and for others in ways that heal and says that “peculiarity of God’s people is marked by relational engagement” (Ephesians 4:17-15:1). As Christians in the midst of conflict, therefore Petersen would argue that for Naga Christians in conflict with each other, we are to “live by a new ethic, which is to speak truth, manage anger, share and talk in ways that builds up one another.”⁴⁵

42 Ibid.

43 Joseph Montville, *The Arrow and the Olive Branch: A Case for Track Two Diplomacy. The Psychodynamics of International Relationships* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1990), 163.

44 Olga, 285.

45 Petersen, extract: *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, 19.

CHAPTER FOUR

RECONCILIATION AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION OF NAGALAND

A Strategy for Building Social Capacity

Luther's positions on the political, economic, and social issues of his day were "predicated on his insistence that there was a Christian responsibility in all these arenas."¹ Paul Altman observes that Luther would never have defended the autonomy and self regulation of the economy, the political system, and the social order disconnected from the gospel. Luther however did argue that "the church as an institution should be free from political, economic, and social pretensions and privileges, and that Christians who held office could dedicate themselves as "justified priests" to tasks in the political, economic, and social arenas."² Luther was further persuaded that these arenas were not autonomous; on the contrary, they were subject to God's will. Everything done within them, using human reason must be in the service of love and must take into account the needs of the people, the establishment of law, and the promotion of justice.³

Late Longri Ao, a religious leader in Nagaland who is still talked about due to his involvement in peace work in Nagaland during the 1950's and 1960's was of the opinion that "love of country is certainly a great virtue and so the task of Christians is to fill it with Christian meaning."⁴ He also elaborated in a circular letter to the Naga people that if

1Altmann, 9.

2Ibid

3Ibid

4O.M. Rao, 76.

the Church failed to harness the energies of patriotism to the true service of the country a narrow and selfish nationalism may use religion for its own ends, which would ultimately lead people to a downfall.⁵

A brief discussion on different Christian traditions on matters of church and state would help us move to a more in-depth discussion of Luther in context. In discussing the reformed tradition, Lukas Vischer states that the “Reformation was primarily concerned with the life of the church, but from the beginning the witness of the Reformers extended to the whole of society.”⁶ God's will had to be respected and followed in all realms of life. Society had to be so ordered that justice could prevail. From the beginning, Calvin regularly intervened with the magistrate of Geneva to advocate for justice and the protection of the poor.⁷ The Barmen Declaration affirms a genuinely Reformed conviction when it states: "We reject the false doctrine, as though there were areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other lords, areas in which we would not need justification and sanctification through him."⁸

On the other hand, the Anabaptists holds the view that a “true Christian” cannot occupy a governmental office.⁹ These two apparently contradictory statements illustrate a tension between the Anabaptist and Reformed traditions. These two traditions represent two important trends in church-state relationships: the withdrawal or non-participation type and the transformationist or conversionist model. The withdrawal or non-

5 Altmann, 9

6 <http://warc.ch/dt/el3/10html> (accessed April 15, 2010).

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Richard Kyle, “Anabaptist and Reformed Attitudes Toward Civil Government: A Factor in Political Involvement.” <http://www.directionjournal.org/article/?514> (accessed April 16, 2010).

participation type approximates Niebuhr's "Christ Against Culture" model and the transformationist or conversionist pattern resembles his "Christ the Transformer of Culture" model.¹⁰ The withdrawal type generally takes a negative view toward culture and the state. While accentuating the Lordship of Christ over believing communities, this model refuses to compromise with the world by participating in the political order.¹¹ On the other hand, the transformationist approach, with its principal origins in the Reformed tradition, bears a similarity to Catholicism in that both positions recognize that the church has a responsibility for society and the state and thus must express its ethical concerns in the political arena.¹² Robert D. Knudsen states that "though the Reformed tradition has produced many articulate political theorists, John Calvin's ideas remain most representative in that religious leaders have taken as positive an attitude toward culture in general and government in particular as Calvin."¹³ He argues that in Calvinism "there is no dichotomy, no dualism between Christianity and culture. Because of its penetrating insight into the doctrine of creation, the universality of divine revelation, and the place of law, it is impossible for Calvinism to think in terms of a simple, unqualified distinction between the divine and human spheres of activities."¹⁴

Thomas G. Sanders writes about another church-state model which is the separationist type. The withdrawal and separationist approaches to civil government have similar origins and much in common, but they are not identical and should not be

¹⁰ Thomas G. Sanders, *Protestant Concepts of Church and State* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), 20,21; H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), 40-1, 45-82, 191-229.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Robert D. Knudsen, "Calvinism as a Cultural Force," in *John Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Michigan, 1982) 1.

¹⁴ Ibid.

confused. He mentions that both tendencies are indebted to the Anabaptists.¹⁵ The withdrawal model is best illustrated by the Anabaptists and Mennonites, who spent most of their history in central and eastern European countries where religious freedom came not from sectarian pressure but from the benevolence of governments.¹⁶ The Puritan separatists, especially the Baptists, lived in the Anglo-Saxon world where religious freedom owes much to the prudent yielding of government to sectarian demands for religious liberty. The Anabaptists lived quietly and hoped for the best.¹⁷ The separatists, influenced by Calvinist thought and the opportunity for success, seized the initiative and struggled for their political rights. Though both the withdrawal and separationist models have a primary concern for religious liberty, the second approach has been more active in civic and political life than the former.¹⁸

John T. McNeil and George M. Marsden are of the opinion that “although John Calvin opposed medieval Catholicism in most areas of his religious thought, in his political theory the first enemy was Anabaptism”.¹⁹ Hans J. Hillerbrand mentions that in regards to the origin of government, “both the Anabaptist and Reformed traditions affirm that the state is ordained by God.” Although the Anabaptist attitude is not totally negative toward the state, it is less positive than that of the Reformed tradition. According to Anabaptist thinking, the origin of the state is directly related to the Flood and thereby to human sin. Because sin would make orderly living impossible, the essence of government

¹⁵ Sanders, *Protestant Concepts*, 166; 224-5.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹John T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954),331-350; George M. Marsden, “America’s Christian Origins: Puritan New England as a Case Study” in *John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World*, ed., W. Stanford Reid (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 249-54.

is its function of maintaining order. This task of punishing evildoers and protecting the weak requires force and coercion.²⁰ Robert Friedmann responds that for this reason “the Anabaptists regarded the state sub-Christian because in contrast, it was the church which represented the Kingdom of God.”²¹ A radical dualism, distinguishing the church from the world, helped to determine the Anabaptist view of the state. They believe that the world is essentially evil and diametrically opposed to the Kingdom of Christ. The true Christian, therefore, does not have anything to do with the world except through missionary effort, as required by the Great Commission.²² Robert Friedmann writes that “such a dualism establishes two distinct realities which are incompatible with each other. While the church belongs to one Kingdom, the state belongs to another. Both the church and state are equally valid within their respective realms and both have their principles and standards, but these two entities remain separate.”²³ As a result, the Anabaptists rejected the medieval vision of a single Christian society with its concept of a government-established church. Because the church consists of committed disciples, it must be separate from the state and have freedom within the political and social order.²⁴ As advocates of liberty for the church, which laid the basis for the future disestablishment of religion, the Anabaptists were essentially calling for a government of limited powers, with no authority to dictate religious beliefs or practices.²⁵

Luther on the other hand distinguishes clearly between the church and the state by

20 Hans J. Hillerbrand, “The Anabaptist View of the State,” *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 33 (1958), 84-5, 87.

21 Robert Friedmann, *The Theology of Anabaptism* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1973) 36-46

22 Robert Friedmann, 36-46 and Hillerbrand, *Anabaptist View*, 97.

23 Robert Kreider, “The Anabaptists and the State” in *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision*, ed. Guy F. Hershberger (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1957) 191; Sanders, *Protestant Concepts*, 81-2, 93.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

ascribing discrete functions and the means for carrying them out to each one.²⁶ In his work *Render Unto Ceaser* Luther argues that God relates to human beings in two very different ways: one is through the church for the sake of eternal life and the other is through the state for this life. Both institutions however find their origins and authority in God.²⁷ In the light of Luther's understanding of the church and the state we will now discuss Luther in his context and if we could come to an understanding of God's will for His people both in church and in society in Nagaland.

Luther in Context

On April 19, 1525, Luther wrote his *Admonition to Peace: A Reply to the Twelve Articles of the Peasants of Swabia*. The objective for Luther in writing this article is clear in that Luther "wished to exhort to peace and understanding between the parties."²⁸ Luther clearly opposed the peasants' insurrection and is convinced that the insurrection is never justified, no matter how good the cause that motivated it. His argument was that; because in an insurrection, irrational values prevail that make it possible to establish justice.²⁹ Luther also, however did not in any way justified the princes. In fact, he accused the princes of being responsible for injustices that were intolerable owing to their cheating and robbing the people so they may lead a life of luxury and extravagance.³⁰ Luther warned the princes that the false security and stubborn perversity would break

²⁶ Luther, *Luther's Works* 45: 81-129.

²⁷ Ibid, 91.

²⁸ Walter Altmann, 125.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Martin Luther, *Admonition to Peace, A Reply to the Twelves Articles of the Peasants in Swabia*. *Luther's Works* 46:17-43 (1525).

their necks.³¹ Luther admonished the princes and encouraged them to enter into agreements with the peasants, to lower taxes, and to alleviate the situation.³²

Luther also admonished the peasants in using the name of Christ for their rebellion. He wrote to the peasants of Germany that the Christian has only one right: “that of suffering violence but never of perpetrating it.” He also added that since “Christians are redeemed by Christ, Christians should remain servants.”³³ Some Lutheran scholars argue that Luther’s influence on the historical events of Germany should not be overestimated because sometimes the episodes presented themselves as if Luther had been the cause of the peasants’ massacre or that he could predict the outcome of the conflict between the peasants and the princes as Luther tried to intervene in the conflict.³⁴ Luther’s treatise *Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants* came out after the peasants had already been defeated. However Walter Altmann argues that the article was not in itself a decisive element in the defeat of the peasants but that Luther did see society as hierarchically structured – a heritage from medieval times.³⁵

Franz Lau makes an observational statement as he writes that like very few other historical personages, “Luther lends himself to a host of divergent images.” Seventeenth-century Lutheran orthodoxy saw in Luther a “prophet” – the stubborn and unbendable defender of purest doctrine. Pietism saw in Luther the “convert,” who through faith and the Bible found peace with God. The Enlightenment celebrated Luther as the “liberator

31 Ibid.,19.

32 Walter Altmann, 126.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid, 128.

35 Ibid, 129.

from narrow-mindedness”³⁶ that the doctrinal authoritarianism of the church generated. Pan-Germanists lauded Luther as a “national German hero.” Psychiatrist Erik H. Erikson attempted to explain Luther on the basis of his relationship with his father.³⁷ And post-Tridentine Catholicism came to see in Luther the very incarnation of the devil.³⁸

Altmann also adds that while Luther “did break with the tutelage of the church over the political realm which was a significant contribution to his time, he left the basic hierarchical structure of society as a whole unchallenged.” This must have been the reason for Luther’s frequent stress on obedience toward the authorities and his aversion to insurrection.³⁹ Bornkamm on the other hand argues that Luther’s clear and sharp differentiation between the secular and the spiritual realms, which rejected the dictatorship of any ecclesiastically approved order, separated him from the social ideal of scholasticism.⁴⁰ With a categorical statement like “Christ does not concern Himself with the state or with political economy,” Luther forbade any trespassing from the spiritual realm into the secular, whether this was by way of a Christian realm into the secular, whether this was by way of a Christian natural law, as the scholastics demanded, or by means of a social reconstruction patterned after the Sermon on the Mount, as advocated by the Anabaptists.⁴¹

36 Franz Lau, *Luther*, trans. Robert H. Fischer (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 13.

37 Erik H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: Norton, 1958).

38 Walter Altmann, 134.

39 Ibid, 130.

40 Bornkamm, 260.

41 Ibid.

In one of the treatise that Luther wrote in 1520, Luther reflected on I Corinthians 12 and distinguishes between secular power and ecclesiastical power.⁴² Walter Altmann states that this distinction is already available to Luther, in the medieval notion that the pope retains two swords, with jurisdiction in the ecclesiastical sphere and also in the political sphere.⁴³ The pope's power to invest kings and emperors had provoked many conflicts during the middle Ages. Luther elaborates the distinction between the "two swords" united in the power of the pope, and strips the pope of political power.⁴⁴ Based on this context, Luther developed the concept of the priesthood of all believers and calls on the body of Christ to take up the task of stripping the institution of the church, or more precisely, the papacy, of its claim to jurisdiction in the political realm. The other idea that Luther developed in the above context is that the church authorities cannot survive independently. They are not self-sufficient but rather dependent – on the shoemaker, on the tailor, on artisans in general. Therefore because of this reason, they cannot act as if they are superior to others.⁴⁵

William H. Lazareth makes a non-apologizing apologetics for Luther's use of scripture as a relevant norm for contemporary social ethics in his book *Christians in Society: Luther, the Bible, and Social Ethics*. Lazareth frames the work as a defense of Lutheran public responsibility against the charges of Luther's "social conservatism," "law-gospel quietism," "Augustinian dualism" and "cultural defeatism."⁴⁶ Lazareth also

42 Martin Luther, *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate*, *Luther's Works* 44:123-217 (1520).

43 Altmann, 88.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid, 89.

46 Lazareth, 3-25.

eloquently and methodically saves Luther's *divisions* (between law and gospel, and between existence *coram dei* and existence *coram hominibus*) from being understood as *dualisms* or *dichotomies* as observed by Jason A. Mahn.⁴⁷ Lazareth implicitly defends critical thought, including Pauline-Augustinian-Lutheran thought, as itself a way to open “third options” between secularism and clericalism, legalism and libertinism, and a theology faithful to the Gospel and one relevant to ethical reflection.⁴⁸

Lazareth continues to argue that the “climax of Luther's theological ethic is better expressed by God's gospel than by the law.”⁴⁹ That the Gospel “sanctifies in society” is asserted over and against those Lutherans who only make a single division, that between gospel and law, and who subsume ethical reflection under the latter.⁵⁰ It is also against those who thereby criticize Lutheranism for the quietism and conservatism such a single division would entail. Positively, recognizing the sanctifying function of the gospel opens the opportunity to describe the shape of Christian freedom and to exhort Christians to pattern their lives on the “mandates” that, before and after the law, shape the Christian life.⁵¹ Mahn observes that Lazareth explicates Luther with the twenty-first century in mind, and this creative side of his retrieval cannot be overlooked. That perhaps the impetus in our day is to recognize those “spaces” in Luther's theology that are relevant to the transformation of society, and not simply faithful to the Gospel or that we should

47 Jason A. Mahn, “Mahn on Christians in Society: Luther, the Bible and Social Ethics, <http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Journal-of-Lutheran-Ethics/Book-Reviews/Christians-in-Society-by-William-H-Lazareth/Mahn-on-Christians-in-Society-Luther-the-Bible-and-Social-Ethics-by-William-Lazareth.aspx>. (accessed April 15, 2010)

48 Ibid.

49 Lazareth, 199.

50 Ibid, 224.

51 Jason A. Mahn, <http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Journal-of-Lutheran-Ethics/Book-Reviews/Christians-in-Society-by-William-H-Lazareth/Mahn-on-Christians-in-Society-Luther-the-Bible-and-Social-Ethics-by-William-Lazareth.aspx> (accessed April 15, 2010).

recognize that relevance for social transformation and fidelity to the Gospel are two distinct sides of the same coin.⁵²

Theologia Crucis for Nagaland

Luther was of the view that Jesus was crucified because of human being's lack of identification with him while he was on earth because no one enters into his own suffering and death.⁵³ With this kind of understanding of the suffering of the cross, the theologian of the cross can now look at the world anew in the light of Christ's suffering. Through this light, human can see that they suffer the sovereign workings of God.⁵⁴ Luther also however adds that a theologian of the cross also recognizes that the theology of the cross ultimately brings people hope, the only true hope there is for humankind.⁵⁵ On this premise of hope, perhaps a theology of hope for the Naga people could be worked out in a more detailed and precise manner.

Dr. Tuisem A. Shishak, a prominent Naga educator and a writer states that, "theology should be radically transforming reflection – transforming the believer-theologian into conformity to the image of Christ ("the new man") and the church into the new humanity constituted in Christ's resurrection.⁵⁶ Echoing his sentiments and thoughts would be to raise the question of what could the Naga church offer to Naga society in order to offer hope in the midst of hopelessness? For Luther, the premises of all

52 Ibid.

53 Gerhard Forde, O, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*, Religion Online, 1997. http://www.religion-online.org/cgi-bin/researchd.dll/showarticle?item_id=320 (accessed March 18, 2010)

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

56 Tuisem A. Shishak, "Liberation Theology and the Naga Church," an extract: *In Search of Praxis Theology for the Nagas* (New Delhi: Regency Publications, 2003), 11.

theology starts with the Word of God, of revelation; that God has spoken to us, had addressed Himself to us and still speaks to us through the person, life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.⁵⁷

Walter Altmann argues that we will not find Luther in any way supporting the rediscovery of the value of the historical Jesus for the practice of liberation. The basis for his argument is: for Luther the distinction between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith had not yet emerged.⁵⁸ While there is a specific historical context for Luther's rediscovery of the freedom and grace of God in the face of the church's commercialized usurpation of the means of grace, Luther's assertions cannot simply be repeated without modification in new historical situations.⁵⁹ Altmann's reason for his argument is because "the church in present contexts does not function as a structure of domination but rather as an instrument of liberation."⁶⁰ Luther's view on nationality should be taken into consideration here. For Luther, the individuality of a person is decisively affected by national ties.⁶¹ Therefore it is important for the proclamation of the Gospel to understand national traits and idiosyncrasies, so that it does not miss the mark by addressing a fancied person but appeals to the heart of the real man.⁶² Luther believes that man in his national identity is a part of creation, but he is differentiated from all other creatures by the law governing him.⁶³

According to Bornkamm, Luther's approach to theological utterances always bore

57 Bornkamm, 136.

58 Walter Altmann, 22.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

61 Bornkamm, 218.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.

the real human being in mind; he was hostile to all speculation. Altmann however uses the life of Jesus as an example to show how his life unfolds between Jesus' birth and death, both in weakness.⁶⁴ Altmann thus observes that without seeing the life of Jesus in the light of faith, of our trust in God, we would have to see Jesus as a failure. He uses this observation as a paradigmatic mark of Jesus which Luther relates to the issue of the hidden God.⁶⁵ However the one consistent trademark that is seen in the life of Jesus and throughout the course of his ministry is his presence in solidarity at the side of all those who are in need, who are marginalized, and who suffer because of injustice and oppression.⁶⁶ Altmann thus suggests that just as we see Jesus in the light of faith – his active identification with the poor and the oppressed, we ought to be integrated into the theology of the cross and of the kenosis of Jesus.⁶⁷ Altmann continues to argue that Luther's *theologia crucis* renounces all triumphalism where the road to power is abandoned and only the path of weakness counts.⁶⁸ The cross signals the way of God, who abandoned majesty and terrible omnipotence and places God's own self in human hands, in an expression of divine love for human beings. As Luther would have put it: "the more we draw Christ down into nature and into the flesh, the more consolation accrues for us."⁶⁹

Commenting on the present context of Nagaland, Shishak argues that, "while the church is not totally liberated, God still seems to be bringing about full liberation over

64 Walter Altmann, 22.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid, 23.

68 Walter Altmann, 144.

69 LW 52:12.

time and through the means of proclamation and the calling into being a distinct liberated servant community in the midst of the world.”⁷⁰ He also comments that the need of the Nagas’ at the moment is praxis theology rather than liberation theology. He defines liberation theology as “basically a response to oppression, or at least to what is perceived to be oppression by the theologian. In liberation theology, the starting point is clearly situational.”⁷¹ However what the Nagas’ need is praxis which is more than merely “involvement in a situation” or “practice.”⁷² Thus Shishak observes that this creates a tension between liberation theology and Luther’s Sola Scriptura. He therefore suggests that theological reflection should include reflection on Scripture as the norm for a “sanctified” consciousness and practice.⁷³ He also mentions that there has been a tendency in the evangelical church in Nagaland to identify social concern with theological liberalism or with spiritual coldness and lack of concern for evangelism.⁷⁴

Therefore his question is:

What does the Word of God (Bible) say about those who exploit illiterate Naga villagers, to capitalist abuses, to corrupt government officials (particularly in Nagaland) who accept bribery, to dishonest politicians? What about the comfortable indifference in our churches towards the suffering of the masses? What about the many Baptist churches willing to spend huge amount of money to construct village church buildings, but are not willing to spend even 5% of their yearly income on evangelism and aiding the poor and the needy around them?⁷⁵ In the light of all the questions above he raises the final question as to whether the believers in Christ of Nagaland have raised a prophetic voice against these?⁷⁶

70 Shishak, an extract, *In Search of Praxis Theology for Nagas*, 13

71 Ibid, 7.

72 Ibid, 10.

73 Ibid, 11.

74 Ibid, 12.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid.

Renthy Keitzar, a Naga biblical scholar writes: “the reconciling role of Jesus Christ as the Prince of Peace and of Justice should be visible in the theological role of the church as a witness to him, because the church is the body of Christ and it is the extension of God’s incarnation on earth in the midst of human society.”⁷⁷ He states that despite the dominance of Christian population in Nagaland where the government offices are manned from top to bottom by Christians (except for a small minority of non-Christian population), one can see political corruptions, injustices, exploitations and malpractices of the highest degree.⁷⁸ He also points out that sadly though, the sacred offices of the Church, including tribal Baptist Associations, conventions and councils, are also not free from such maladministration.⁷⁹ Rev. L. Bizo, also a Naga preacher states that, “Christians are part of the society and citizens of earthly city.” Therefore Christians are to be the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world” seeking to preserve and protect the values that are right, true, good, and proper in the sight of God, and as are taught in the Scripture.⁸⁰

Just as Luther would have said of Germany and the Catholic church of his time, a group of Naga theologians in their deliberation to find healing for Naga society and its people state that, “the Naga churches and their leaders, by and large have become spiritually and morally bankrupt” by aligning themselves with the corrupt state – “powers that be”.⁸¹ They argue that the Naga church is “guilty of misplaced allegiance to the

77 Dr. Renthy Keitzar, “Theology Today,” an extract: *In Search of Praxis Theology for the Nagas*, 26.

78 Ibid, 27.

79 Ibid.

80 Rev. L. Bizo, “Total Christian Living,” an extract: *Search of Praxis Theology for the Nagas*, 86. ed, V.K. Nuh, 169.

81 “In Search of a Theological Statement,” an extract: *In Search of Praxis Theology for the Nagas*, ed. V.K. Nuh (hereby quoted at V.K. Nuh)

extent that she has failed to acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ in faith and practice.” The result is that the church has ceased to be a prophetic voice in her mission. In an effort to encourage Naga theologians to formulate a theology for the Naga people, the first Naga Theological Seminar was held at Kohima, the capital city of Nagaland in 1984. In 1995, more concerned Naga theologians signed the historic theological statement: *Insearch of Theological Statement*.⁸² In the section *Theological Critiques and Reflection*, they mention:

Conflict, fragmentation, mistrust and enmity are at the center of Naga existence today. Our conflicts and divisions are complex . . . Theologically this means that no unity and reconciliation, no forgiveness and pardon will take place without sincere personal and collective national repentance. We therefore advocate a theology that is biblical and seek to bring out the truth than reconciliation with sin and selfishness. Nagas are today morally and spiritually bankrupt, politically corrupt, economically dependent and socially unproductive. De-culturalisation, dehumanization and alienation cannot be our goal and destiny. . . Liberation is a precondition for a new society but this is not all of it. Without liberating historical events, there could be no growth of the Kingdom. We are committed to apply this biblical understanding of salvation and hence call on the Naga churches to contribute to liberation. The responsibility for liberation is placed on our churches as a result of God’s summon and support.⁸³

While the above quotation certainly paints a picture of hopelessness in Naga society, the message of Luther’s theology of the Cross and the crucified Christ still seem to hold relevance for Naga people. As Naga theologians would say that, “our theology informs us that personal commitment and faith in Christ divorced from an active commitment to love, truth and justice is a mockery of the gospel,”⁸⁴ Naga churches are encouraged to make a radical turn from the present pattern and to reaffirm our allegiance

82 V.K. Nuh, vi.

83 Ibid, 175.

84 Ibid, 174.

to the coming reign of God's kingdom among the Nagas.⁸⁵ The message of the theology of the cross and the Christ crucified should inspire Nagas to make sacrifices for justice and liberation.⁸⁶ The message of resurrection gives us hope in the midst of hopelessness challenging us to wake up to action with courage and confidence.⁸⁷ If Christ brought a new beginning to humanity and the whole creation, everything that is affected by sin is also now affected by redemption.⁸⁸

85 Ibid.

86 Ibid.

87 Ibid, 176.

88 Ibid, 174.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: His Ethical Application of Luther's Theologia Crucis

According to Elizabeth L. Gerhardt, Bonhoeffer provides a contemporary example of the methodology and consequences of applying Luther's theology of the cross to the problem of institutionalized evil.¹ He also offers a model of a practical application of Luther's theology that base this ethics in proclamation. Incorporating an analysis of Bonhoeffer's theology and his challenge of the structures of society would therefore help us see how Luther's theology of the cross could help Naga churches to be a prophetic voice to the evils that exists in society and state. For Bonhoeffer, the Sermon on the Mount is the challenge and the measure of humanity. With Christ who was poor in spirit, he took his stand against Nazi fanaticism.²

Hermes Donald Kreilkamp writes that despite a long-standing tradition which kept religion and politics separated in autonomous worlds of their own, Bonhoeffer saw the necessity of breaking this tradition – one in which he had been raised and of pressing for an integrative solution to human needs which would build up human solidarity rather than divide people against each other.³ Bonhoeffer's Christology is the starting point for his commitment to social and political justice. Christ and the human relationship *coram*

1 Elizabeth L. Gerhardt, 140.

2 Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Man of Vision – Man of Courage*, trans. E. Mosbacher et al (New York: Harper, 1970), 369.

3 Hermes Kreilkamp, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Prophet of Human Solidarity*, <http://www.spiritualitytoday.org/spir2day/843625kreilkamp.html> (accessed April 13, 2010).

Deo and *coram hominibus* informs Bonhoeffer's life and work.⁴ Bonhoeffer's central proclamation of "Christ as Savior allows him identification with the oppressed without falling prey to a negative theology of glory that would make his identification salvific."⁵ Kreilkamp also observes that at a time when Hitler's power was on the rise, Bonhoeffer at ecumenical conferences of Life and Work pressed openly for resolutions on behalf of the Jews.⁶ He also urged the church to speak out, not simply for peace, but against the coming war, at a time of intensifying German militarism. Bonhoeffer argued for the church's responsibility to move beyond confession to resistance when faced with an issue of *status confessionis*.⁷

Clifford Green mentions that what brought Bonhoeffer to a Nazi prison cell was Christian humanism.⁸ Bonhoeffer emphasized on the radical following of Christ's example, and he opposed totalitarianism. According to Hermes Donald Kreilkamp, Bonhoeffer not only criticized Nazism but he was also a critic of ecclesiasticism which Hitler used to his advantage. Bonhoeffer underscored the weakness of established churches.⁹ His prophetic call to the churches was to give up their concern for privileges, status, and exemptions and to join the ranks of the poor.¹⁰ Kreilkamp also states that Bonhoeffer's ethics is at heart an ethics of loving others as Christ loved human beings.

4 Elizabeth Gerhardt, 40.

5 Ibid.

6 Hermes Kreilkamp, <http://www.spiritualitytoday.org/spir2day/843625kreilkamp.html>. (accessed April 13, 2010).

7 Elizabeth L. Gerhardt, 140.

8 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Fiction from Prison: Gathering Up the Past*, ed. Renate and Eberhard Bethge, trans. U. Hofman (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), vii.

9 Hermes Kreilkamp, <http://www.spiritualitytoday.org/spir2day/843625kreilkamp.html>. (accessed April 13, 2010).

10 Ibid.

Elizabeth Gerhardt states that a church set apart from the world and yet in service to Christ is in a position to voice its opposition to evil and work to establish justice.¹¹ According to Clifford Green there are two theological motifs that support Christian action and resistance which are expressed by the incarnation and a theology of the cross. Through the incarnation God poured himself out for humankind through the birth, life and death of Jesus. His experiences and suffering were not merely “put on” but were fully human. God’s revelation “was not a barrier to God’s dealing with humanity, but precisely the form which God chooses to act and speak in the world.”¹² According to Luther, Christians are not called out of the world but rather into the world for the sake of others. These include the current sufferings of the oppressed, injustices and existing social evils.¹³

Luther’s theology of the cross, as we have seen is God’s response to human suffering and Bonhoeffer’s ethics based on Luther’s theology of the cross, we also see the need for Nagas to offer forgiveness and also receive forgiveness in the light of the Cross if we are ever going to rebuild a new history of the church as well as of society. Case studies and history have taught people in conflict that violence is not the solution to problems of injustices and other social evils that we encounter. Luther repeatedly points out that the peace is broken because of sin. Perhaps a comprehensive deliberation and study on the problem of sin in Naga churches and society should be given thoughtful consideration. Harakas mentions that “forgiveness” in the early fathers of the church was

11 Elizabeth L. Gerhardt, 142.

12 Clifford Green, ed. *An introduction in Karl barth: Theologian of Freedom* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 25.

13 *Luther’s Works* 7: 354.

often times referred to as “freedom.”¹⁴ He therefore argues that from the early church fathers’ point of view “repentance is not a personal or private atonement for sins committed; it is simply the only way by which we may dare to call again at the throne of mercy.”¹⁵ Luther also argues that while God executes “the alien work of compelling civility and accusing the conscience through the law, God carries out His proper work of showing mercy through his gospel.”¹⁶

Luther’s understanding of the *Gospel* as God’s forgiveness, acceptance and reconciliation should be reflected upon on a deeper level by Naga church leaders as well as Christian politicians. Luther’s explanation of good works encompassing everything in faith as our response to God’s gracious act of love and forgiveness in Christ also supports the need to raise awareness among the religious as well as in secular Naga community to consider peace building as our duty and not someone else’s. The theology of the cross provides a basis for Naga’s to believe that in our sense of alienation we are not alone because Christ has experienced that sense of alienation already on the cross. As Luther would have famously put it: “pursuing whatever ‘makes for peace’ is a part of working out our progress in salvation.”¹⁷ Luther in his lecture on Psalms 85:10 and Psalms 72:7 mentioned that “because of the perversity of men, he seeks peace before righteousness, and for this reason they do not find peace.”¹⁸ This could be interpreted as Luther saying that violence is not the way to protect ourselves, not just from spiritual attacks but also physical attack. Luther also emphasizes that “in works of faith we must strive to make

14 Harakas, 72-73

15 Ibid.

16 Martin Luther, *Sermon on St. Thomas’ Day* (1516), *Luther’s Works* 51:19-21.

17 *Luther’s Works* 25, 117

18 Ibid, 285.

ourselves worthy of Christ and His righteousness as our protection and refuge.”¹⁹

Whatever topic he preaches or writes on Luther constantly draw on Christ and the Cross.

He also echoes St. Paul in explaining that, “since we are justified, and our sins are forgiven, we have access and peace, but only through Lord Jesus Christ.”²⁰

Perhaps what Naga theologians need to do is challenge the structures of society by starting a theological discourse on the role of religion in peace making/reconciliation ministries. This would help inform the state and responsible Christian citizens who have been taught to believe that it is not the duty of the church to meddle with the affairs of the state. While Luther believed that there is a distinct differences in their duties, he did acknowledge both the origins of church and state are from God. I would also argue that in the light of Luther’s understanding of faith and works that Luther would have definitely understood the vocation of a Christian politician as sacred as a Christian religious leader. As Luther would have argued that when a Christian does anything in faith as a response to God’s love and forgiveness in Christ, it is considered “good work” in God’s sight even though in medieval terms “good works” meant works of charity or specific acts of spiritual disciplines like celibacy, fasting etc.

Luther never forgot to mention that God is actively involved in the world and its affairs. Thus the mindset of Naga Christians, both church and un-church, should be enlightened to the fact that God is indeed actively interested and involved in our spiritual life as well as political life. This could perhaps bring about a shift of thought and idea in the minds of both Naga politicians who believe that religious leaders have no right to

19 Ibid, 287.

20 Ibid.

challenge the structures of the civil society even when they indulge in corrupt practices. On the other hand, raising awareness to the religious leaders on their role as peacemakers or mediators between God and men on matters pertaining to ruler-ship, authority and reconciliation by religious leaders both inside the church and in the public square will help empower Naga religious leaders to understand the power and authority that have in Christ to act as the conscience of civic leaders by speaking up and challenging the civic leaders in power to be responsible in the way they handle power and authority which is granted to them by God and not from men.

Luther and the theology of the cross, along with his emphasis on discipleship – *coram Deo and coram hominibus* as also seen in the work of Bonhoeffer draws us to think about the work of forgiveness and reconciliation in society. It is the people who assure the peace and tranquility of a society in that it may be the government that make the peace, but only people can keep the peace. Churches and the Christian community can work alongside government to ensure the kind of peace and tranquility envisioned by Luther. Track II diplomacy as it has been and is being developed in contemporary political history offers a way in which this social vision can be made manifest.

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