

The Contribution to the History of Ideas Embedded in Martin Luther's Textual Interpretation of the *Psalms*

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ABSTRACT

Interpretive studies of the *Psalms* have frequently prioritized their literary aspects, often relegating the theological and philosophical dimensions to secondary importance. Concurrently, Martin Luther's theological insights and his exegesis of the *Psalms* have frequently been overlooked and marginalized. This paper aims to focus on Luther's interpretation of the *Psalms*, delving deeply into the profound philosophical and theological insights inherent in what he termed "Theology of the Cross." Furthermore, we will examine how contemporary thinkers such as Martin Heidegger and Karl Barth have exalted and revitalized Luther's "Theology of the Cross." This study will elucidate the significant value of Luther's interpretation of the *Psalms* and its important contribution to contemporary thought. It will also argue that Luther's ideas should not be confined narrowly to Reformation history but should be recognized for their relevance in the realm of contemporary cutting-edge thought.

KEYWORDS

Martin Luther; *Psalms*; Theology of the Cross; Paradoxes; "Relational" Truths

1 Introduction

The influence and contribution of Martin Luther's thought during the Reformation period are well recognized by the scholarly community. However, the significance of Luther's "theology of the cross" in the history of Western thought has often been marginalized. Typically, Luther's contributions have been confined to the narrow field of the social history of religion during the Reformation. The profound insights embodied in Luther's thought are frequently overlooked by scholars. Consequently, the theological and philosophical insights in Luther's interpretation of the *Psalms* have been even more widely neglected.

This paper will use the twelfth volume of Luther's Complete Works as the primary research material. By analyzing Luther's interpretation of the *Psalms*, this paper will argue that Luther's texts do not merely treat the *Psalms* as a literary work. In them, Luther clearly articulates the paradoxical "Christ-centered" theology of the cross. In his exegesis, he critiques the Aristotelian tradition of Catholic scriptural philosophy as well as various humanistic approaches. This critical perspective has been revived by contemporary thinkers such as Martin Heidegger and Karl Barth.

Through examining these issues, it becomes evident that Luther's interpretation of the *Psalms* has significant literary value and substantial importance in the history of thought. Currently, in the series of research on "Martin Luther and the Third Enlightenment" initiated by scholars led by Professor Paulos Huang of the Finnish School at Shanghai University, many researchers hold views consistent with those presented in this paper. Therefore, this paper will also explore Luther's thought further and cite these related research perspectives to support its arguments.

2 Luther's Criticism of Catholicism through the Interpretation of the Psalms

Among Martin Luther's writings, well-known works such as *On the Freedom of a Christian* and *Heidelberg Disputation* are widely circulated. However, in the Chinese-speaking world, scholarly engagement is often limited to these few works. In fact, many of Luther's writings remain relatively unknown. The German Weimar edition of Luther's works includes over 120 volumes, and more than 60 volumes have been published in English. Yet, only about ten volumes have been translated into Chinese. In recent years, with the promotion of the "Luther and the Third Enlightenment" series, more of Luther's thought has been explored, and additional writings have gradually been translated into Chinese (Paulos, 2022:1-30).¹

Among the untranslated writings, there often exists a preconceived bias regarding their subject matter. Luther's interpretation of the *Psalms* is a prime example of this. The traditional view of the *Psalms* as purely literary poetry means that Luther's exegesis is frequently relegated to the realm of literary appreciation or theory, thus limiting it to the scope of religious literature. However, just as the theological and philosophical ideas in all of Luther's exegetical works should not be confined to the history of the Reformation, Luther's interpretation of the *Psalms* contains profound insights that can significantly contribute to contemporary thought.

In the twelfth volume of Luther's Works, Martin Luther focuses on the second, eighth, twenty-third, twenty-sixth, forty-fifth, and fifty-first *Psalms*. Luther mentions that he selected these *Psalms* because they are thematically strong and insightful, illustrating his exegetical thought (Martin, 1955: 197).² Additionally, the significant themes of Luther's "Theology of the Cross" are further discussed in this volume.

Luther's systematic deconstruction of Catholic thought is particularly evident in his commentary on verses 16 and 17 of *Psalms* 51 ("The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."), addressing the issues of sin and justification in Catholicism (Martin, 1955:374).³

Through Scripture, Luther equated the rebellious, Pharisee-like beliefs of the Biblical Israelites with the Catholic legalism of his time. He argued that the Catholic religious law implicitly included all religious ceremonies and behavioral rules as conditions for "justification" and atonement. Such behavior, according to Luther, was tantamount to "Phariseism." In this passage, God clearly expresses His dislike for such sacrifices. With this critical approach, Luther also initiated a paradoxical deconstruction of the prevailing religious metaphysics of his time.

According to Luther, the more one pursues strict religious laws, the less God appreciates this kind of "godliness." Through this paradoxical view, Luther calls us back to the true spiritual life emphasized in the passage. Although the Old Testament Israelites received a covenant and a comprehensive set of laws and rituals from God, deceitful hearts lay behind this religious system. The Israelites adhered to the commandments and regulations merely on a ceremonial and theoretical level, neglecting the actual spiritual life. When one's life is centered on the desire to rely on external behaviors for self-righteousness, no amount of "godly" behavior will please God. However, if the foundation of one's life is repentance and faith, it is already pleasing in the blood of Christ, regardless of how defiled one may feel; outward works will naturally flow from the Holy Spirit

1 Paulos Huang. (2022). Martin Luther and the Third Enlightenment Forum, Season One: Martin Luther and the Third Enlightenment Series No. 7. Finland: International Journal of Chinese and Western Studies.

2 Martin Luther. (1955). *Luther's Works*, Vol. 12, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan, Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

3 Martin Luther (1955). *Luther's Works*, Vol. 12, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan, Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

(Martin, 1955:375-376).⁴

On this basis, Luther further argued that the scriptural metaphysical tradition of the Catholic Church in his time neither truly recognized its own sin and impotence to justify, nor truly experienced and acknowledged the extensive scope and depth of Christ's grace. The Aristotelian tradition underpinning Catholicism insisted that humans could maintain some knowledge of God through reason. Concurrently, the blood of Christ was viewed only as a "cause of merit," through which individuals could accumulate their own merits via the "redemption" of various religious rites to achieve sanctification (Martin, 1955:377).⁵

Drawing on *Psalms* 51, Luther unreservedly argued that such a Catholic progression leads only to idolatry and sin. Luther believed that Catholic believers have always based the trust and certainty of faith on the metaphysics of the Aristotelian tradition and the religious inheritance and rituals of the papists. In contrast, Christ's salvation and trust are meant to be found in the midst of profound despair and powerlessness over oneself. Christ's love is never directed toward the visible, tangible being but rather toward the "nothingness" of human thoughts and actions, which lack the power to transcend. It is precisely in the "abyss" of humanity's unspeakable and unthinkable love for God that Christ's love operates. Through his death on the cross, Christ gives new life to humanity and bridges the gap between humans and God. Anyone who tries to build faith through rational speech and thought will inevitably rely on themselves and the world, leading to a "bottom-up" dead end. True love and grace are embodied in Christ Himself and require no "additions" or "deletions" from humans. Christ can only be found in the "invisible," in opposition to the visible (Martin, 1960:3-4, 208).⁶

This reasoning is also reflected in the current series of studies on "Martin Luther and the Third Enlightenment" at Shanghai University. Prof. Paulos Huang, the initiator of this series, argues that the prejudice and neglect of Luther's biblical interpretation in the Chinese-speaking world are significant. Professor Huang emphasizes that the study of Luther should not be confined to the narrow category of Western medieval religions. Instead, it should address and dispel the longstanding narrow understanding of Luther's thought in the Chinese-speaking world. Frequently, Chinese scholars assume that since Luther's theoretical ideas stem from studying the Bible, his interpretive ideas are confined solely to the religious field and the Reformation movement. Such a one-sided view inevitably overlooks the valuable contributions and significance of Luther's thought. As will be further discussed in the next section, Luther's critique of Catholic thought through his interpretation of the *Psalms* also addresses important themes of subjectivity in the history of Western thought and philosophy.

3 The Emancipation of Subjectivity Emphasized in Luther's Interpretation of the Psalms and its Critique of Humanism

As mentioned above, Luther focused on the second, eighth, twenty-third, twenty-sixth, forty-fifth, and fifty-first *Psalms* in the Psalter because these chapters address many important discursive themes. The progression of subjectivity and humanism is central to the interpretation of these *Psalms*.

Regarding the long-standing suppression of subjectivity and individual freedom in Catholicism, Luther made a clear case for the emancipation and liberation of individual faith. According to Luther,

4 Martin Luther. (1955). *Luther's Works, Vol. 12*, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan, Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

5 Martin Luther.(1955). *Luther's Works, Vol. 12*, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan, Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

6 Martin Luther. (1960). *Luther's Works, vol. 12* . Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

the religious tradition derived from Aristotle only brought slavery and oppression to human faith and the pursuit of truth. (Martin, 1960:238).⁷ In the Catholic system, each individual was required to be absolutely subservient to the centralized religious political power. Each person's sins needed to be regularly cleansed through penitential rites such as confession. Dogmas that emphasize religious authority, such as papal infallibility, served as obstacles to a direct connection between the individual and Christ.

Luther's interpretation of the *Psalms* also emphasizes his concept of "justification by faith." According to Luther, an individual's search for truth and salvation does not require the mediation of any religious authority. One simply needs to believe in and accept Jesus Christ to directly receive and experience the grace of salvation and justification. Conversely, if one seeks to achieve absolute goodness and righteousness apart from Jesus Christ, relying solely on reason or will, this is the very path Luther vehemently criticized. Thus, any humanistic path is under the power of Satan and opposed to Christ (Martin, 1960:13-14).⁸

According to Luther, anyone who seeks to separate from the blood of Christ and define God in metaphysical terms by relying on reason is equally sinful and idolatrous. Attempting to know God through the metaphysical path of the "visible" leads inevitably to the Greek philosophical tradition within Catholicism, making one an enemy of Christ. Therefore, through his "invisible" way of faith, Luther rejected all humanistic approaches.

Through his exegesis of the *Psalms*, Luther consistently criticized the metaphysical approach of "seeing and thinking" in interpreting theological themes, implementing his paradoxical situated exegesis of Scripture. As Luther articulated in the philosophical outline of *Heidelberg Disputation*, "Whoever wishes to apply Aristotelian philosophy to the interpretation of theology without jeopardizing his own soul must first become foolish in Christ" (Martin, 2005:28).⁹ Similarly, regarding the question of truth, Luther repeatedly emphasized through the *Psalms'* passages on sin that humans cannot attain absolute truth on their own. The only path to truth is through the paradox of the "cross," meaning that only those who confess their sin and impotence can be reborn in the truth of Christ through His crucifixion. Therefore, acknowledging our sins and limitations before God is the sole way to approach the truth, which is granted to us by grace through faith. It is only through faith in Christ that we are truly "justified" (Martin, 1960:20-21).¹⁰

With regard to human freedom and will, Luther expounded on their paradoxical nature. The renowned Lutheran scholar Thomas Mandoma provides an insightful summary of this issue. According to Mandoma, Luther believed that while we possess the will and freedom to pursue goodness in our daily lives, these should not be suppressed by narrow religious authorities. However, when confronted with God's law, we inevitably realize that our will and freedom are constrained by sin. True freedom can only be experienced through the new life in Christ. Consequently, Luther's theory distinguishes between various paradoxical contexts, requiring different approaches for different situations. In discussing human justification, sin, and freedom, Luther differentiates between "before God (Coram Deo), before the world (Coram Mundo), before humanity (Coram Hominibus), and before oneself (Ipse Coram)," making nuanced distinctions. Regardless, Luther asserted that the transition from hidden, unseen love to visible love is achieved

7 Martin Luther.(1960). *Luther's Works*, vol. 12, Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

8 Martin Luther. (1960). *Luther's Works*, vol. 12, Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

9 Martin Luther.(2005)."The Heidelberg Debates," translated by Liu Xingshi, in *Luther's Collected Works*, vol. 1, Shanghai: Sanlian Bookstore.

10 Martin Luther.(1960). *Luther's Works*, vol. 12, Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

solely through “Christ-centered” faith (Thomas, 2018:188).¹¹

Through his interpretation of the *Psalms*, Luther completely rejected all natural theology and the subjective approach while simultaneously affirming the subject in “Christocentricity.” This concept involves rediscovering the dignity and value of human spiritual life from the perspective of the unity of Spirit, Soul, and Flesh in Christ (Paulos, 2021: 18).¹² By doing so, Luther deconstructed the idolatrous authority of medieval religious organizations and all humanistic approaches. This paradoxical reasoning has increasingly garnered scholarly attention in the context of contemporary intellectual history. Despite originating in the Reformation period, it gradually faded from Western intellectual history, with Melancthon’s subsequent theory criticized as a metaphysical revival in the modern era.

The current series of studies on “Luther and the Third Enlightenment” presents a unanimous perspective on this issue. This series argues that Luther’s interpretation of the *Psalms* rejected all forms of humanism of his time while simultaneously liberating and awakening human subjectivity. It is posited that Luther’s thought initiated key concepts of modernity such as rationality, science, democracy, fairness, liberty, and justice. However, beginning with René Descartes and continuing through the Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the rational aspect of the individual increasingly dominated. By the time of modern scientific positivism, human reason was exalted to such an extent that it effectively denied God. This approach negates the limitations and original sin inherent in humanity, affirms the extremity of human ability and freedom, and implicitly suggests that humans can become gods.

The series contends that Luther’s ideas, within the historical evolution of these intellectual movements, should be highly recognized for their contributions to continental intellectual history. Nonetheless, the extreme exaltation of human reason and freedom in Western modernity—despite its intellectual legacy from Luther—completely contradicts Luther’s exegetical thought and the *Bible* itself. Consequently, human subjectivity and rationality are misaligned, leading to contemporary ideological crises where fantasies of becoming gods and the use of big data to enslave and control others become inevitable.

Meanwhile, Luther has been largely “missing” in the Chinese academic world. This absence is partly due to the nature of China’s first and second Enlightenment movements, which took place in 1919 and 1978, respectively. These movements drew heavily on the achievements of contemporary Western thought but also inherited its limitations to some extent. Therefore, the current series of studies, which adopts Luther’s paradoxical approach, explicitly opposes “anthropocentrism” and promotes a “Christ-centered” perspective (Paulos, 2021: 11).¹³ The dialogue between Luther’s thought and different religious traditions within the Chinese context has already begun in various settings (Paulos, 2021:1).¹⁴

As for the interpretation of the *Psalms*, the contribution of Luther’s ideas to the development of the history of thought has been recognized and affirmed by contemporary thinkers such as Heidegger and Karl Barth. These thinkers have appreciated the depth of Luther’s insights and the

11 Thomas Mandoma. (2018). *The Collected Writings of Thomas Mandoma*, translated by Paulos Huang, Shanghai : Sanlian Publishing House.

12 Paulos Huang. (2021). *Martin Luther and the Third Enlightenment Series No. 2: Union with Christ: The Interaction between the Finnish School of Martin Luther Studies and the American Context*, Finland: International Journal of National and Western Studies.

13 Paulos Huang. (2021). *Martin Luther and the Third Enlightenment Series No. 2: The Interaction between the Finnish School of Martin Luther Studies and the American Context*. Finland: International Journal of National and Western Studies.

14 Paulos Huang. (2021). *Martin Luther and the Third Enlightenment Series No. 4: The Interaction between Martin Luther's Finnish School and the Chinese Context*. Finland: International Journal of Chinese and Western Studies.

often overlooked significance of his contributions. The paradoxical dimension of Luther's thought has been rediscovered and further developed in the reasoning of these and other contemporary philosophers. These acknowledgments serve as important affirmations of Luther's enduring influence in the history of thought.

4 The "Revival" of Luther's Relevant Ideas in Contemporary Intellectual History

As mentioned in the previous section, Luther's interpretation of the *Psalms* systematically critiques Aristotle's natural theological tradition and anthropocentrism through a Christocentric and paradoxical approach. However, the progression of anthropocentrism has flourished in modern intellectual history, especially with the rise of schools such as logical positivism and neo-Kantianism, which emphasize empirical evidence, reason, and will as the ultimate measures of all things. In this context, Luther's "theology of the cross" and his Christ-centered interpretation of the *Psalms* were inevitably devalued and forgotten.

In the twentieth-century development of continental philosophy, many schools emerged based on phenomenology. More importantly, the intellectual climate faced by continental philosophy at that time was strikingly similar to that of Luther's era. The early twentieth-century intellectual world was dominated by two main currents: subjective worldview philosophy and objective, rigid rational empirical science. During the Weimar period in Germany, these two approaches were deeply entangled. This atmosphere paralleled the period of Luther's Reformation, where the collapse of the Catholic religious system—an institution with over a thousand years of spiritual and intellectual domination—created widespread anxiety and a quest for certainty, truth, and value theory. Consequently, the search for a foundation for philosophical questions and truths led to an expansion of rationalism. At the beginning of the twentieth century, neo-Kantianism and scientific empiricism, which exalted rationality, became the dominant paradigms in various disciplinary fields in continental Europe.

In an intellectual context highly consistent with Luther's time, Heidegger offered a direct critique and deconstruction of the scientific positivism and neo-Kantianism of his era. Heidegger's approach explicitly inherited Luther's deconstruction of traditional metaphysics. Early in his career, Heidegger engaged with numerous philosophical and theological historical texts, including Christian writings and Oswald Spengler's works. Heidegger argued that the true historical object, the text, should not be treated as a rigid object of thought but rather as the living experience of the present, mirroring Luther's paradoxical approach to existence. From this perspective, Heidegger developed the significant methodology of "deconstruction" in his seminal work, *Being and Time*.

Luther's theories are directly mentioned and quoted in numerous places in Heidegger's phenomenological writings. In Heidegger's critique of scriptural theology and the ancient Greek tradition of Catholicism, he explicitly states, "As some of you may know, I originally read theology... Faith does not need the thought of 'being' at all; if it did, it would not be faith. Luther understood this best, though it has long been forgotten in his church (Martin, 2022:291)."¹⁵ In his hermeneutics of the existential turn in *Being and Time*, Heidegger highlights Luther's seminal position in his hermeneutical progression, "Aristotle -- New Testament -- Augustine -- Luther. The deconstruction of philosophy with the idea of research, i.e., the hermeneutics of actuality, according to pre-existence

15 Martin Heidegger. (2002). "The Reply to the Third Question at the Seminar in Zurich," 1951, edited by Laurence Paul Hemming, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

and pre-grasp (Martin, 2016:122)."¹⁶

As Heidegger revisited Luther's thought, the emergence of the French phenomenological-theological turn and discursive positivism also reflected Luther's influence. Although this trend, based on Heidegger's inheritance, occupies a significant position in contemporary French thought, the Chinese-speaking academy has largely overlooked the theological resources behind it. Existing textbooks fail to address these theological resources, and the lack of research on Lutheran theology, which underpins this trend, results in an insufficient interpretative framework.

Luther's theories are directly mentioned and quoted in numerous places in Heidegger's phenomenological writings. Among contemporary thinkers, Michel Henry, who significantly inherited from Heidegger, exemplifies the implicit influence of Luther's thought. Henry's emphasis on extreme immanence and subjectivity as the basis of all inquiries reflects the rational development of Luther's ideas. This represents a vital contribution of Luther's exegetical thought to the history of ideas, even though Henry himself may not have explicitly acknowledged Luther's influence. Karl Barth, one of Germany's most influential theologians, also highlights the significance of Luther's Reformation. Barth sees it as the landmark event that dismantled Greek metaphysical solipsism and the religious hegemony of Catholicism, returning people to the foundational event of faith. However, Barth notes that Luther's ideas and spirituality were subsequently distorted by the "conventionalized" metaphysics of religion, becoming incorporated into the "religious rights" of Protestant denominations. As Barth states, "Luther, in contrast to Melancthon and Calvin, was engaged in a typical 'unconventional' soteriology (Martin, 2020: 368)."¹⁷ The "unconventional" here refers not to the commonplace but to the "non-conventional" as opposed to the rigid metaphysical system, indicating a move beyond the conventional and universal, towards deconstruction and disassembly.

In summary, the theories of important thinkers like Heidegger and Karl Barth demonstrate that Western thought has greatly benefited from Luther's exegetical contributions, which advanced the concepts of "interiority" and "subjectivity." However, subsequent deviations from and denials of the essence of Luther's thought have led to various ills associated with the one-sided and extremist development of metaphysical reason. Therefore, a return to Luther's thought and approach in modern philosophy represents a certain "inevitability" in the history of thought. This lecture series aims to provide a significant breakthrough and renewal in the study of Western intellectual history within the Chinese-speaking world, as well as in exploring solutions to contemporary philosophical problems.

The lecture series "Luther and the Third Enlightenment," beginning in January 2022, will focus on the influence of Martin Luther on Heidegger's phenomenology and the subsequent theological turn in French phenomenology. The "reappearance" and inheritance of Luther's thought in contemporary philosophy are deeply reflected in the existentialist phenomenology initiated by Heidegger and the theological turn in French phenomenology that followed.

It is crucial to draw on the intellectual advances of Heidegger, Karl Barth, and others to uncover the implicit contributions of Luther's thought in contemporary intellectual history. The theories of Heidegger and Barth are credited with significant influence in the history of contemporary thought. Therefore, it is of great academic significance to excavate and recognize the implicit contributions of Luther's thought within these frameworks.

16 Martin Heidegger. (2016). *Theory of Being*. Translated by He Weiping, Beijing: Commercial Press.

17 Karl Barth. (2020). *Ecclesiastical Soteriology (Volume 1)*. Translated by Wang Jianxi, Hongkong: Tien Tao Shulou Publishing House, 2020.

5 Summary and Prospect

In summary, traditional interpretations often regard the *Psalms* primarily as literary and emotional expressions. However, Luther imbued these literary works with profound philosophical and theological significance. Luther's "theology of the cross" seeks to eradicate all humanistic and relational approaches to salvation and truth, thereby negating human sovereignty and attributing all authority to Christ.

Luther's objectives resonate with central theological and philosophical themes of modernity. In modern thought, reason and individual freedom are exalted, and methods of attaining truth, such as experience and feeling, are emphasized. This highlights the individual's "existential relationship" with the absolute truth, which is revealed and given. Religious movements like pietism and liberalism also stress an original "faith relationship" with God through their distinct approaches, whether through spiritual impulses or free will. Different denominations often invoke Luther's concept of "justification by faith," yet they tend to "relationalize" it by emphasizing the subjective aspect of faith. The famous existentialist theologian Paul Tillich, in *A history of Christian thought* dedicates considerable attention to Luther's ideas. However, his interpretation also follows modern tendencies by emphasizing the courage of choice and other existential aspects (Paul, 2008).¹⁸

Thus, while various theological schools appear to emphasize human sin and Christ's salvation, they have unconsciously conflated human nature and subjectivity with questions of absolute truth, such as doctrines of salvation and sanctification. This conflation transforms the absolute truth of Christ into a relational truth. As Karl Barth comments on the history of subsequent theology, "Luther's theological phenomenon ... could survive the collegiate theology of Melanchthon and Calvin and their successors, and all that it may have lost in the process should not prevent us from appreciating that, for the sake of the ecclesiastical character of the Reformation, this process was necessary (Karl, 2020:370)." ¹⁹

The most direct manifestation of this "relational" perspective of absolute truth in contemporary mainland churches is evident in the various religious laws, regulations, and "religious exercises" implemented in church practice and teaching. In denominations with such tendencies, although they explicitly teach the "dimensional Christ," they inadvertently emphasize human "acceptance" and "response" in salvation and "practice," especially the so-called "active" spiritual pursuit of sanctification after salvation. Believers are expected to strictly adhere to a set of prescribed religious laws and practices, such as praying and reading the *Bible* daily at specific times and regularly engaging in various "pursuit" actions. Failure to comply with these practices often leads to being labeled as not "good" Christians. This system of religious discipline, driven by the truth of "relationality," unwittingly mirrors the logic of Catholic monasticism. After Christ has redeemed us from a relationship of total hostility to one of reconciliation, this system suggests we must continue to pursue "victorious" relationships "from the bottom up." This approach results in the absurdity of needing Christ for salvation but relying on religious will and law for sanctification.²⁰

The widespread influence of a "relational" approach in contemporary philosophy, especially its fusion with fideism in the history of ideas, has been profoundly critiqued by the renowned French philosopher Quentin Meillassoux. Meillassoux's concept of "discursive positivism" begins with a refutation of contemporary "correlationism," which denies the existence of absolute truth beyond

18 Paul Tillich. (2008). *A History of Christian Thought*. Translated by Daiyi Yin, Beijing: Oriental Publishing House.

19 Karl Barth. (2020). *Ecclesiastical Dogmatics, Volume I*. Translated by Jianxi Wang, Hongkong: Tien Tao Book House Publishing House.

20 Investigation subject: A Reformed Church System in Liaoning; Time: 2017-2020; Place: Synagogues in Shenyang and Panjin, Liaoning.

the relational framework of "thought-being."

In Meillassoux's framework, "correlationism," which dominates contemporary philosophy, is seen as being entirely integrated with various approaches to faith. This integration stems from the relationship between faith and thought in contemporary philosophy. For example, Immanuel Kant critiqued metaphysical solipsism by delineating the boundaries of thought and reason, thereby limiting the scope of absolute truth. In postmodern thought, the trends of "no-truth" and "de-truth" have become increasingly dominant. If all truths can only be examined within the relationship between existence and thought (truth and us), then ontological absolute truth cannot be discussed. If thought is powerless over absolute truth, faith must fill the void. Consequently, the boundaries of thought become the triumph of "blind faith" (Quentin, 2018:97).²¹ This scenario has led to the chaotic emergence of various forms of fideism, reducing philosophy to the handmaiden of theology, and transforming thought into the embrace of godliness (Quentin, 2018: 96).²² Heidegger's "heaven, earth, man, and God" quadrangle and Levinas's "Absolute Other" have come to dominate the philosophical landscape through the lens of faith.

The "correlativist I-thought" (Quentin, 2018:99)²³ conceptualizes the relationship between being and thought in a way that may seem like "good news" for Christian theology. However, the "God" and "faith" accessible through contemporary Cartesian correlativist I-thoughts must, like Descartes' argument for God, exist in a framework akin to "Belarquism," which Heidegger also criticized (Martin, 2019: 5-15).²⁴ Just as Descartes argued for God through the existence of inner perfection, the various conceptions of God in modern contemporary philosophy, accessed through thinking and experience, bypass the centrality of Christ and may even oppose Him.

A prime example is the French philosopher Georges Bataille. Bataille explicitly acknowledged his inheritance from the negative theological progression of the Lutheran scholar and negative theologian Otto (Georges, 1970-1988: 251).²⁵ However, behind Bataille's emphasis on paradox and death lies a move towards a "theology of nothingness" and human sanctity, a position highly similar to Nietzsche's.

As evident from the above discussion, Luther's thought implicitly contributes to the theoretical development of various contemporary thinkers, even though the conclusions they reach may differ significantly. This basis also facilitates a dialogue between Christianity and Confucianism on the relationship between heaven and man, drawing from Luther's thought (Paulos).²⁶ Thus, the development of contemporary intellectual history has been significantly influenced by Luther's thought. Therefore, recognizing the implicit contribution of Luther's thought in contemporary intellectual history is crucial and should not be confined to the narrow field of Reformation history.

6 Conclusion

In summary, although it is commonly perceived that the interpretation of the *Psalms* is often confined to the realms of literature and hermeneutics, this paper has examined Luther's

21 Quentin Meillassoux.(2018). *After Finitude*.Translated by Wu Yan, Henan: Henan University Press.

22 Quentin Meillassoux.(2018). *After Finitude*.Translated by Wu Yan, Henan: Henan University Press.

23 Quentin Meillassoux.(2018). *After Finitude*.Translated by Wu Yan,Henan: Henan University Press.

24 Martin Heidegger. (2019). *History of Philosophy: From Thomas Aquinas to Kant*. Translated by Ruicheng Huang, Northwestern University Press.

25 Georges Bataille. *Œuvres complètes, vol 1*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard.

26 Paulos Huang. "On Several Issues of Confucian-Christian Dialogue: Reflections on Prof. Tian Wei's Great Work," <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/OWcVHBmqLoUGYcJ2xQyAiQ>. Accessed 6 Feb. 2024.

interpretation of the Psalms from a Reformation perspective. By delving into the profound philosophical and theological insights within Luther's interpretation, this paper aims to expand the current narrow academic positioning of Luther, which often restricts him to the domain of social and ecclesiastical history. Through discussing the contemporary recognition and "revival" of Luther's thought by thinkers such as Heidegger and Karl Barth, this paper demonstrates that the ideas presented in Luther's interpretation of the *Psalms* have significantly contributed to key areas of modern philosophy and theology. Therefore, the academic and practical significance of Luther's thought warrants further emphasis and exploration.

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