

Christian Identity and Community – An Ethical Approach to Martin Luther

ShinHyung Seong

Abstract

Christian identity is an important basis of Christian ethics since identity formulates the notion of how to live *in* and *for* the world. This research concentrates on Martin Luther's communitarian concept in his theology and ethics. Because the church is a liturgical community for the moral transformation, church needs to communicate with the world through her liturgical ceremonies. Based on this ethical concept in Luther, this research paper focuses on how Christian identity becomes the foundation of theological ethics, how Christian ethics is active in the relation with neighbors and how the church practises her ethics in community with the world.

Keywords

Martin Luther, Christian Identity, Justification, Freedom, Communitarian Ethics

I. Introduction

Martin Luther has been known as a systematic theologian as well as a commentator of the Bible. People, however, usually misunderstand his ethics and conclude that Luther ignores morality and ethics. On the other hand, some criticize Luther's ethical perspective as individualistic because of his emphasis on the individual realms of Christian faith such as justification, forgiveness of sins, and freedom. This criticism, however, is not legitimate for properly considering Luther's theology and ethics since his ethical notion clearly has several social and communitarian perspectives. In this research paper, I will argue that Martin Luther not only has very powerful ethical notions in terms of his basic theological doctrines like justification and forgiveness, but also emphasizes the social and communitarian morality in terms of love for neighbors and practices of liturgical ceremonies. Through this work, I will delve into how Christian identity is founded upon

this ethical basis, how Christian ethics is active in the relation with neighbors and how the church, a liturgical community, practices her ethics in community with the world.

In order to accomplish the above task, I will demonstrate how Luther models the Christian identity as a free being as well as a servant, identifying where the Christian identity comes from and how faith forms Christian moral life. According to Luther, justification and forgiveness of sins by God's grace is the main source to form the Christian identity because a Christian gets freedom owing to the grace of God. A Christian is not a slave of sins any more; rather, he or she is totally free through justification. On the contrary, a Christian becomes a servant for the world not because of his or her necessity for salvation, but because of the existential status, *per se*. Namely, a Christian's servant-hood comes from the new relationship between God and human beings and among human beings through faith. Thus, I will show how Luther illustrates Christian identity as the container of the ethical virtues and values.

Furthermore, I will describe the social ethical thought of Luther exploring how a Christian works for the world. Luther believes that a Christian, as a totally new being, activates his or her faith in love for neighbors. I will explore the idea that Luther does not abolish good works; rather, he empowers Christians to do good works through loving for neighbors as the ultimate vocation of Christians. Lastly, I will elucidate the communitarian ethics in Luther's theology in terms of his liturgical theology and ethics. The church practices liturgical ceremonies not because those are the required works for salvation, but those are the divine promise and signs of death and resurrection. Through this practice, the church will be a liturgical community to do ethical transformation not only for the congregation but also for the world. Therefore, the church ministry of word and sacraments reveals the communitarian ethical points. Based on this research of Luther's ethical notion, I will argue how ethical transformation of Christians occurs in the Christian community.

II. Identity of a Christian – Become a Servant

“Who is a Christian?” is a prerequisite question in Christian ethics before the question of “what should a Christian do?” Luther begins with this question to develop his ethical argument, and he posits a Christian is a servant for the world, and becoming a servant, as a free Christian, is his main ethical concept. Namely, Luther's basic ethical notion is that a Christian needs to be a servant because he or she becomes free owing to justification through the hand of Jesus Christ. In other words, ‘justification and forgiveness’ is not only the basis of Luther's theology which was designated ‘Reformation,’ but

also the foundation of Luther's ethics. Luther's ethics is originated by justification and forgiveness and this is a critical difference between Luther's morality and other philosophical or theological ethics. According to Luther, justification and forgiveness is the key to the liberation from sin, the formation of a new relationship between God and people, Christian freedom¹ and equality among human beings.² Thus, the good works of a Christian became very crucial in Christian life because human beings received the value and meaning of life through God's justification and forgiveness.³ Based on his recognition of Christian-identity, Luther develops his ethical thoughts focusing on the doctrine of justification and forgiveness.

To begin with, it is necessary to see Luther's dichotomy between freedom and servant-hood to understand Luther's ethics. His renowned maxim speaks to all Christians, "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all."⁴ According to Luther, even though these two categories seem to contradict each other, they are compromised together to serve one purpose—the Christian identity—perfectly.⁵ Luther illustrates human's twofold nature: a spiritual and a bodily one, or the inner and outward man.⁶ As a freeman as well as a servant, a human being lives his or her life, and especially, a Christian is a being who knows and recognizes this human condition in terms of faith, works and moral virtues. Not only is a Christian a spiritual being, totally free through the grace of God, but a Christian also is a servant to the world.⁷ This division of twofold nature is the starting point of Luther's ethics because the new identity as a Christian comes from the recognition of this existential position, and the new relationship with God and the new law of works is based on this nature.

Luther demonstrates the ontological status of a Christian as the inner spiritual being, who is righteous, free, pious, spiritual and new.⁸ And he posits, "no external thing has any influence in producing Christian righteousness or freedom," and more, "even contemplation,

¹ Robert Kolb, "Forgiveness Liberates and Restores: The Freedom of the Christian according to Martin Luther," *Word & World*, Vol 27, Num 1, Win., 2007, 5–13.

² Walter Altmann, *Luther and Liberation – A Latin American Perspective*, trans., by Mary M. Solerg, (Fortress Press: Minneapolis, 1992), 28–41.

³ Paul Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, trans., and foreword by Robert, C Schultz, (Fortress Press: Philadelphia, 1965, reprinted on 1972), 10.

⁴ Martin Luther, "The Freedom of a Christian," in *Three Treatises*, trans., by W. A. Lambert and revised by Horald J. Grimm, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1943, revised 1960, second revised 1970) 277.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 278.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

meditation, and all that the soul can do, does not help”⁹ one to become free. Namely, no qualification is necessary to be righteous and free—freedom is the unconditional status of a Christian. Therefore, good works are not the minimum condition to be free; only faith makes a Christian free and righteous. Luther even says that it is foolish for someone to be righteous and free with his or her own works. Luther illustrates:

..... anyone can clearly see how a Christian is free from all things and over all things so that he needs no works to make him righteous and save him, since faith alone abundantly confers all these things. Should he grow so foolish, however, as to presume to become righteous, free, saved, and a Christian by means of some good work, he would instantly lose faith and all its benefits, a foolishness aptly illustrated in the fable of the dog who runs along a stream with a piece of meat in his mouth.....¹⁰

Thus, Luther’s ethics does not originate from a human being’s general understandings of good works that can bring people good results or happiness; rather, his ethical notion comes from the unconditional divine power which makes people free and righteous. This ethical notion, related to ethical capability, is very unique and critical in Christian ethics because a Christian is *able* to do works for the world not because the works are his or her obligation, but because a Christian has his or her ontological position, the new Christian identity, as a free being through the grace of faith.

The direction of a Christian life is totally reformed from dogmatic obligations to gracious freedom.¹¹ The new direction of a Christian makes the new ethics that good works are not for the pleasure of people, but for the satisfaction of God. In other words, good works are only effective in relation to concrete faith, and a Christian needs to do works to show how he or she is faithful to God. Althaus explains this point:

“Works” are nothing but the concrete realization of faith itself. Faith needs works—that is, concrete specific acts of life—in order to be itself at any point. Faith always needs secular life—just as secular life in turn always needs faiths. Believing is not something I do *alongside* my life in this world but rather in it—in each and every act of living. Faith expresses itself in the form of works. Faith lives *in* works, just as works are done *in* faith.¹²

⁹ Ibid., 278–279.

¹⁰ Ibid., 291.

¹¹ *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, 10.

¹² Ibid., 17. Italic by author.

And, he explains the happiness of a Christian owing to the freedom based on faith such that, “faith sets the Christian free. He is free to do his work with joy, in contrast to the slavish worry, insecurity, and unhappiness of the man who has no faith, doubts how he stands with God, and does not know how he will satisfy God.”¹³ In this way, Luther formats a new and rudimental ethical foundation based on faith, freedom, justification and forgiveness. A Christian is able to act ethically not because of the acquisition of his or her own salvation, but because of his or her new beingness as a real Christian. Finally, Luther’s ethic surpasses philosophical ethical aspect like deontology and teleology, in that it forms a new Christian ethics in terms of good works based on the new Christian identity. This new Christian identity arises from the new relationship between human beings and God, and the new servant-hood among human beings.

According to Althaus, justification, in Luther’s ethics and theology, makes human beings encounter God in a totally different way which forms a new relationship between God and human beings.¹⁴ Althaus elaborates that, before justification, the relationship was determined by the law related to God’s demands and judgment; however, after the moment of justification, human being can encounter God concretely in his or her daily life.¹⁵ The law of works has been enslaving people as sinners; however, the grace of justification and forgiveness sets people free. Finally, human beings are free as total new beings, or new creatures, with a completely new relationship with God. Luther uses a marriage metaphor to describe this new relationship as he says, “it(faith) unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom.”¹⁶ This relationship bestows true liberation to all brides as a new being. Luther demonstrates:

... the believing soul by means of the pledge of his faith is free in Christ, its bridegroom, free from all sins, secure against death and hell, and is endowed with the eternal righteousness, life, and salvation of Christ its bridegroom.... In this way he marries her in faith, steadfast love, and in mercies, righteousness, and justice as Hos 2 [:19–20] says.¹⁷

Thus, the new relationship with God enable human being to live his or her life ethically and morally as a sincere and responsible bride,

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 11.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “The Freedom of a Christian,” in *Three Treatises*, 286., Parentheses by the writer of this research paper.

¹⁷ Ibid., 287.

not because of his or her own righteousness, but because of the new marital union with Christ.

Finally, justification and forgiveness promotes a Christian to form a totally new relationship among people and, consequently, to be a faithful servant for the world. Most of all, forgiveness and justification can help people recognize that they are equal through the grace of Christ, not only in the individual realms but also social realms. Altmann catches this point insightfully:

Justification by grace and faith implies a radical principle of equality among human beings and of the valuing of each one of them before God; it implies utter opposition to all forms of discrimination against persons and to all limitations of the quality and dignity of their lives.¹⁸

Altmann argues this ethical point as he elaborates Luther's valuation of human beings and Luther's view of the church as a community.¹⁹ This explanation shows us that Luther's ethics is not only based on the individual sphere, but it also based on the social realms because the new relationship among people is focusing on equality and justice. Likewise, Kolb illustrates the social aspect in Luther's ethics, as he focuses on the meaning of forgiveness. According to Kolb, forgiveness of sins is a crucial element of human relationship because receiving forgiveness is a declaration of people's dependence on others as well as God.²⁰ Kolb further develops his argument, stating that Luther's concept of forgiveness has two dimensions: forgiving those who have hurt an individual, and forgiving those who have transgressed public order and justice.²¹ Kolb concludes, "Forgiveness does not set aside the need to seek justice in interpersonal relationships."²² Thus, the new Christian identity, as a servant for the world, formulate a Christian to become a Christian ethically, based on his or her totally new relationship with God as well as others. These new relationships come through the grace of God, that is, justification and forgiveness.

III. Love for neighbors – Become a disciple of Christ

The recognition of Christian identity among people and the new relationship with God enables a Christian to follow Christ through love

¹⁸ *Luther and Liberation – A Latin American Perspective*, 5.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ "Forgiveness Liberates and Restores: The Freedom of the Christian according to Martin Luther," in *Word & World*, 12.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

of neighbors. This faith-based ethical foundation of Luther does not ignore human works or actions, but it develops good works of a free Christian. To begin with, it is necessary to grasp Luther's discussion of love for neighbors to understand Luther's ethical notion of the relationship between good works and a Christian. Luther argues:

The following statements are therefore true: "Good works do not make a good man, but a good man does good works; evil works do not make a wicked man, but a wicked man does evil works." Consequently it is always necessary that the substance or person himself be good before there can be any good works, and that good works follow and proceed from the good person as Christ also says, "A good tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit" [Matt. 7:18].²³

Ontologically, a Christian must be a good servant because of the grace of God and justification. Because faith leads a Christian to do good works, Luther did not try to abolish human works, but he changed the perspective of works. Luther's comment on God's commandment shows this perspective:

And because this commandment is the very first of all commandments and the highest and the best, [the one] from which all others proceed, in which they exist and by which they are judged and assessed, so its work (that is, the faith or confidence that God is gracious at all times) is the very first, highest, and best from which all others must proceed, in which they must exist and abide, and by which they must be judged and assessed.²⁴

Thus, a Christian follows the commandments of God, related to good works, because he or she loves God and the grace of God makes him or her justified and equal. Clearly speaking, the best way to show how a Christian loves God is to love others as he or she follows God's will.

According to Moseman, faith not only makes a Christian free from the necessity of the merit of righteousness, but it also leads a Christian to be a servant of Christ, or "a Christ," to others.²⁵ Moseman elaborates this point more clearly, "The commandments direct us to serve our neighbor, not out of duty, but because of the love we have received from God."²⁶ Naturally, a Christian does follow God's commandment for neighbors not because a Christian seeks his or her own self-righteousness but because he or she becomes altruistic for others through faith. Luther illustrates:

²³ "The Freedom of a Christian," in *Three Treatises*, 297.

²⁴ Martin Luther, "Treatises on Good Works," in *Luther's Works*, vol. 44, ed., Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 30.

²⁵ Carrie Moseman, "Martin Luther on 'Becoming a Christ to One's Neighbor,'" *Presbyterian: Covenant Seminary Review*, Vol. 26/02, Fall 2000, 96.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Our own self-imposed good works lead us to and into ourselves so that we just seek our own benefit and salvation. But God's commandments drive us to our neighbor's need, that by means of these commandments we may be of benefit only to others and to their salvation.²⁷

Likewise, neighbor-centeredness is found many times throughout Luther's "Treatises on Good Works." For instance, Luther says of the fifth commandment, "For if faith does not doubt the favor of God, and a man has no doubt that he has a gracious God, it will be quite easy for his to be gracious and favorable to his neighbor. . . ."²⁸ And, Luther says on the seventh commandment, "Such a man is absolutely certain that he is acceptable to God: therefore, he does not cling to money; he uses his money cheerfully and freely for the benefit of his neighbor."²⁹ Thus, the commandment of God can be actualized through the love for neighbor in the Christian life. A Christian, who is accepted by God, can embrace, serve and love his or her neighbors. This is "the imperative" of a Christian.

On the other hand, because Luther's ethical foundation is based on his theological ethos "justification by faith," his ethical practice can be described in the biblical slogan, "faith forming love" or "faith active in love" (Gal. 5:6).³⁰ Forell describes Christian love as "a love that does not consider self-interest; it is, in fact, the judgment of God over all self-love."³¹ Luther demonstrates:

Here faith is truly active through love [Gal. 5:6], that is, it finds expression in works of the freest service, cheerfully and lovingly done, with which a man willingly serves another without hope of reward; and for himself he is satisfied with the fullness and wealth of his faith.³²

And, the love of the true Christian becomes spontaneously overflowing because it is not asking about the worthiness of the object, but it is concerned with the value of love, *per se*.³³ This spontaneous love is overflowing to neighbors with joy and willingness, and it makes a Christian really free. Luther demonstrates:

Behold, from faith thus flow forth love and joy in the Lord, and from love a joyful, willing, and free mind that serves one's neighbor willingly and takes no account of gratitude or ingratitude, of praise or blame, of gain or loss. For a man does not serve that he may put men under obligations. He does not distinguish between friends and

²⁷ "Treatises on Good Works," in *Luther's Works*, 71.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 103.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 108.

³⁰ George Wolfgang Forell, *Faith Active in Love – An Investigation of the Principles Underlying Luther's Social Ethics* (The American Press: New York, 1954), 89–90.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 95.

³² "The Freedom of a Christian," in *Three Treatises*, 302.

³³ *Faith Active in Love*, 98.

enemies or anticipate their thankfulness or unthankfulness, but he most freely and most willingly spends himself and all that he has, whether he wastes all on the thankless or whether he gains a reward.³⁴

Therefore, a Christian becomes the disciple of Christ, not because of the reward of action, but because of the love for neighbors itself. Christianity means the ethical transformation in that love is an unconditional reaction of faith. Unless a Christian loves others, he or she, ontologically, is not a disciple of Christ:

Just as our neighbor is in need and lacks that in which we abound, so we were in need before God and lacked his mercy. Hence, as our heavenly Father has in Christ freely come to our aid, we also ought freely to help our neighbor through our body and its works, and each one should become as it were a Christ to the other that we may be Christs to one another and Christ may be the same in all, that is, that we may be truly Christians.³⁵

Now, the meaning about neighbor needs to be shifted from a simple meaning to the ultimate end in that a Christian's action is no other than the love for neighbors in any circumstances. As Forell says, "in all situations, the Christian constrained by a faith active in love was to give himself to his needy neighbor as God had given Himself to man in Christ."³⁶ Althaus explains this ethical aspect clearly, ". . . . teleologically, our deeds are done not for God but for our neighbor and for him alone. Whatever we do, we are to concern ourselves only with our neighbor's needs and not worry about our own salvation."³⁷ In short, related to Christian action and good works, love for neighbor is the only goal in the Christians' earthly life; no other way to live in the world except love for neighbors as a Christian can be acceptable.

Luther develops his ethical aspect, love for neighbor, to the practical realm in earthly life in his theology of calling or vocation. According to Wingren, he demonstrates that love comes from God and it flows down to human beings on the world through all vocations.³⁸ Wingren demonstrates a Christian vocation is based on the cross of vocation as Christ accomplished his vocation by crucifixion; therefore, suffering naturally follows to the vocation of a Christian.³⁹ He argues:

³⁴ "The Freedom of a Christian," in *Three Treatises*, 304.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 305.

³⁶ *Faith Active in Love*, 109.

³⁷ *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, 5.

³⁸ Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, trans., Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957) 27–28.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 29–30.

In the final sentences the allusion of Christ's cross is manifest. Behind this entire view of Luther's lies the concept of vocation's work as divine love's coming down to earth, the same love as was in Christ. No person who lets the work of his vocation go forward without grudging will escape troubles, hatred, and persecution.⁴⁰

And, he develops his argument as explaining the relationship between faith and love in terms of vocation:

We have noted above that vocation is so constituted that it is conducive to the well-being of neighbors; it serves others (love). Now we see that it also compels one to look to God, to lay hold of his promise (faith). Man is thereby put into right relation both to earth (love) and to heaven (faith). God's complete work is set in motion through vocation: he changes the world and he sheds his mercy on hard-pressed humanity. As soon as vocation is abandoned, God loses hold of man, both faith and love cease, and since there is no free will before God, the devil, that objective power that opposes God, has gained control of man.⁴¹

Thus, whether or not a Christian loves his or her neighbor reveals his or her attitude to accomplish his or her vocation. The more a Christian realizes the love of the cross, the deeper is his or her love for neighbor, and the more faithfully he or she works for the world through their vocation.

IV. A New Community – Worship God and Transform People

I have been probing not only the ethical foundation of Luther's theology in terms of justification and grace of God, but also the ethical practice related to the existence of others and neighbors. Now, I will develop my argument with regard to the communitarian ethical aspect which is the major argument of this research paper. Focusing on Luther's theology of sacraments and worship service, I will demonstrate the liturgical ministry of the church, which, based on Luther's theology of liturgy, is related to its communitarian and social roles. In other words, I will show how Christian identity is formed through the liturgical community (the church), how the community practices its ethical notion, love for neighbors, in its ministry—especially, in its liturgy, and how the liturgical elements, like preaching, Eucharist, baptism, and so on, is related to ethics in Luther's theology of liturgy.

Saliers points out that the church, as a liturgical community, should make moral and ethical transformation of persons and society in his

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

article, “Liturgy and Ethics: Some New Beginnings.”⁴² And, Saliers develops his theology of liturgy with regard to the communitarian ethics. He argues, “the presence and self-giving of God in the liturgy of Word and sacraments cannot be disassociated from the neighbor in need.”⁴³ If a church gives up this communitarian aspect in her ministry, she cannot become the body of Christ; she becomes just another social organization to enjoy the earthly life. Therefore, the church, as a liturgical community, has to re-discover the meaning of her liturgy related to the Word and sacraments. There are several salient ethical points about worship and liturgical ministry based on the Word and sacraments in Luther’s theology.

Most of all, worship is one of the most effective ways to find and develop the Christian identity, related to faith and justification, into the communal identification of the church. This communal identification of the church is related to communitarian and social acknowledgement or involvement in the world. Again, the Christian identity, a free being in the inwardly spiritual life as well as a servant in the outwardly earthly life, insures that all Christians become a community through liturgical ceremonies, not because the salvation comes from the ceremonies of the church, but because the ceremonies, *per se*, come from the grace of God. In this point, Luther criticizes that the church utilizes the ceremonies for her convenience to manipulate the congregation insofar as the church insists that the ceremonies are necessary to receive the grace of God and salvation.⁴⁴ Luther demonstrates that ceremonies are the test of the righteousness of faith, as good works are the test of faith.⁴⁵ Not only does Luther criticize the church as a manipulator of the ceremonies, but he also criticizes the mischievous usage called “ecclesiastics.”⁴⁶ And he proposes a new priesthood of “the ministry of the Word to serve other and teach them the faith of Christ and the freedom of believers.”⁴⁷ Luther argues that the words “priest,” “cleric,” “spiritual,” “ecclesiastic” are unjustly used in the church; rather, everybody in the church should be called “all Christians,” and he explains that there is a role-difference according to the stewardship in the church, but no hierarchical discrimination.⁴⁸

⁴² Don E. Saliers, “Liturgy and Ethics: Some New Beginnings,” in *Liturgy and the Moral Self – Humanity at Full Stretch Before God*, ed., by E. Byron Anderson, Bruce T. Morrill (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 28.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ “The Freedom of a Christian,” in *Three Treatises*, 300–301, 308.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 313.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 292.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 291–292.

Besides, Luther emphasizes the ministry of word including both preaching and hearing in the church. The ministry of word is the way to let Christ be for the community:

Such faith is produced and preserved in us by preaching why Christ came, what he brought and bestowed, what benefit it is to us to accept him. This is done when that Christian liberty which he bestows is rightly taught and we are told in what way we Christians are all kings and priests and therefore lords of all and may firmly believe that whatever we have done is pleasing and acceptable in the sight of God.⁴⁹

As soon as the preaching ministry is done, God's grace occurs, and the receivers come to love Christ⁵⁰ and to participate in the community. Luther emphasizes more about the hearing ministry as he explains the importance of Service to God and the crucial meaning of preaching and hearing God's Word, and he criticizes the tendency that the church seems to ignore this portion of preaching, focusing more on other elements of the mass.⁵¹ Truly, God's Word in the worship service is the best and most necessary part because, Luther says, "to hear mass means nothing else but to hear God's Word and thereby serve God."⁵² Moreover, hearing does not only mean to attend in the worship service sincerely, but it also has very ethical meanings because it is related to Christians' daily life as a service to God. Luther explains that hearing the word expresses bearing the fruits:

Thus you will be warned and stirred to love hearing it all the more and God will also grant that it bear fruit, more than anybody can tell. For the Word never goes out without bringing forth much fruit whenever it is earnestly heard, without your being the better for it.⁵³

Thus, the congregation can participate in the community through the ministry of word because the receivers of preaching will love Christ and they can bear the fruit owing to hearing the word.

Furthermore, there are two other crucial liturgical ceremonies to make people become a member among the community: baptism and Eucharist. Sacraments of baptism and Lord's Supper are the divine promise as well as memorial signs for the participation in death and resurrection. Not only is baptism the divine promise that anyone "who

⁴⁹ Ibid., 293.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Martin Luther, "On the Sum of the Christian Life, 1532," in *Luther's Works*, vol., 51, ed., Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 262.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 265.

believes and be baptized will be saved” [Mark 16:16],⁵⁴ but also the Lord’s Supper is the promise which is commanded by Jesus, “Do this in remembrance of me,” [Luke 22:19; I Cor. 11:24–25].”⁵⁵ The divine promise enables participants to become the member of the Body of Christ through grace and justification. Because the sacraments of Eucharist and baptism are the divine promise of God, they are always steadfast, unbroken and unchanged for Christians⁵⁶ as members of the new community, the church. Also, both sacraments are not only the “effective signs” of grace,⁵⁷ but also signify the death and resurrection of the believers as Jesus Christ died and was resurrected.⁵⁸ Therefore, both sacraments do not simply mean the process of washing away of sins and receiving forgiveness; rather, they are the symbols of death and resurrection.⁵⁹ Luther criticizes severely, however, the Roman Catholic church and her way to have a mass because the church thinks that a mass is a work for salvation. Rather, a mass, containing the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist, is the promise, a sign of grace as well as the “fountain of love” of Christ. Luther illustrates the fruits of the mass:

For it is just this incomprehensible overflowing of God’s goodness, showered upon us through Christ, that moves us above all to love him most ardently in return, to be drawn to him with fullest confidence, and despising all else, be ready to suffer all things for him. Wherefore this sacrament is rightly called “a fountain of love.”⁶⁰

Moreover, sacraments enable Christians to act for the world because of overflowing love and the grace of forgiveness.

Bonhoeffer points out the communal meaning of sacraments very well, as he demonstrates the church as a holy community which is fulfilled in the Body of the Christ.⁶¹ Bonhoeffer explains that baptism enables Christians to participate not only in the ministry in the church, but also in every realm of life:

⁵⁴ Martin Luther, “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” in *Three Treatises*, trans., by A. T. W. Steinhäuser, revised by Frederick C. Ahrens and Abdel Ross Wentz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1943, revised 1960, second revised 1970), 180.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 160–171.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 163, 181.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 162, 187, 189.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 190., and see, Martin Luther, *Large Catechism*, trans., by F. Samuel Janzow (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1978), 110–121., and Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, trans., by Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 29–31.

⁵⁹ “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” in *Three Treatises*, 161–163, 191.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 164–165.

⁶¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 272–297.

It is the baptism into the Body of Christ which assures all Christians of their full share in the life of Christ and the Church. On the contrary, baptism confers the privilege of participation in all the activities of the Body of Christ in every department of life When a man is baptized into the Body of Christ not only is his personal status as regards salvation changed, but also the relationship of daily life.⁶²

For instance, Bonhoeffer shows, the relationship between Onesimus (a slave) and Philemon (a master) is not standing any more, but the master should receive the slave as a brother after they received baptism.⁶³ Bonhoeffer calls this new relationship “a perfect communion of fellowship.”⁶⁴ And he defines the new community based on the liturgical aspect:

. for fellowship always springs from the Word and finds its goal and completion in the Lord’s Supper. The whole common life of the Christian fellowship oscillates between Word and Sacrament, it begins and ends in worship. It looks forward in expectation to the final banquet in the kingdom of God. When a community has a source and goal it is a perfect communion of fellowship,⁶⁵

Thus, the new communal relationship among Christians occurs through sacraments and worship services; therefore, participation in Christian liturgy means becoming a member of the holy and equal community for the new life in the kingdom of Christ forever.⁶⁶ All in all, the church, the liturgical community, has done and will have to do her communitarian ethical works for neighbors in the world through the ministry of the Word and sacraments of baptism and Eucharist.

V. Conclusion

In this research paper, I described how the ethical transformation occurs in Christian community through Luther’s theology and ethics. My argument is that Luther’s ethical notions are based on the Christian’s identity—a free being as well as a servant—through the justification of God and his social and communitarian ethical acknowledgment about the world. Most of all, I demonstrated that justification and forgiveness of sins is the basis of the formation of the Christian identity because a Christian is free in his or her spiritual and inward life. Simultaneously, a Christian willingly becomes a servant

⁶² Ibid., 256.

⁶³ Ibid., 256–257.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 255.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 254.

⁶⁶ *Large Catechism*, 97–104.

for the world because Christian identity enables a Christian to serve the world. Thus, the ethical transformation of a Christian is an unconditional process if a Christian comes to believe in Jesus as his or her Christ through the grace of God. This is ethical virtue and the value of a Christian.

Furthermore, I highlighted Luther's social and communitarian ethical notions through his theology of good works and liturgy. Luther believes that Christian faith is active in love for neighbor, and this belief of Luther's illustrates his social ethics. A Christians' good works is not necessary to get salvation; however, good works are associated with all Christians because the works reveals whether a person is a Christian or not. Therefore, every work of Christians is the vocation for neighbors as well as the world. In addition, the church, a liturgical community, has done her liturgical ministries—the ministry of word and sacraments of baptism and Eucharist—not only for the community herself, but also for the world. Whenever the church does this ministry, she keeps the divine promise of God and the signs of death and resurrection. And, the church can transform her members ethically in their daily life. The holy liturgical community, finally, serves the world in the name of Christ. This is the communal model in Christian ethics.

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ShinHyung Seong

Soong-sil University

Humanities

369 Sangdo-Ro, Dongjak-Gu

Seoul, Republic of Korea

shinhyung.seong@gmail.com