

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: An Inquiry
into Freedom

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis takes its structure from the prison poem "Stations on the Road to Freedom," written by Bonhoeffer in 1944. It is of a highly autobiographical nature and, as such, reflects his own perception of his life and thought up to that point in time. Within the poem are four stanzas, each representing a phase of his life and work. Thus, there are four chapters contained herein, each dealing with that period of time pertinent to the corresponding stanza.

The umbrella theme of freedom is one which is traced throughout all Bonhoeffer's major works, and is shown to be the driving force behind his theology and its application to life. Basically stated, freedom for Bonhoeffer is proper relationship in the social context. This context is of the broadest possible nature; it is not restricted to the sphere of one-to-one. Rather, it encompasses all relational aspects of man's life. Since Bonhoeffer believes man is always and everywhere social man, the ramifications are far-reaching. Freedom, then, is not a "thing" but a relationship.

This thesis attributes as much import to Bonhoeffer's active struggle for freedom in Germany and the world as it does to his theology. An historical-contextual method has made possible a chronological study of Bonhoeffer's life and work, where the consideration of each is accorded its due. The author believes that to neglect either aspect is to miss the fullness and richness of Bonhoeffer's contribution. A more detailed discussion of these and other factors is found in the introduction.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work is dedicated to my husband,
Keith Drouin,
who alternately
cooked dinner or ate out,
accompanied my insomnia or tucked me in early,
threatened and cajoled,
and generally supported me in every way.

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INTRODUCTION

A. Choosing the topic

The concern of this thesis is Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Why? He was a man whose life, to a lot of minds, embodied two seeming polarities: theologian/pastor/university lecturer and counterespionage agent; active member of the resistance movement in Nazi Germany. This very brief, catchall statement may seem like sensationalism, but its truth is undeniable and thus it speaks to us.

At the age of thirty, he was barred from his academic post; when he was thirty-four, the pulpit was closed to him; at thirty-five, written publication was forbidden; and, with his imprisonment at thirty-seven, even conversation with his friends was denied him. Yet, each time this narrowing circle came closer, his acting and thinking gained power and stretched into new dimensions. When he was silenced for good at thirty-nine, he began to speak more loudly than ever before.¹

What is it about this man's life which speaks to us and draws us to look more closely? The essence of the answer lies in those "polarities": our conception of the world and our conception of religion. On the one hand, we have a daily experience of our secular world; on the other, we carry in our heads certain ideas of God and things religious. We suffer under the concept deus ex machina. This is the God-of-the-gaps of which Bonhoeffer speaks in Letters and Papers from Prison. (Without jumping too far ahead of ourselves by looking at Bonhoeffer's last theological statements, we must clarify the reasons we feel there are mutually opposing elements at work here.) God for us has become a God-of-the-gaps because we have pushed God out to the boundaries of our lives. We answer life's daily questions very well all on our own. Psychology, sociology, politics, medicine, industrialization, mass media, astronomy, space travel, the natural sciences—all these

¹Eberhard Bethgé, "The Challenge of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Life and Theology" in World Come of Age, ed. by Ronald Gregor Smith, p. 22.

provinces of the universe and human activity fill our lives more and more with the answers we need. It is only in boundary situations--in crises--that we call upon God. God fills the gaps we cannot ourselves fill: the reasons for dying of cancer, losing a child, natural disasters (cite insurance companies and their "act of God" clauses), etc.. A final, desperate attempt to save God comes with inwardness and pietism. Concomitant with this is the sphere of religion as the place of God. So religion becomes another sphere of life alongside government and politics, family life and work, medicine and science: a place for everything and everything in its place.

Against this backdrop, I would like to highlight the phenomenon of men and women who resisted Nazi terror and sought to undo the regime. We think their courage truly remarkable and wonder if in the same position we today could respond as bravely. Could we "do the right thing"? Furthermore, when we scrutinize the roster of resistance members we see "diplomats, generals, professors, journalists, lawyers, top civil servants, high men of labour, a few industrialists, a sprinkling of clergymen. . . ."¹ Many of us stop at this point and wonder about what kind of resistance activity a clergyman would take up. When one of these clergymen is also a university lecturer, established theologian-on-the-rise, and a ranking member of the early ecumenical movement, we begin to admire.

We discover he entered the Nazi counterintelligence agency ostensibly to put his international ecumenical ties at the service of the German military secret service, but in reality to put them at the disposal of the Resistance. When coupled with the fact that he and his family were intimately involved in putsch and assassination conspiracies, we begin to be puzzled. We wonder about his crossing the border between religion and politics and assume he must have traded a religious role for a political one. How else could it be?

The purpose of this thesis is to prove that this is not so. It is to prove that what we perceive as polarities in his life were not polarities in his thought. Yes, there were new twists and tangents.

¹Larry Rasmussen, Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Reality and Resistance, p. 177.

There were deletions and additions. But the fabric of Bonhoeffer's life and thought is remarkably of one piece. Theologian and political activist are seen as one in the following anecdotal report. While in the prison yard, a companion on daily walks asked Bonhoeffer how a pastor could be involved in politics. Bonhoeffer answered that if a drunk driver were to kill people in the streets, it would be his duty not only to bury the dead and console the families of the victims but also to get the drunk out from behind the wheel.¹

B. Methodological problems

Now that I know Bonhoeffer speaks to me in a unique way, my problem becomes clear: how do I speak of him? I do not hope to do this in a way which is unique--the amount of research on this subject makes uniqueness a matter of more and more difficulty. But I do intend to speak of him in a way which concerns me.

This brings us to the method employed here. I began my research by reading Bethgé's biography.² This exceptional piece of work pointed up the basic unity of Bonhoeffer's thought and life. When I turned to secondary sources to get an idea of the kinds of questions and arguments prevalent, I grew more and more dissatisfied. Their methods³ and questions were not mine. They appeared to me as fragmentary or reified or dry. Although most acknowledged the importance of Bonhoeffer's life in understanding his thought, they sought to treat various aspects of it in isolation.

¹Otto Dudzus, "Arresting the Wheel" in I Knew Dietrich Bonhoeffer, ed. by Wolf-Dieter Zimmermann, p. 82. (hereinafter referred to as IKDB)

²Eberhard Bethgé, Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Man of Vision, Man of Courage. (hereinafter referred to as Biography)

³The scope of this essay cannot hope to include a critique of other works. Notwithstanding their quality and the need for these works, the reader is referred to an excellent critique of methods used by some scholars in treating Bonhoeffer. See Clifford Green, Dietrich Bonhoeffer: The Sociality of Christ and Humanity, pp. 7-42. I express my debt to this work for helping me to come to an understanding in this matter.

Although this kind of work is essential to be able to come to a fuller understanding of Bonhoeffer's work, what appealed to me was the whole. After grappling with these varied approaches and themes of several scholars, I hit upon the clue which Bonhoeffer himself provided: "Understanding cannot be separated from the existence in which it has been won."¹ From this I took my cue.

Bethgé's definitive biography has beyond all doubt established the closest affinity between Bonhoeffer's life and thought. The relevance of the biographical can no longer be disputed. But the study of Bonhoeffer cannot be reduced to one or the other without clearly doing damage to the whole. Cite the following quotes on Bonhoeffer:

His enduring significance is better explored in a biography than in an analysis of his theology.²

. . . the story of a man's life does not create his thought.³

It will be the attempt of this essay to find the mean path between the attitudes expressed above. To be more succinct, interspersed where it is needed for illumination, the reader will find pertinent biographical data. By keeping to a biographical dimension, we shall find that psychologism and reductionism are avoided without losing sight of the importance of the context. We shall see how life and theology informed each other in Bonhoeffer as the warp and weft of a fabric; therefore, I feel the best approach to be an historical-contextual method.⁴ The next section will make clear the procedure.

C. The scope and structure

The treatment of the "whole" will necessarily demand an economy within such a limited space. The "historical" aspect of the method

¹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, p. 55. (hereinafter referred to as CD)

²John McQuarrie, New York Times Book Review, June 21, 1970, p. 5, cited by Green, p. 43, note 7.

³André Dumas, Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologian of Reality, p.37, cited by Green, p. 32.

⁴Green, pp. 10-12.

will lead us on a chronological path which begins with Bonhoeffer's period of academia and leads us on to his thoughts before death. The "contextual" points to the personal and social matrix in which this thinking was done.¹ The framework I have chosen for development is the Tegel² poem Stations on the Road to Freedom.³ This was written the day after the failed assassination attempt on Hitler on July 20, 1944, more than a year after Bonhoeffer's arrest and imprisonment.

This poem is divided into four stanzas named Discipline, Action, Suffering, and Death.⁴ Each chapter in this work will deal with that phase of Bonhoeffer's life which led to the attainment or realization of each of these states, and with the works chronologically pertinent to each phase. This poem is highly autobiographical in that it reflects both the movements of his thought and life from his own perspective. That perspective was won during the period of "Suffering," when "Death" was clearly a foreseeable possibility.

The clue to understanding this poem, indeed the whole of Bonhoeffer, is in its title. It is my contention that "Freedom" is the basic category of his work, and it is his understanding of it which informs his Christology/anthropology and soteriology.

Freedom in Bonhoeffer never became a closed system. The reason for this is that "freedom by its very nature does not lend itself to system. It is the untranslatable, enigmatic quality that enables persons to 'be in relation,'"⁵

Freedom is not a quality of man, nor is it an ability, a capacity, a kind of being that somehow flares up in him. Anyone investigating man to discover freedom finds nothing

¹Green, p. 11.

²Tegel Military Prison in Berlin where Bonhoeffer was held from his April 1943 arrest to his October 1944 removal to a Gestapo Prison.

³Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Stations on the Road to Freedom" in Letters and Papers from Prison, pp.370-71. (hereinafter referred to as LPP)

⁴Full reprint at end of this introduction.

⁵Donald Bachtell, "Freedom in Bonhoeffer" in A Bonhoeffer Legacy, ed. by A. J. Klassen, p. 331.

of it. Why? Because freedom is not a quality which can be revealed - it is not a possession, an object, nor is it a form of existence - but a relationship and nothing else.¹

As we shall see later, being-in-relation is for Bonhoeffer of prime importance. "Freedom as relational" is the catchphrase the reader should bear in mind. It has ramifications for all of Bonhoeffer's work as well as life.

Bonhoeffer's concept of freedom, although as we saw it was never systematized, nevertheless was, from the outset very carefully presented in his works. He paints for us a picture of divine freedom whereby God created out of the void. It is out of freedom that God binds himself to man, not out of freedom keeping himself separate. God is in relation to man. With the fall man lost freedom, i.e. proper relation. With Adam, we have man who is unfree by setting himself up as an "I" over against a "Thou." As centre of his own universe, man is unfree. With Christ however, man is again restored to freedom. The Creator-creature relationship is once again in perspective. For Bonhoeffer, God and Christ and the Word are personal. The Word speaks to man ever anew. And Christ is the personal being who stands central to the form of all reality. For man reality is concrete, and freedom must therefore be a concretion, i.e. relational, within reality.

His concept of freedom is framed in theology, rooted in ontology, interpreted and realized in Christology, and shaped by each existential situation. To disregard any one of these dimensions of freedom would miss the full scope which Bonhoeffer wishes to place within our view.²

In Bonhoeffer's works we shall see that this concept of freedom has ever wider consequences, and these he vigourously applied in his own life. In other words, the life situation in which he found himself was clearly one of disharmony. Bonhoeffer's response was a movement from pacifism to active resistance. As this was the basic movement of his life and found reflection in his thought, it will be taken up as a sort of sub-theme throughout this paper. Freedom as being-in-proper-

¹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall/Temptation, p. 37. (hereinafter referred to as CFT)

²Bachtell, p. 340.

relation had ultimately been displaced by power, and power for Bonhoeffer is our main soteriological problem. Finally, here we have arrived at the crux. We have a triangle of Christology, anthropology, and soteriology and the key to unlock it is freedom.

A final word on freedom as relational: being in relationship is not confined to the human sphere of one-to-one. It is also relationship between God and man, man and man, and very importantly it is also between man and institution, between institution and institution, between institution and community, and between community and community. Freedom has a universal scope and it is an event in which people share and participate. Freedom is grounded existentially in sociality. It is sociality with which we find Bonhoeffer concerned in the next chapter.

STATIONS ON THE ROAD TO FREEDOM

Discipline

If you set out to seek freedom, then learn above all things to govern your soul and your senses, for fear that your passions and longing may lead you away from the path you should follow. Chaste be your mind and your body, and both in subjection, obediently, steadfastly seeking the aim-set before them; only through discipline may a man learn to be free.

Action

Daring to do what is right, not what fancy may tell you, valiantly grasping occasions, not cravenly doubting—freedom comes only through deeds, not through thoughts taking wing,
Faint not nor fear, but go out to the storm and the action, trusting in God whose commandment you faithfully follow; freedom, exultant, will welcome your spirit with joy.

Suffering

A change has come indeed. Your hands, so strong and active, are bound; in helplessness now you see your action is ended; you sigh in relief, your cause committing to stronger hands; so now you may rest contented. Only for one blissful moment could you draw near to touch freedom;
then, that it might be perfected in glory, you gave it to God.

Death

Come now, thou greatest of feasts on the journey to freedom eternal;
death, cast aside all the burdensome chains, and demolish the walls of our temporal body, the walls of our souls that are blinded,
so that at last we may see that which here remains hidden. Freedom, how long we have sought thee in discipline, action, and suffering;
dying, we now may behold thee revealed in the Lord.

CHAPTER I

TOWARDS DISCIPLINE

A. Biographica¹

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's decision to become a theologian and minister was made as a young boy. In this decision he never wavered, although his family had no connections with the church as such and were not churchgoers. His father and brother Karl-Friedrich were agnostics, so there is no determinant there either. The decision was not considered all that eccentric since there were forebears who had entered this field. The family, through the mother, had its own direct relationship with the Bible and to the history and traditions of the church, and the children were raised in the German Lutheran tradition. There is no evidence of a case of hero worship of one theologian or another; with the exception of Karl Barth, Bonhoeffer never allowed himself to be swayed by any theologian to a large degree. This, in effect, is what Bethgé sees as the clue to understanding Bonhoeffer's choice: a drive for independence, and it is pointed up very well in the following anecdote. After being informed of their brother's wish to study theology and become a minister, his siblings (especially the three elder brothers) tried to persuade him that he was taking the path of least resistance and pointed out that the church he would be joining was boring, provincial, petty, and bourgeois. To this, the fourteen-year-old Dietrich confidently and rather defiantly replied: "In that case I shall reform it!"² Indeed,

¹The sources for this section are pp. 20-23 and pp. 36-41 in Bethgé's Biography.

²Biography, p. 22

in such a diversified and well-accomplished family it is no wonder that there should be the need in a young boy to establish himself in some independence. And so it stood.

In 1923, at the age of seventeen, Bonhoeffer entered Tübingen University and studied the course in theology. In 1924, he entered the University of Berlin and that summer he and his brother went to Rome. It was here that Bonhoeffer got his first taste of the Catholic Church, and he was very much impressed with the international flavour of the clergy to be seen there. It made him realize the very narrow and provincial nature of his own church in Germany. This internationalism may be seen as the impetus to his future ecumenical work. What is important for us here is the Rome trip laying open to Bonhoeffer the very sociological nature of the church.

In 1927 Bonhoeffer completed his studies in Berlin and qualified for his licentiate with the doctoral dissertation Sanctorum Communio. Bonhoeffer spent the year 1928 as an assistant pastor in Barcelona, Spain, and returned to Berlin in 1929 to become assistant to a professor at the University of Berlin. Bonhoeffer qualified for university teaching in July 1930 with his book Act and Being. September of that year saw him cross the Atlantic to attend Union Theological Seminary in New York as a Post-Doctorate Fellow. Upon his return to Berlin in 1931 he developed an intense commitment to the ecumenical movement, and at the same time took up a post as lecturer at the University of Berlin.

The years 1927 through 1931 were basically spent establishing himself academically in theology. The areas of concern in this chapter will be the two major works cited above where Bonhoeffer establishes the main categories of his theology. As we saw in the introduction, the major concern of this thesis is the interpretation of Bonhoeffer's writings and life in terms of what he understood as freedom. Freedom is relational and relationship presupposes sociality. Sanctorum Communio and Act and Being establish the base of sociality, which in turn would become the grounding of all his further thought; as such, it is imperative we understand his theological departure point.

There is other, much briefer, material which will also demand our attention. Although unrelated in that they are not major academic works, they are essential for us to understand Bonhoeffer's later movements from passive to active resistance. His theology of sociality heavily informed his later political thought, as did his involvement in the ecumenical movement. We shall therefore concentrate in this section on his thoughts on war and peace.

Finally, the end of the chapter will make clear the turning point in his life (becoming a true Christian), and why he himself came to see his situation in 1932 as being in "Discipline."

B. Sanctorum Communio

As was mentioned above, Bonhoeffer spent some time in Rome with his brother during 1924. "Unlike other Protestant pilgrims he was not angered or revolted by the Eternal City; on the contrary, he fell permanently in love with it."¹ He was struck by the air of universality about the Catholic Church; significantly, he never referred to his own background as "church" but as "Protestantism" in his letters home. The phenomenon of Church found a place to roost in Bonhoeffer at this time, and his concern for it never left him. It was the sociological constitution of the church which imprinted itself on his mind.

Three years later, when the time came to write his dissertation, it was the social category of Christian concepts which concerned him:

The more theologians have considered the significance of the sociological category for theology, the more clearly the social intention of all the basic Christian concepts has emerged. Ideas such as 'person', 'primal state', 'sin', and 'revelation' are fully understandable only in relation to sociality.²

The category of sociality may be seen as programmatic for the whole of this work, for Bonhoeffer sees all of human life as social. He borrowed philosophical and sociological categories and used them to develop theological concepts in a theology of sociality. It is this

¹Biography, p. 37.

²Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Sanctorum Communio, trans. by Ronald Gregor Smith, p. 13. (hereinafter referred to as SC)

theology which informs all Bonhoeffer's subsequent thought.

Sanctorum Communio is Bonhoeffer's most complex and demanding book. There are some who interpret it as an aberration, and as such, they feel it an obstacle to finding a continuity between it and the later "secular" writings from prison. Among those writers in this group are Hanfried Mueller and John Phillips.¹ On the other hand, we have writers such as Eberhard Bethgé and John Godsey who find no problem in seeing a basic continuity throughout Bonhoeffer's work and yet still see this book in a rather narrow light, seemingly unwilling to grant the category of sociality the status of foundation for the work.² The reason for the confusion, among those who agree with each other as well as those who disagree with each other, is that it has been taken for granted that Bonhoeffer's major concern in this work is ecclesiology. Granted that the bulk of the book does deal with the church, it is not a narrow ecclesiology but one of the most catholic. It is my intention to prove that we cannot subsume sociality under the rubric of ecclesiology when dealing with this book; rather, it is the reverse. Bonhoeffer treats many theological topics: doctrines of creation, sin, God, revelation. He also discusses many anthropological subjects: the Christian understanding of person, community, ethics, history, and society.³

What Bonhoeffer is here trying to do is to move theology into a world of persons, community, history, and relevance. In fact, the whole argument of the book centers around the idea of "person," and it is dealt with as "individual" and as "corporate." Once these definitions are set, they are transferred to the realm of theology where Bonhoeffer develops them in terms of "primal state," "sin," and finally, in great detail, "revelation" and the church.

1. Person as relational

When Bonhoeffer discusses "person" he means a socio-ethical historical person. He is not appealing to any ideal notion of person but

¹Green, p. 53. ²Green, p. 53. ³Green, p. 56.

the one who finds expression in everyday concretion. As a socio-ethical being, a person is necessarily always in relation with other socio-ethical beings.

. . . the individual exists only through the 'other'. The individual is not solitary. For the individual to exist, 'others' must also exist.¹

We must now discover who this "other" is. Bonhoeffer was certainly not subsuming the individual into or under the social. The individual is not subordinated to the social process; he remains independent and an individual. However, he is inescapably social--and this means inescapably in relation.

By placing "persons" in a socio-ethical light, Bonhoeffer is stressing the will of the person and the need for decisions on the part of that person. When the "I" encounters the "Thou" of the other, he is coming up against another like himself: a person who wills and decides.

But the two I-forms must be strictly distinguished. The Thou, as a form which has reality, is independent in principle, over against the I in this sphere. Its essential difference from the idealist object-form is that it is not immanent in the mind of the subject. It is a barrier to the subject, it activates a will with which the other will comes into conflict, as an I for a Thou.²

Negatively stated, the Thou is a barrier up against which the will of the I runs. The egotism and dominating pretensions of people are checked and limited as they run up against the wills of others. Power limits are set and maintained. Proper relation is possible.

The I-Thou relation is the social basic-relation for Bonhoeffer.³ The theological basis for this anthropology is the Christian concept that man is always man-before-God where God is always God-as-Divine-Other. The I-Thou relationship does not allow for the I to view the Thou as an object, whether the Thou be human or divine. "Every other concept of person cuts through the abundance of life of the actual

¹SC, p. 32. ²SC, p. 33.

³Green, p. 93, note 35. Green maintains a truer translation of the German is not "basic social relation" but "social basic-relation."

[other] person."¹

It is a Christian recognition that the person, as a conscious person, is created in the moment when a man is moved, when he is faced with responsibility, when he is passionately involved in a moral struggle, and confronted by a claim which overwhelms him. Concrete personal being arises from the concrete situation. . . . For Christian Philosophy the human person comes into being only in relation to the divine person which transcends [him], opposing and subjugating [him]. . . . The Christian person arises solely from the absolute distinction between God and man; only from the experience of the barrier does the self-knowledge of the moral person arise. The more clearly the barrier is recognised, the more deeply the person enters into responsibility.²

With this paragraph, ethical decision-making lends weight to the concept of history. It is in history, in concrete situations, that the person finds transcendence and it is in the form of the Thou: God is present to, not immanent in, man in social relation.

God, or the Holy Spirit, comes to the concrete Thou; only by his action does the other become a Thou for me, from which my I arises. In other words, every human Thou is an image of the divine Thou. The character of a Thou is in fact the form in which the divine is experienced; every human Thou has its character from the divine Thou. . . . the divine Thou creates the human Thou, and because God wills and makes it, this human Thou is real, absolute, and holy, like the divine Thou. . . . But since one man's becoming Thou for another does not in principle alter anything about the Thou as a person, it is not his person as an I that is holy, but the Thou of God, the absolute will, here visible in the concrete Thou of social life. The other man is Thou only insofar as God makes him this. It is only in God that the claim of the other resides; but for this very reason it is the claim of the other.³

2. Person as corporate

Now that we have established the principles behind the concept of person as individual-in-relation, we must push on to discover how these individuals collectively, i.e. in groups, relate. A society or community is not simply a group of individuals; the whole is more than just the sum of its parts. As persons in groups, we form various organizations and institutions within the community and these are formed

¹SC, p. 31. ²SC, p. 31. ³SC, p. 36.

for various reasons. These communities and institutions are formed by deliberate willing, as in the individual. Bonhoeffer uses the common distinction between two sociological types of organizations: Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft. The former type of community is that which is willed and established as an end in itself: the family, friendships, cultural and recreational organizations, peoples and nations, and mankind as a whole. The church, of course, is in a special sense a Gemeinschaft; later, when we discuss revelation, this theme will be further developed. The latter type, Gesellschaft, is willed into being as a means to a common end, political organizations, various institutions in the business community, etc.. Gemeinschaft-willing constitutes a structure of meaning whereas Gesellschaft-willing establishes a structure of purpose.¹

God does not desire a history of individual men, but a history of the community [Gemeinschaft] of men. Nor does God desire a community which absorbs the individual into itself, but a community of men. In his sight the community and the individual are present at the same moment, and rest in one another.²

As ethical individuals, we hear the call to the ethical. As individuals in community, there is a call to ethical corporate life. The concept of personhood is transposed to corporate life with all its socio-ethical, historical responsibility. The personal model of the I-Thou relationship characterizes Gemeinschaft, and gives rise to a collective ethical spirit. At this point, Bonhoeffer begins to discuss the idea of Kollektivperson.

Kollektivperson is the objective spirit of a Gemeinschaft--whether it be one of friendship, family, church, or even humanity. The notion of reciprocity which we found in the interpersonal I-Thou is inherent in the Gemeinschaft because individuals are not subordinated to the social process--they retain their individuality. Kollektivperson, as the objective spirit of any and all Gemeinschaften, is not the elevation of the social spirit to a status of superperson:

¹SC, p. 56. There is a tendency in English to, at times, apply community and society interchangeably. For this reason the German usage will be retained to remind the reader of the differentiation.

²SC, p. 52.

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it does not supersede the individual wills of which it is comprised. There is reciprocity between the individual(s) and the Gemeinschaften to which they belong. There can be no divorcing the ethical essence from the individual simply because he is in a group. The ethical is intrinsic to the notion of Kollektivperson:

. . . the very reason he applies to communities his own model of the human person is to guarantee that they are understood to have the same ethical-historical character of the individual person. The ethical sphere is not confined to the private moral questions of individuals.¹

In the most universal sense humanity can be called a Kollektivperson because of its constitution as a Gemeinschaft. As the most collective, universal I it stands before God--the divine Thou. As person, humanity stands before the other person of God. Bonhoeffer names created and fallen humanity Adam; the new humanity is the Kollektivperson of Christ. Bonhoeffer now turns to a treatment of humanity in the three realms of creation, sin, and revelation.

3. Applications to theology

It is only once Bonhoeffer has thoroughly defined the concepts he will be using that he transfers them to the realm of theology. We shall briefly see how he uses them to discuss the primal state (creation), sin (the fall), and revelation (in Christ).

a) The primal state

"Analogous to eschatology, the primal state is 'hope projected backwards', as Bonhoeffer puts it."² Any discussion of the state of creation before the fall can only be approached from the hindsight of what man now knows through revelation in Christ. Bonhoeffer is not concerned with the primal state as some kind of ideal religious prelude for ecclesiology, but is addressing himself to the problem of human nature as such--creation was a social reality.³ Bonhoeffer looks to

¹Green, p. 170.

²Green, p. 73, quoting the German edition of SC, p. 35.

³Green, p. 71.

distinguish man as created from man as sinner and to put these in perspective with the new humanity represented in Christ.¹ He puts these perspectives in his own language of sociality. Sociality in the created state belonged to all--to humanity as a whole--since we are all created social beings.

Bonhoeffer describes the primal community (Gemeinschaft) as one of mutual love and service:

Undoubtedly man in the primal state must be thought of as being in immediate community of service with God, as we find in Genesis 1 and 2. It is the concept of the church which first makes it clear that this immediate community means more than the ontic I-Thou relation. This community is a real connection of love between an I and an I. In the Christian conception of God, known to us from the revelation in Christ, the community of God and social community belong together. . . . So we maintain that the immediate community of God demands also the immediate community of man, that the latter is a necessary correlate of the former, and that it is no accident that we read in Genesis 2:18: 'It is not good that the man should be alone.' The immediate community of God is documented in the immediate community of man.²

And furthermore:

But what does immediate community mean? . . . In religious language, certainly, this community is built upon immediate and mutual love; but because love rules when it serves we have the problem here of a pure association of authority (Herrschaftsverband): by limitless serving God rules limitlessly over men.³

The importance of this concept of serving love is of great import for Bonhoeffer's later formulation of "being-there-for-others," which is so prominent in the prison writings.

b) Sin and the broken community

We have seen that Bonhoeffer distinguishes between Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft, and that he accords a special structure of meaning to the former which the latter, by its very nature, cannot claim. This does not mean that there is no authentic place for Gesellschaft in the created state nor the fallen state. Gesellschaft is that type of association which is willed towards self-preservation, and that in itself is not an evil.

¹SC, p. 40. ²SC, pp. 40-41. ³SC, p. 41.

Therefore sin in the community is not the newly-added individual will to self-preservation--which in fact makes community possible--but the sin is the will to affirm in principle oneself and not the other as value, and to acknowledge the other only in relation to the self. But it will be objected that this is precisely the nature of a society. Not so. A society is not built upon self-seeking, but on the instinct to self-preservation; and thus it is no more built upon the evil will than a community is.¹

It is here that the soteriological problem of power is defined for the first time. Willing is not the problem when it is kept in balance. But when willing becomes a quest for power over the other and the other becomes an object and not a Thou, we are clearly in the state of the Fall. "Whereas the primal relationship of man to man is a giving one, the state of sin is purely demanding."²

The Fall is exemplified in social and communal love by reversal of the direction of wills. In the primal state, whether in Gemeinschaft or Gesellschaft, the willing which constitutes is uni-directional. In sin, people will against each other and this leads to conflicts of power.

Every man [now] exists in a state of complete voluntary isolation: each man lives his own life instead of all living the same God-life. Each man now has his own conscience. Conscience did not exist in the primal state . . . Conscience can just as well be the ultimate prop for self-justification as the point at which Christ strikes home at man through the law.³

Sin, therefore, is rebellion against God and men. It is the height of isolation whereby man sets himself up as his own centre. "What is important is that the narrator sees some kind of separation arising through the Fall, that is, through the moral act of rebellion against God, by which the original community of God and man is lost to man."⁴

c) Revelation and the new humanity

Only after all of the above definitions and clarifications are set forth does Bonhoeffer tackle the problem of the church and its meaning for us. With Christ, as opposed to Adam, we have a representative of the new humanity and the model of the new (original) social basic-relation between God and man and between man and man. By placing Christ in the context of humanity we can see that Bonhoeffer is not being narrow

¹SC, p. 82. ²SC, p. 71. ³SC, pp. 71-72. ⁴SC, p. 42.

his ecclesiology but is speaking of the universal Gemeinschaft of humanity.

The reality of the new humanity in Christ is actualized by the Holy Spirit, where Christ is the initiator and reality of the new humanity. Christ is God's revelation and this revelation has the social form of the church.

Revelation is not an idea, a past historical happening, a doctrine, or an entity. It is a person, and since person and community are inseparable, the revelation of Christ is present in personal-communal form.¹

The church does not possess Christ as if Christ were the essence of the church at man's disposal; Christ is not a possessed attribute which is frozen into static being. The person and action of Christ is vicarious:

. . . for in him (Christ) as the foundation and body of the building of his church, the work of God is accomplished and consummated. And in this work Christ has a function which sheds clear light on the difference in principle between Adam and Christ; his function is vicarious . . . Adam's action is not deliberately vicarious but is on the contrary extremely ego-centric. . . . With the old mankind it is as if mankind falls anew each time one man incurs guilt, whereas in Christ mankind is placed--and this is the very essence of real vicarious action--once and for all in communion with God.²

Since Christ is present in personal-communal form in the church, this constitutes the church as Gemeinschaft. As such, it is an instrument of God's will. Relation to Christ presupposes man's relation to the church.³ Furthermore, God is only comprehensible when joined to the church.⁴

The church is the world of Adam being encountered by the new humanity in Christ. This is where, once again, the Thou is loved for his own sake and valued in himself.

In the church, Christ is present as Word and sacrament.

The structure of the objective spirit, in the forms in which it

¹Green, p. 73. ²SC, p. 107. ³SC, p. 39.

⁴SC, p. 97. Note the polemic against "liberal theology." Bonhoeffer held with Barth and the dialectical school that liberal theology had made God too 'haveable and graspable.'

is embodied, is clearly that of community, a way of acting, that is to say, which is filled with symbolic meaning. Its essential expression is in the cultus . . . The congregation gathered round the Word and the sacraments is certainly the representation of the church, both before itself and before God. . . . It is not enough to interpret the church as a community; it is indeed a community, but a community concretely defined as a community of spirit.¹

The *Sanctorum Communio* has now been defined, but Bonhoeffer by no means claims that this spells the end of fallen men. "Indeed, the *Peccatorum Communio* lives on in the *Sanctorum Communio*. The church is the historical kingdom of Christ, not the eschatological kingdom of God. It is not uncommon in Bonhoeffer's works to find him struggling to dialectically reconcile seemingly opposing factors. In fact, if one recalls our original discussion of the seeming polarity between his political action and his vocation, one will see that his dialectics went beyond his works and found expression in his life. In his next major work we shall once again follow him in his attempt to integrate two variant factors.

In summary, what we have seen in *Sanctorum Communio* is a Christology which is inescapably linked to an anthropology by means of a very particular soteriology. Christ restores man to his proper relation both to God and man, as well as to himself. The power of Christ overcomes the power of the isolated self.

C. Act and Being

The main concern of this work is theological anthropology. The issue of man's act and man's being is inherent in *Sanctorum Communio*, but within the concept of man as a willing, deciding, ethical being the emphasis was laid more on act than on a continuity of being. In the early decades of this century " . . . 'actualistic' and ontological positions in philosophy and theology were vying with each other . . .";² but there is more than concern over the outcome of this argument. Bonhoeffer brings to the fore in this work the soteriological problem of power; it was more than a passing interest, however, because

¹SC, p. 180. ²Green, p. 107.

it was a problem which he struggled with himself--thus there is a personal dimension. There will be more on this at the end of the chapter once we have discussed the book.

The structure of Act and Being deserves outline. It is divided into three parts. The first deals with philosophies of understanding man; the second sets up revelation in Christ as the only proper way to understand man; finally, the third part goes on to define more fully man 'in Adam' and 'in Christ.'

1. Philosophies of man

While in agreement with Barth that liberal theology had wrongly brought God so close to man that man had felt he "knew" God, Bonhoeffer disagreed with Barth in that he felt Barth had removed God totally from man. God is accessible to man--finitum capax infiniti--not through man's own means of self-reflection but through Christ. It is this self-reflection and self-centering as found in all philosophies which Bonhoeffer objects to in a radical way. This is the problem of the isolated, powerful self which we found in his first work and it comes to the fore here.

What offends Christian thought in any autonomous self-understanding is that it considers man capable of bestowing truth on himself, of transporting himself into the truth by his own resources, since it is reasonable to suppose that the 'basis' of existence must somehow be within truth (likeness to God) . . . 'Never being able to give oneself truth' represents the unattainability of a systematic metaphysics; for such knowledge as that would imply would signify a self-placing into the truth . . . for the world of the I untouched by grace is confined to the I . . . Only thought which, bound to the obedience of Christ, 'is' from the truth--can place into the truth.¹

And so we once again meet autonomous man--fallen man. He is existing alone in isolation, and it is of his own making.

It simply is not true that concrete man (including even the philosopher) is in full possession of the mind. Whoever countenances the idea that he need only arrive at himself to be in God is doomed to hideous disillusion in experiencing the utter introversion, the treadmill confinement to the self, of the very loneliest solitude,

¹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Act and Being, translated by Bernard Noble, pp. 71-72. (hereinafter referred to as AB)

with its tormenting desolation and sterility.¹

And when this happens, the I-in-isolation seeks to make itself
God:

If the world owes its being to the I, there is an exchange of roles between the I and the creator-god; God can no longer become the object of knowledge, but, since he cannot imaginably be the creature of the I, is somehow integrated with the I itself. Thereupon God 'is' only insofar as I think, i.e., enter myself in thought.²

It believes itself free and is captive, is overlord of all--yet is itself only vassal: that is what Protestant dogmatists mean by the corruption of reason. It is ontic narcissism, the cor curvum in se . . .³

Bonhoeffer's concern in these passages is best understood when we remember his concept of person as individual and as corporate--sociality--and how this is the way in which man should relate to fellow men as well as to God. The self-reflection of the individual is diametrically opposed to the faith of the Christian community which looks not to itself but to revelation in order to understand itself. It is clearly self-reflection versus faith. It is trying to seize God in an intellectual system.

What reason can learn from itself (thus Hegel) is revelation, and so God is incarcerated in consciousness. Through living reflexion on itself, the I understands itself from itself. It directly relates itself to itself, hence to God, in reflexion . . . One is like the very God one conceives. Thus intensified, such propositions are exposed as theologically intolerable. It is not because man is by nature God that God comes to him--on the contrary, he would not then need to come--but because he is utterly unlike God and never shapes his concept of God according to his own image. That is why God gives himself to man, that man may conceive him, and then--only then--man can indeed conceive him. This is an idea which has to find a place in Christian epistemology.⁴

Over against the self-in-isolation in philosophy, Bonhoeffer goes on to discuss the Christian understanding of the self.

2. The church as unity of act and being

Bonhoeffer goes to some lengths to prove that act is always an act of intentionality, and that being is always being directed towards

¹AB, p. 28. ²AB, p. 30. ³AB, p. 32. ⁴AB, pp. 41-42.

the transcendent--something which is other, something man is in-relation-to:

Only when existence [being], supposed in permanent orientation to transcendence, is said not to be able to understand itself (or only to understand that it does not understand itself) is the true sense of the act expressed: act as an ever-shifting 'with reference to', as utter intentionality, . . . act as 'direct' consciousness--actus directus.¹

Act without reflection on the self is the act of faith. Man is always in relation to the transcendent, he never controls it. We are moving away from epistemology and into the realm of sociality where the I is in relation to something other than itself.

Christ as revelation allows men to escape the isolation of self-reflection and to act directly through faith. The community of the church is not a community where the individual can own and cultivate Christ as a possession. The church is a community created by Christ and founded upon him, "one in which Christ reveals himself as the new man--or rather, the new humanity itself."² We again meet Christ as the Kollektivperson of the new humanity; the Person who liberates man from himself and places him in proper relation. Revelation is present in encounter with the other, the transcendent; revelation is present in the congregation. In the sociality of the congregation act and being are dialectically integrated.

In the congregation the being of revelation has continuity; it also has priority over the individual act of faith within that congregation. Being is prior to act (response to being). This being (in the congregation) necessitates act(s) (of faith).

For man, act is act-presupposing-being (or act-in-relation-to-being), and being is being-including-act. . . . Man is act in being, self in community, individual in humanity.³

The dialectic of act and being is upheld in the church through sociality. "Both the transcendental essay at act-subjectivism and the ontological attempt to establish the continuity of the I envisaged consistently the individual man, and he was the rock upon which they foundered."⁴ In searching for reality, philosophers have overlooked the fact that man is never simply an I, not even simply the I claimed

¹AB, p. 28. ²AB, p. 121. ³Green, p. 127. ⁴AB, p. 122.

by a Thou; man "invariably finds himself in some community, whether in 'Adam' or in 'Christ.'"¹ We remember that the old humanity, Adam, the Peccatorum Communio, lives on in the new humanity in Christ, the Sanctorum Communio. We shall now briefly look at how act and being are retained in tension both in "Adam" and in "Christ," each as Kollektivperson.

3. Man in Adam and in Christ

Adam, by "being in sin", also activates sin. In isolation, man refuses to be God's creature. Being in sin is being in isolation. The problems involved are manifold: a) the power of the knowing and interpreting I, b) the posture is one of dominance, c) the I is in isolation, and d) the I accuses itself in conscience.² In conscience the isolated I recognizes it has violated the sociality for which it was meant and calls upon its better-self. But the I is trying to restore itself by means of itself and its solitude remains intact. It is only Christ who can break through the solitude by placing the I in proper relation to God and to others.

Revelation is the foundation for seeing man in Adam as man in sin. In the church man sees himself through revelation and not through the I. In the congregation the being of revelation, Christ, is guaranteed continuity.³ The individual in congregation may still feel the call of conscience, but he knows he is borne by the congregation, for it is here he encounters forgiveness.⁴ But it is a reformed conscience, a Christian one. "Whoever seeks himself in Christ sees himself always in sin, but now the sin is no longer able to distract the attention from Christ--indeed, it is rather the basis from which I can contemplate Christ with such singleness of mind. I see my sin in the context of my having been forgiven by Christ."⁵

The transition from 'being in Adam' to 'being in Christ' is a movement which involves several themes: from autonomous self-understanding to understanding oneself from revelation; from trying to be a lord and creator to finding oneself as God's creature under the lordship of Christ; from isolated self-

¹AB, p. 122. ²Green, p. 125. ³AB, p. 124. ⁴AB, p. 131.

⁵AB, p. 178.

imprisonment to community; from the domination of the other and of nature to the love of others; from self-seeking to freedom for others; and from conscience as self-reflection and self-accusation to faith and forgiveness in Christ.¹

These movements occur only because of Christ's presence as person in sociality. In this matrix, Christ is the reality of the new humanity in both personal-individual and personal-communal encounters and relationships. He brings the freedom to be for others. People are restored to their original and authentic relations with one another and God.

D. Addresses on War and Peace

We shall now detour briefly in order to establish Bonhoeffer "politically" during this period. While in Barcelona as an assistant pastor to a German community, Bonhoeffer had occasion to give an address entitled Grundfragen einer christlichen Ethik.² This address is an obvious aberration in Bonhoeffer's thought because never again does he use this type of language nor speak in such a manner when dealing with these questions.³ At the tender age of twenty-two Bonhoeffer, although well read in theology, shows a marked lack of astuteness in affairs political. He quickly came to see the dangers of what he had said.

In the Barcelona address, Bonhoeffer clearly views war as sin, crime, and murder. But there is a rejection of pacifism because it is a lifeless interpretation of the commandment "Thou shalt not kill." The problem arises when another Volk attacks my Volk: am I to sacrifice my closest neighbour in order not to kill "the enemy"? Or am I to kill the enemy in order to save my neighbour? Bonhoeffer's choice to protect the neighbour has its foundation in the narrow interpretation of Volk as nationalistic and organic. Beside the exegetical and the national reasons, there is a third: pacifism "rejects God-willed his-

¹Green, pp. 130-31.

²Rasmussen, pp. 96-98. The portion quoted there was received by Rasmussen as a typewritten copy of the original from the Rev. Christfried Berger, East Berlin, who had obtained it from Eberhard Bethgé.

³Biography, p. 144.

tory of the strong over the weak."¹ As Bethgé says, Bonhoeffer is "not yet talking his own language."² In this address, although war is clearly depicted as criminal, it "can be the commandment of God for my Volk,"³ and as such can be justified, whether it is one of defense or of aggression. The Christian commandment of brotherly love does, however, make it an offense to hate your enemy while you are killing him. This makes for rather confusing reading.

As little as a year after Barcelona, changes in thought are clearly perceptible. An address given while in New York, Ansprache in New York,⁴ indicates a shift in meaning when Bonhoeffer speaks of Volk: it takes on a supranational, ecclesiological breadth. "It must never more happen that a Christian people fights against a Christian people, brother against brother, since both have one Father."⁵ There is a sympathy for peace movements which here finds expression. In fact, the whole of the address concerns his passion for peace, which as we shall see, comes more and more to the fore. The regard for sociality never falls to the wayside, and the commitment to peace is one based on his theology of sociality.

Bonhoeffer returned to Berlin from New York in June 1931. He was very much influenced by the social gospel movement, which at that time was receiving much attention at Union Theological. Although he had not come to terms with all the influences he felt during his stay, he did come out of his orthodox European shell:

He felt that political questions in which our students were so interested were on the whole irrelevant to the life of a Christian. Shortly after his return to Germany he became very much interested in ethical and political issues and for some time considered going to India to study Gandhi's movement . . . Once very unpolitical, he became a very astute political analyst.⁶

¹Rasmussen, p. 99. ²Biography, p. 86. ³Rasmussen, p. 99.

⁴Rasmussen, p. 100, quoting Gesammelte Schriften, ed. by Eberhard Bethgé, 2nd. ed. (Munich: Char. Kaiser Verlag, 1965), vol. I, p. 72-73. (hereinafter referred to as GS.)

⁵"Ansprache in New York", GS I, p. 72, cited by Rasmussen; p. 100.

⁶Reinhold Niebhur, Union Seminary Quarterly Review, Vol. I, no. 3, 1946, p. 3, quoted in Biography, p. 122.

A personal letter written in October 1931 makes clear Bonhoeffer's own impressions about what America did for him in terms of his thoughts and feelings about the peace movement and its expression in the ecumenical movement of the early thirties:

My stay in America . . . made one thing plain to me: the absolute necessity of cooperation and at the same time the inexplicable gap that seems to make such cooperation impossible. Looked at from across the Atlantic, our standpoint and our theology look so local, and it seems inconceivable that in the whole of the world just Germany, and in Germany just a few men, have understood what the Gospel is. And yet I see a message nowhere else.¹

In August 1931, he and Franz Hildebrandt (a friend and practicing churchman) collaborated on writing a Lutheran catechism entitled "If you believe, you have."² On the question of war:

. . . the Church knows nothing of any sanctity of war. War is a struggle for life using dehumanizing means. The Church that prays to Our Father appeals to God only for Peace.³

Bonhoeffer held that the peace commandment was based on the anti-nationalist principle of the unity of the human family, which was an argument he had heard in New York.

The ecumenical argument, and also the idea of the Church's share in the responsibility for the course taken by the political struggle for life between the nations, were here adopted by Bonhoeffer in the autumn of 1931, and he never again departed from them.⁴

Bonhoeffer was drawn to the ecumenical movement by its commitment to peace. Although the World Alliance of Churches had a slender reputation for theology,⁵ it was this branch of the movement to which he gave his loyalty. It was not only because of the peace movement either; it was also because one of the aims of the Alliance was to promote friendship between the churches and all other religions. Once again, we have evidence of Bonhoeffer's deep belief in the unity of mankind. In September 1931, Bonhoeffer was elected a member of the German Youth Delegation and, as such, he attended the Alliance confer-

¹Letter to H. Rossler, 18.10.31, GS I, pp. 60f., quoted in Biography, p. 122.

²GS III, pp. 248-57, quoted in Biography, p. 142.

³ibid., p. 144. ⁴Biography, p. 144. ⁵Biography, p. 147.

ence in Cambridge, England, in that month.

His interest in the ecumenical movement was at first merely incidental, but it took such a hold on him that it became an integral part of his being. Soon he was engaged in a lively battle concerning its interior alignment and was enthusiastically representing it in its relations with the outside world. The world of the early stages of the evangelical ecumenical movement came to play a vital part in his theology, his part in the church struggle, and finally in his political commitment.¹

From 1931 through 1933 Bonhoeffer took up a position at Berlin University as a lecturer. At the same time as his interest in the ecumenical movement was growing and his allegiance to it becoming concrete, so too there was a reflection of this in his lectures at the University. We shall see this in the next chapter. But before we enter this period in Bonhoeffer's life, we must briefly document a crucial turning point: his becoming a Christian and entering into what he termed "discipline."

The Bonhoeffer we meet in the next chapter is one who has resolved the personal problem of the centered, knowing I. Although in Act and Being Bonhoeffer had intellectually offered the solution of Christ to this problem, it was not until the summer of 1932 that he was able to resolve it personally. When we recall the circumstances surrounding his decision to become a theologian, as they were laid out at the start of this chapter, the following letter to a girlfriend in 1936 takes on an importance which lends existential weight to the concerns of Sanctorum Communio and Act and Being.

I plunged into work in a very unchristian way . . . I know at that time I turned the doctrine of Jesus Christ into something of personal advantage for myself . . . For all my loneliness, I was quite pleased with myself. Then the Bible, and in particular the Sermon on the Mount, freed me from that . . .²

In 1944, Bonhoeffer phrased it this way:

"Discipline"

If you set out to seek freedom, then learn above all things to govern your soul and your senses, for fear that your passions and longing may lead you away from the path you should follow. Chaste be your mind and your body, and both in subjection, obediently, steadfastly seeking the aim set before them; only through discipline may a man learn to be free.

¹Biography, p. 146. ²Quoted in Biography, pp. 154-55.

CHAPTER II

TOWARDS ACTION

Although Bonhoeffer didn't see it this way at the time, in 1931 he entered a new phase which was more than a turning towards Christianity; his work took on new characteristics, the ramifications of which would be felt well outside academic circles and would eventually alter his life. The years 1931 through 1933 were marked, as we have seen, by an increasing commitment to the ecumenical church and the peace movement, and although Bonhoeffer remained at the University of Berlin and continued his academic work, there is a discernible change in his approach to theology. As we saw in the letter quoted at the end of chapter one, the Bible had come to play a major role in his life; this new importance accorded the Bible found expression in his academic work as well. The elements of sociality which were discussed in the previous chapter were by no means abandoned. Rather, he sought to give them an exegetical basis.

We shall first examine the lecture course Creation and Fall which Bonhoeffer gave in the fall of 1932, shortly after his turning. Next, we shall discuss his Christology lectures which were given in the summer of 1933 and which mark not only the end of his academic career but also the culmination of all the work that had gone before. Finally, we shall follow Bonhoeffer into the church struggle and investigate The Cost of Discipleship, which reached completion in 1937. The end of the chapter will place us in perspective with a brief review of what we have seen so far and a preview of where Bonhoeffer will lead us in chapter three.

A. Creation and Fall

As we saw, Bonhoeffer's approach to theology in this phase became an exegetical one and this work represents the first such attempt. The

touchstone, however, remains Christological for "It is hopeless to want to know for ourselves what man was originally, . . . not to understand that we can know about the man of the beginning only if we start from Christ."¹ We have no direct access to God except through Jesus Christ:

By using a proper name for God we can conceive of God correctly. Indeed, the proper name is God himself. We do not have God in any way except in his name. This is true today as well: 'Jesus Christ' is the name of God.²

We shall examine the substance of this lecture course under three subtitles: creation, fall, and preservation. We shall meet again many of the concepts previously viewed, but there are new elements added which will show that Bonhoeffer is not simply restating the old ever anew.

1. Creation

Always against any natural theology, Bonhoeffer is adamant in pointing out that there is no causal link for creation.

'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth'. That means that the Creator, in freedom, creates the creature. Their connexion is not conditioned by anything except freedom [italics mine], which means that it is unconditioned. Hence every use of a causal category for understanding the act of creation is ruled out. Creator and creature cannot be said to have a relation of cause and effect . . . Between Creator and creature there is simply nothing: the void. For freedom happens in and through the void.³

Humanity cannot claim for itself any right to exist except through the freedom of God. God's freedom is obviously not a 'freedom from'; God was free from man before creation. God created man in order to be 'free to,' i.e. to be in relation to. God's freedom is expressed to man in his choosing to be in relation to man--in his having created man.

Classically, the tradition has been to make man's reason the image of God. Bonhoeffer disputes this for two reasons, and these should

¹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall/Temptation, trans. by John C. Fletcher, ed. by Eberhard Bethg , p. 37. (hereinafter referred to as CFT)

²CFT, p. 45. ³CFT, p. 18.

come as no surprise to us now. The first is that it tends to do injustice to the whole of a person. It makes room for the possible interpretation of everything else human as less than good. But more importantly, reason, in isolation elevated to the status of God's image, leads to the problem of the centered, powerful, knowing I.. Secondly, Bonhoeffer objects to this interpretation because it allows for an individualistic and isolated view of people. We know how important the category of sociality is to Bonhoeffer, so it should cause no wonder that he names the imago dei an analogia relationis. "The likeness, the analogy of man to God, is not an analogia entis but an analogia relationis."¹ Man per se is not of the same substance or of the same nature as God.

This means that even the relation between man and God is not a part of man; it is not a capacity, a possibility, or a structure of his being . . . in this given relation freedom is given . . . Analogia relationis therefore is the relation given by God himself and is analogy only in this relation given by God. The relation of creature with creature is a God-given relation because it exists in freedom and freedom originates from God.²

Therefore, we can see that in his interpretation of Genesis, Bonhoeffer uses sociality--not rationality-- as the key to understanding God's relationship to man and, as a result, man's proper relationship to fellow man. The sociality of God and man is developed under the rubric of freedom. The particular relationship God demands is the freedom of love:

In man God creates his image on earth. This means that man is like the Creator in that he is free. Actually, he is free only by God's creation, by means of the Word of God; he is free for the worship of the Creator. In the language of the Bible, freedom is not something man has for himself but something he has for others. No man is free 'as such', that is, in a vacuum, in the way that he may be musical, intelligent, or blind as such. Freedom is not a quality of man, nor is it an ability, a capacity, a being that somehow flares up in him. Anyone investigating man to discover freedom finds nothing of it. Why? because freedom is not a quality which can be revealed - it is not a possession, a presence, an object, nor is it a form for existence - but a relationship and nothing else. In truth, freedom is a relationship between two persons. Being free means "being free

¹CFT, p. 38. ²CFT, p. 39.

for the other," [italics mine] because the other has bound me to him. Only in relationship with the other am I free.¹

To be there for others is the analogia relationis, as God is there for man. This being there for others is freedom. In order to be there for others, all the concepts of sociality first introduced in Sanctorum Communio and subsequently developed in later works must come into play. Being there for others continues to play a central role right through the prison letters.

In the primal state, we find God as the centre of our existence. And as the centre, he is also our limit. The tree of knowledge and the tree of life are in the centre of the garden, and "Man's limit is in the middle of his existence, not on the edge."²

The limit which we look for on the edge is the limit of his condition, of his technology, of his possibilities. The limit in the middle is the limit of his reality, of his true existence. In the knowledge of the limit on the edge there is constantly given the possibility of an inner boundlessness. In the knowledge of the limit in the middle all existence, man's being from every possible standpoint, is limited. By the limit - the tree of knowledge - there is also the tree of life, that is, the life-giving Lord himself. He is at once the limit and the middle of our existence . . .³

Man finds his limit in the middle. He finds it in Christ and in the other man--in the Thou. To make himself the centre and limitless is to forfeit his true humanity, i.e. the freedom of co-humanity.

Man enjoys two forms of freedom--serving and ruling. Vis-à-vis man, man is free for--free to serve--as we have seen. Vis-à-vis nature, man is free from and over.⁴ The right of dominion, of course, comes from God and is not a power over nature which man can abuse as he chooses. Nature is his bond, and what it binds him to is his creatureliness. Nature is not to be feared nor worshipped for it is neither demonic nor divine. Human nature is both body and spirit; man does not 'have' a body nor 'have' a soul, but is both body and soul.⁵

To live as man means to live as body in Spirit. Escape from the body is escape from being man and escape from the spirit as well.

¹CFT, p. 37. ²CFT, p. 52. ³CFT, pp. 52-53. ⁴CFT, p. 39.

⁵CFT, p. 46.

Body is the existence-form of spirit, as spirit is the existence-form of body . . . God glorified himself in the body: in this specific form of the human body . . . Man thus created is man as the image of God. He is the image of God not in spite of but just because of his bodiliness. For in his bodiliness he is related to the earth and to other bodies, he is there for others, he is dependent upon others. In his bodiliness he finds his brother and the earth. As such a creature man of earth and spirit is in the likeness of his Creator, God.¹

It is clear that Bonhoeffer affirms the whole man--to be human is to be body and spirit in relation to others. Bonhoeffer's interpretation of the Genesis text is in accord with the sentiment "and He saw that it was good."

In Sanctorum Communio Bonhoeffer made it clear that we must distinguish between the created, primal state and the state of fallen man. Here, too, we must bear this in mind as we go on to examine his exegetical account of the fall.

2. The Fall

The story of the fall is one that Bonhoeffer sees as a power struggle. The weapon is knowledge and the setting is creaturehood and divinity surrounding the tree of knowledge. The serpent is represented as subtle and cunning intelligence. When he questions Adam--"Did God say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"--he enables man "to catch sight of a hitherto unknown profundity in which he would be in a position to establish or dispute whether a word is the Word of God or not."²

The decisive point is that this question suggests to man that he should go behind the Word of God and establish what it is by himself, out of his understanding of the being of God. Should it contradict this understanding then man has clearly made a mistake. Surely it can only serve God's cause if such false words of God, such misunderstood commands are swept aside before it is too late. The misleading thing about this question is therefore that it obviously wants to be thought to come from God. For the sake of the true God it seems to want to sweep aside the given Word of God. Beyond this given Word of God the serpent pretends somehow pretends to know something of the profundity of the true God . . .³

¹CFT, pp. 47-48. ²CFT, p. 66. ³CFT, p. 66.

In this way, Bonhoeffer sees the serpent as offering man a possibility of doing without the limit of God. Man, by use of his intelligence, can get behind God and question His Word. No matter for what cause, this for Bonhoeffer is the limitless, centered, knowing I supplanting its own intelligence for obedience. It allows the I to think it has an idea of God; the I, in its "knowledge" of God, sets itself up as a judge over God's Word and hence removes God from the centre of its life. The result is an I without limits.

Now man stands in the middle, now he is without limit. That he stands in the middle means that he now lives out of his own resources and no longer from the middle. That he is without a limit means that he is alone. To be in the middle and to be alone means to be like God. Man is sicut deus. . . . With this his creatureliness is finished and destroyed for him. Adam is no longer creature . . . He is like God . . . Together with the limit Adam has lost his creatureliness. Adam can no longer be addressed in his creatureliness.¹

The dominating I we have met in Sanctorum Communio and Act and Being is here given an exegetical basis. The concerns we found in the latter work--consciousness and conscience--again find expression:

Eve, the other person, has been to Adam the bodily form of the given limit whom he acknowledged in love, i.e. in the undivided unity of his devotion and whom he loved in her very nature as limit, i.e. because she was human and yet 'another person.' Now that he has transgressed the limit, he knows for the first time that he was limited. At the same time he no longer accepts the limit as the grace of God but hates it, looking upon it as the envy of God the Creator. In the same act he has transgressed the limit that the other person had embodied for him. Now he no longer sees the limit of the other person as grace but as the wrath, the hatred, the envy of God. This means that he no longer sees the other person in love. He sees him over against himself, at variance with himself. Now the limit is no longer grace holding man in the unity of his creaturely and free love; it is discord.²

Man is alone, living out of himself and his own resources. But man knows he was not meant to live alone, so he feigns the presence of another by way of the conscience.³ In the echoless solitude of his dead, silenced ego-world, man seeks to speak to himself: he torments, accuses, and glorifies himself.⁴

¹CFT, p. 72. ²CFT, pp. 77-78. ³CFT, p. 90. ⁴CFT, p. 90.

The consequences of the fall are known to us. The essence of sin is the desecration of the sociality of love: breached social relationships in asocial power alliances of self-centered, egotistical, dominating men. From prison in 1944, Bonhoeffer expressed it this way:

It is often said that our idols are money, sensuality, reputation, other men, and we ourselves. It would be still more appropriate if we would designate as our idols our display of strength, our power, our success.¹ (italics mine)

The fall, therefore, is the violation of man's social relationships with others; it is a violation of relationship with himself in that conscience comes into play; it is violation of his relationship with God by his loss of peace and simplicity in relation to the divine Word; and it is an estrangement from nature, which finds its expression in the fact of man's work.²

3. Preservation

In the fall, Adam lives between curse and promise. The curse is labour and death, and conscience in his own sicut deus world: he must live. The promise is that he may live in it, and not without the Word of God--although it is the wrathful Word.³ The fallen world "is the world of the preservation of life, blessed in God's curse, pacified in enmity, pain, and work. Preservation for what? To what end?"⁴ Adam lives in death, for he has cut himself off from the tree of life. But the promise of God holds within itself merciful preservation, the promise of the God of grace. The curse of death means the promise of the death of death, i.e. the death of man as sicut deus. The death of death means life--Christ. And this is the purpose of the preservation: that through Christ man may again reestablish himself in freedom. He would once again be in proper relation to God, himself, others, and nature. Remembering that the Kollektivperson of Adam lives on in the Kollektivperson of Christ, we must not interpret Bonhoeffer as saying that with the coming of Christ man shall return to the pristine state of creation.

¹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "The First Table of the Ten Commandments" in John Godsey, A Preface to Bonhoeffer: The Man and Two of his Shorter Works, p. 57.

²CFT, p. 85. ³CFT, p. 83. ⁴CFT, p. 85.

But the revelation of God through Christ, which is God's ultimate revelation of his freedom, will offer man the salvation he needs. . . Being between the two poles of history--the creation and the eschaton--man lives in the middle, and he lives only because the Creator is the Preserver.¹ God preserves by entering into the new laws of the earth, directing the fallen world into its limits by means of ordinances.² But these ordinances no longer have an eternal character because they are there to preserve life. "All the orders of our fallen world are God's orders of preservation on the way to Christ. They are not orders of creation but of preservation. They have no value in themselves."³

It is here that Bonhoeffer makes a break with the Lutheran tradition: he moves away from the concept of the orders of creation to one of preservation. To understand the importance of this concept, we must further explore in another work--for Bonhoeffer is there not as brief. The lecture series Creation and Fall was given in the fall of 1932; in November of that same year he spoke to a large audience in Berlin. The address was entitled Thy Kingdom Come and in it the concept of the orders of preservation are given full vent. He names four of them: state, marriage, family, and nation. These "orders" precede, and will later inform, the "mandates" we will find in Ethics. The important thing here is to give this idea of preservation its due. It is the order of state to which we shall now turn because it is this order which is so closely linked with the church in Bonhoeffer's scheme.

Bonhoeffer places the church in the centre of the state as one ring may be placed concentrically within another: as centre, the church calls the state to its right function.

Miracle and order--these are the two forms in which the kingdom of God appears on earth. The kingdom is always divided in this way: miracle as breaking through all order, and order as preservation in preparation for the miracle . . . The form in which the kingdom of God attests itself as miracle we call the church; the form in which it attests itself as order we call the state. The kingdom of God exists in our world exclusively in the duality of church and state. Each is necessarily related to the other;

¹CFT, p. 88. ²CFT, p. 88. ³CFT, p. 88.

neither exists for itself.¹

The church and the state are not there as an order of creation; they are not sanctioned by God because of their very nature or being. They are an order of preservation, there to preserve. Preservation is a function, not a state of being. They are there for each other; as collective persons they relate to each other as persons--limiting one another and calling one another to their respective purposes. The authority of the state is limited and qualified, however. Its purpose is to protect and preserve life, to keep social order, to prevent any civil breakdown due to unchecked power in any forum, and to attempt to allow the various Gemeinschaften the space to grow and develop in freedom.

While there can be little doubt that the political climate in Germany at the end of this year gave Bonhoeffer reason to raise his voice concerning the proper sphere of activity for the state, he is also addressing himself to the church. For it is within Bonhoeffer's method to relate every question to the revelation of Christ. Not only was Bonhoeffer castigating the state for overstepping its boundaries, he was also directing himself to the church. Note the following quote from this address:

The kingdom of God assumes form in the state insofar as here man's desire is held in check with authority and responsibility and is kept within the order: that is, insofar as each man is saved and protected from the desire of another. Yet the desire is not obliterated but merely restrained, so that it may prove its value and bear fruit in the service of the community of the fallen world. Love is also present here--but always marked by the possibility of hate; joy, too, is to be found here--but never without the bitter consciousness of its transiency; and even blessedness--but always on the edge of despair.²

The purpose of the state is clearly set forth here. But when Bonhoeffer sees the state overstepping itself, he calls the church up on the carpet, so to speak:

We are otherworldly--ever since we hit on the devious trick of being religious, yes, even Christian, at the expense of the earth.³

¹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Thy Kingdom Come," in John Godsey, A Preface to Bonhoeffer, p. 40.

²ibid., p. 42. ³ibid., p. 28.

We remember that in Creation and Fall, God viewed creation as good and that the Creator was meant to be the centre of man as well as his limit. In the same way, the church is meant to be the centre of the state, and its limit as well. The purpose of the church is to pre-serve the good creation of God, not to hold itself aloof from it and preserve only itself. For:

. . . just as in Christ the reality of God entered the reality of the world, so the sacred is to be found only in the secular, the revelational only in the rational, the supernatural only in the natural, the Christian only in the worldly.¹

Christ brings unity to a fallen world and the Word must be heard through the organ of the church. God preserves the world towards Christ, and in Christ the old Adam dies; Christ, the second Adam, in resurrection becomes the Mediator and Preserver of the new humanity.

The next section deals with the Christology lectures, where Bonhoeffer's theology of the freedom of sociality finds its culmination.

B. Christology

Published under both the names of Christology and Christ the Centre, Bonhoeffer himself said that this was his most demanding work.² The reason for this was that he had to pull together and test out everything that he had written and thought before.

Bonhoeffer uses the Chalcedonian definition as his point of departure, because it is here he feels that the problem of language causes us to pose "How" questions rather than "Who" questions.³ God in Christ is not an idea but is totally present as Person.⁴ God is identical with himself:⁵

. . . everything hangs upon the fact that God in his totality and sovereign majesty is this incarnate one who meets us in Jesus. One of the first theological statements must remain, that where God is, he is totally there.⁶

¹Godsey, p. 13. ²Biography, p. 164.

³Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Christ the Centre, trans. by Edwin H. Robertson, p. 98. (hereinafter referred to as CC.)

⁴CC, p. 43. ⁵CC, p. 99. ⁶CC, p. 97.

The language of the Chalcedonian definition--nature and substance--tends to lend itself to thoughts concerning ideas of God rather than the Person of God in Jesus. Consequently, we concentrate on the question "How" rather than "Who," i.e. how two natures can be in one, ect.. When we recall Bonhoeffer's emphasis on the person of Christ and his polemics against the realm of ideas, it is not surprising that he sees himself as moving from a negative to a positive Christology when he asks the "Who" question. Christ as person needs such a question, and this can only be asked of a person who is present to us, i.e. in relation.¹ Furthermore:

Christ can never be thought of as being for himself, but only in relation to me. That in turn means that Christ can only be thought of existentially, or to put it another way, in the Church. Christ is not first a Christ for himself and then a Christ in the Church. He who alone is the Christ is the one who is present in the Church pro me. As Luther said, 'There is therefore a distinction between when God is there and when God is there for you' (Luther, Weimarer Ausgabe 23, 152). It is not only useless to contemplate a Christ for himself, it is even godless.²

The person of Christ is understood as ontologically related to man, therefore Christology must have anthropological correlates. The Christ who is present has a distinct mode of Being: the humiliated and exalted one. The humiliation is not linked to the incarnation because, we will recall, "God glorifies himself in man."

In what way does this special mode of existence of the humiliation express itself? In this way, that Christ takes sinful flesh. The humiliation is necessitated by the world under the curse. The incarnation is related to the first creation; the humiliation is related to the fallen creation. In the humiliation, Christ, of his own free will, [italics mine] enters the world of sin and death. He enters it in such a way as to hide himself in it in weakness and not to be recognized as God-Man.³

Therefore, we can see that this theology of Christ as Mediator is a theologia crucis. In weakness, Christ overcomes man's power--the power of the self-centered, egotistical, knowing I. The reality of the Kollektivperson Christ is actualized in the Christian community, i.e. in social concretion. We shall analyze closely Part One of the Christology lectures because it is here that Bonhoeffer develops this Pres-

¹CC, p. 43. ²CC, p. 47. ³CC, p. 107.

ent Christ under the headings "The Form of Christ" and "The Place of Christ."

1. "The Form of Christ"

Bonhoeffer offers us the same three Gestalt Christi we found in Sanctorum Communio: Christ is present to man as Word, Sacrament, and congregation. As such, Christ is present to man in the relational, social context of the church.

a. "Christ as Word"

The Word reaches man as spirit; as spoken Word, it reinforces Christ as person and not idea. As Word, Christ comes from an other (extra me), but in being directed to me it is also pro me. Transcendence is not the otherness of God, but the Christ which is present in the other man. In the other, transcendence is not graspable by the dominating I; but, as word embodied in the other as person, who acts as a limit, it is possible in the free, relational context.

The Word as address stands in contrast to all this [Christ as timeless truth--an idea]. While it is possible for the Word as idea to remain by itself, as address it is only possible between two. Address requires response and responsibility. It is not timeless but happens in history. It does not rest and is not accessible to anyone at any time. It happens only when the address is made. The word lies wholly and freely at the disposal of the one who speaks. Thus it is unique and every time new. Its character as address requires the community . . . Christ as Word in the sense of address is thus not timeless truth. It is truth spoken into the concrete moment; it is address which places a man in the truth before God.¹

When we ask the "Who" question of Christ, we are also asking it of the other, for Christ is in him. Therefore, this question is the transcendence question.

b. "Christ as Sacrament"

As sacrament, Christ reaches man's nature.

The Word in the sacrament is embodied Word. It is not representation of the Word. Only that which is not present can be represented. But the Word is present. The elements of water, bread, and wine, given to us by name from God, become sacraments . . . The Word preached is the form in which the Logos

¹CC, p. 50.

reaches the human logos. The sacrament is the form in which the Logos reaches man in his nature.¹

The Christ of the sacrament is the same Christ as the one in preaching. In the Word he makes use of man's logos but in the sacrament he reaches him in his body. Christ is tangible in the sphere of the natural and is alongside man as creature. He is brother with brother. But he represents the new creation, restored and breaking through the old and the fallen.

c. Christ as Congregation

The congregation is not a third Gestalt Christi per se. It is a Gestalt Christi in the sense that community of congregation is essential for the Word to be present. Its inclusion is to stress the sociality of the presence of the Word--whether it be in sermon or sacrament. The Word is addressed to man through the other, therefore it is not heard alone.

Just as Christ is present as Word and in the Word, as sacrament and in the sacrament, so he is also present as Church and in the Church. His presence in Word and sacrament is related to his presence in the Church as reality is related to form. Christ is the Church by virtue of his pro me being.²

We have now briefly reviewed the forms in which we find Christ, i.e. the Christology. In the next section we shall review the Place of Christ, i.e. we shall have a look at the anthropological correlates to the Christology, for Bonhoeffer never treats either in isolation. Christ as Mediator of the new humanity has three forms which address man in three spheres of life.

2. "The Place of Christ"

The structures of the person of Christ--Word, sacrament, and Gemeinde--are interrelated as are the various structures of the whole being of man--sociality, nature, and historicity. Christ in the role of Mediator brings into the picture not only anthropology but also soteriology. That is to say that man is addressed by Christ in his various forms in different, concrete modes of human reality. Christ

¹CC, p. 53. ²CC, p. 58.

addresses man in the truth of the moment.

a. "Christ as Centre
of Human Existence"

Christ as Word in the sermon reaches man in his spirit. He restores him to the freedom of sociality.

That Christ is the centre of our existence does not mean that he is central in our personality, our thinking, and our feeling. . . . The statement made about his centrality is not psychological, but has the character of an ontological and theological statement. It does not refer to our personality, but to our being a person before God. The centre of the person cannot be demonstrated.¹

Christ as the centre of human existence means that he now stands for man where man has failed. In the form of personal Word, he restores man to his personhood, i.e. to sociality. He is the judgment and the justification of man.²

Christ as Word is the Counter-Logos which comes up against the classifying I. The "Who" question is posed against those of the "What" and the "How": the Counter-Logos battles the human logos.

Human reason has reached its limits with the question 'Who?'. What happens when the Counter-Logos raises his claim? Man seeks to deny the one with whom he is confronted. Pilate asks, 'Who are you?' and Jesus is silent. . . . But what happens if the Counter-Word, which was killed, rises alive and victorious as the final Word of God? . . . If the crucified one shows himself as the risen one? Then the question 'Who are you?' is sharpened to an extreme point. . . . Man may struggle against the incarnate one; against the risen one, he is powerless. Now he is the one who is condemned and put to death.³

The one who is condemned to death is, of course, the fallen Adam--the centered, knowing, egotistical, asocial I. Man must ask the "Who" question of Christ as well as the human other. For Bonhoeffer, it is the freedom of social relationship which marks the Centre of Human Existence.

b. "Christ as the
Centre of History"

History lives between promise and fulfillment, between the crea-

¹CC, pp. 60-61. ²CC, p. 61. ³CC, pp. 33-34.

tion and fall and the eschaton. History is the time of promise seeking fulfillment, "to become full of God."¹ History lives in and from the expectation of the Messiah; this is where history claims its significance. History is tormented by the impossibility of fulfilling its corrupt messianic promises.²

Since the incarnation and resurrection, Christ is the centre of history; so too now is the Church, since Christ is present in the Church. The Church functions at the centre of the state, and as such also acts as its limit and boundary.

[the Church] is the centre of a history which is being made by the state. Again this is a hidden and not an evident centre of the realm of the state. The Church does not show itself to be the centre by visibly standing at the centre of the state or by letting itself be put at the centre, as when it is made a state Church . . . The meaning and the promise of the state is hidden in it, it judges and justifies the state in its nature . . . the nature of the state is to bring a people nearer to its fulfillment by law and the order it creates. With the thought of an order-creating state, that messianic claim dwells hidden within.³

Christ is present to man in the dual form of state and Church, and as such he is the mediator of man's political history. Bonhoeffer quotes Luther, saying "The state is 'God's rule with his left hand.'"⁴ Christ as Church mediates between God and state; he is the centre of history.

As the centre of history, the Church is called to response and responsibility, as is required of one who hears the call of the Word. Political responsibility is unquestionably within the realm of the Church:

The hour in which the Church today prays for the kingdom constrains it, for better or worse, completely to identify itself with the children of the earth and the world. It binds it in loyalty to the earth, to misery, to hunger, and death. It makes the Church stand in complete solidarity with evil and with the guilt of the brother.⁵

Bonhoeffer was here directing his thoughts to a very specific church--his own German Lutheran, and to an exact situation--the rise of Hitler in Germany. Having very highly placed friends and well connected fam-

¹CC, p. 61. ²CC, p. 62. ³CC, p. 63. ⁴CC, p. 64.

⁵Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Thy Kingdom Come", in Godsey, p. 33.

ily members, Bonhoeffer was always well informed politically; this in turn always fed his theology, for as we have seen, he is extremely concerned about concretion, reality, and the context of the moment. It is not the case that he lay heavy emphasis on these three concepts only with the rise of Nazism; indeed, we need only review his work to this point to see that they were always of importance to him. It will become clear in the following chapters that Bonhoeffer's worst imaginings of asocial power being cut loose on the world were embodied and actualized in Nazism. All this is to point out that the political responsibility that Bonhoeffer laid at the feet of the Church during the German Church Struggle was not a result of the political scene but was there from his first theological stirrings.

c. "Christ as the Centre
Between God and Nature"

Christ in the form of sacrament reaches man in his nature. In the sacrament Christ stands before God as the new Creature, therefore showing all others to be old. The redemption of nature cannot be proved, but only proclaimed; what is worth noting here is that there is a distinction maintained between redemption and reconciliation, the latter applying to the existence of man and history but not of nature.

Nature stands under the curse which God laid upon Adam's ground. It was the originally created Word of God, proclaiming it freely. As the fallen creation, it is now dumb, enslaved under the guilt of man. Like history, it suffers from the loss of its meaning and freedom. It waits expectantly for a new freedom. Nature, unlike man and history, will not be reconciled, but it will be set free for a new freedom.¹

The anthropological connection between the sacraments and the bodily life of man are not developed here, but there is promise. Bonhoeffer by no means denounces bodily life; rather, he affirms it as much as he affirms political and social life. It is not until Ethics and Letters and Papers from Prison that we meet a more cultivated and mature treatment of this topic.

In summary, we may quote a section from the lectures which makes clear Bonhoeffer's Christology, and firmly establishes it as a theo-

¹CC, p. 64.

logia crucis.

If Jesus Christ is to be described as God, we may not speak of this divine being, nor of his omnipotence, nor of his omniscience; but we must speak of this weak man among sinners, of his manger and his cross. If we are to deal with the deity of Jesus, we must speak of his weakness. In Christology, one looks at the whole historical man Jesus and says of him, that he is God. One does not first look at a human nature and then beyond it to a divine nature, but one has to do with the one man Jesus Christ, who is wholly God.¹

It is the weakness of Jesus which is the possibility of man's reconciliation. It is the weakness of Jesus which fights the power of unfree, fallen man.

C. Addresses on Peace and Pacifism

The Christology lectures mark the de facto end of Bonhoeffer's career as an academician in the University of Berlin's theology department. Bonhoeffer's concerns did not change after this point, but rather intensified to the degree where his energy and work were directed towards realizing the freedom of sociality in Germany. When discussing Bonhoeffer's turning we quoted a letter from Bonhoeffer to a girlfriend.² It is one of the few candid remarks we have to show us what Bonhoeffer meant by this turning.

It was a great liberation. It became clear to me that the life of a servant of Jesus Christ must belong to the Church, and step by step it became clearer to me how far that must go. Then came the crisis of 1933. This strengthened me in it. Also I now found others who shared that aim with me. The revival of the Church and of the ministry became my supreme concern.³

It was the ecumenical church as a Church to which Bonhoeffer was directing his efforts. He tired easily of passing motions which would require that a topic be discussed even further. He saw the need for action and demanded it of the ecumenical movement. Because of its international nature, Bonhoeffer felt it was within its potential to aid in restoring peace, peace being not only the absence of war but the freedom of proper relationship. The call to peace is the call to socio-ethical responsibility which results in freedom in Christ, which

¹CC, p. 104. ²Supra, p. 30. ³Biography, p. 155.

results in faith, which results in discipleship--our next topic.

We have seen earlier that Bonhoeffer believes that the Word speaks to the moment; this applies as well to the call for pacifism. The call to peace is always a commandment, but the call to pacifism is one Bonhoeffer saw as the concrete command of Christ today. Bonhoeffer espoused a contextual ethic which is a direct result of his linking actualism to the being of Christ, this having been discussed in Act and Being.

In 1932, Bonhoeffer delivered an address to the Institute of Technology in Berlin which goes by the name of The Right of Self-Assertion. In it, he distinguishes between the two forms of self-assertion he and his time had witnessed: passive resistance as it was taking place in Gandhi's India, and war and technology as it had developed in the West. Exhibiting a great compassion for Gandhi and his ways, Bonhoeffer still allows one possibility for war which, despite the terrible destruction it brings, may be justified. The exception, of course, is preparation for community.¹

There are three more addresses to consider in order to get a clearer understanding of Bonhoeffer's stand on peace and pacifism. The first two are 1932 ecumenical addresses which both show the continued shift from the Barcelona address of 1928. The primary task of the ecumenical church is to excommunicate war because it is so utterly destructive of both body and spirit.² Bonhoeffer claims that we should not shy from using the word "pacifism," but because the "Church must not preach timeless principles however valid, but only commands which are valid today,"³ it must be concluded that Bonhoeffer's pacifism is a conditional one and not an absolute principle. God is always God

¹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Das Recht auf Selbstbehauptung" (The Right of Self-Assertion) GS III, pp. 261-69, quoted in Rasmussen, Reality and Resistance, p. 101.

²Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Ansprache in Gland", GS I, p. 168ff. and "A Theological Basis for the World Alliance?", No Rusty Swords, p. 157 ff., quoted in Rasmussen, p. 101.

³"A Theological Basis for the World Alliance?", quoted in Rasmussen, p. 101.

today and his commandments are also addressed to today.

The last address which we will survey is the 1934 ecumenical address in Fanø, Denmark, made to the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work. This is Bonhoeffer's most unqualifiedly pacifist statement. He draws the distinction between the "secular" pacifism which became popular between the World Wars, and an ecclesiological pacifism of the cross.¹ The goal is not pacifism, but peace--which must be dared in accordance with the Sermon on the Mount. But peace, which is the freedom of living in true community, can also demand militancy and struggle. "The command of Christ can demand the most radical destruction of orders of preservation for the sake of Him Who builds up."² The Church can say "Fight this war" or "Do not fight this war." Bonhoeffer is trying to strike a balance between on the one hand, the secular pacifists who denounce war for any reason and, on the other, those who will comply with the state in any war regardless of its justifiability.

Bonhoeffer claims that the "cross will not have" any more war, although the distinction must be clear that nothing happens in the fallen world without struggle. But at all costs, no war.³ The command of peace, therefore, must be attempted at all costs through peaceful means. But struggle of a non-pacifist kind is not ruled out. That the cross will not have any more war must be taken to mean that Bonhoeffer establishes his insistence on peace on the commandment of the Sermon on the Mount and his theologia crucis.

During the years 1932-1937, Bonhoeffer also worked on The Cost of Discipleship, a book whose questions and answers were already present in 1932. The end of Bonhoeffer's academic career marks the beginning of his absolute and total dedication to establishing community, i.e. freedom. From this point onwards, it will rarely be necessary to treat his political and theological thoughts separately; for as he became more politically active, so his theology became more politically shaded.

¹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "The Church and the World of Nations", GS I, pp. 444-46, quoted in Rasmussen, p. 103.

²Rasmussen, p. 102. ³Rasmussen, p. 102.



D. The Cost of Discipleship

From the beginning, it was clear to Bonhoeffer that Hitler meant war. Thus we have Bonhoeffer directing his energies to preventing war through the Church. The years of the Church struggle in Germany saw Bonhoeffer as one of the first to rally to the support of establishing a Confessing Church in lieu of the crushing successes of the German Christians, that faction of the established state church which was formed and officially backed by Hitler's state and who, in return, supported Hitler in the hopes of self-preservation. The actual establishment of the Confessing Church did not, in the end, satisfy Bonhoeffer, for they too were beset by differences in belief which worked to undermine their unity. Rather than set aside what he saw as minor differences in comparison to the crisis facing the Confessing Church and all of Germany, it became obvious that the Confessing Church was seemingly putting out more energy to survive rather than do its bidding, i.e. assume its proper role as centre and limit to the state, calling it out to its proper function. For Bonhoeffer saw most clearly that the state was no longer an order of preservation but, in all respects, the opposite. Bonhoeffer's disappointment led him to leave Germany for London for a period of eighteen months, where he ministered to a German congregation and continued to inform those around him about what was truly taking place at home. Bonhoeffer returned to Germany at the bidding of the Confessing Church in 1935; they required him to head a seminary for the training of ordinands for the Confessing Church. Into this work Bonhoeffer plunged himself, for he saw the desperate need for new ordinands who would minister to the people under the auspices of the Confessing Church, not the German Christians. In 1937, the seminary--the House of Brethren, at Finkenwalde--was officially closed by the Gestapo but Bonhoeffer continued, clandestinely, to train ordinands until 1940 in what were called Collective Pastorates. The shifts and changes Bonhoeffer went through once the house at Finkenwalde was closed properly belong to the next chapter. The following discussion of The Cost of Discipleship will lead us naturally to where we can discuss them.

A note on the present arrangement of the book may be in order before we move on to our analysis. As it stands now, the book is

presented in four parts, the first three dealing with the gospels and the fourth dealing with the Pauline corpus. This arrangement obscures Bonhoeffer's original intention of having the book divided into two parts, where the first part would deal mainly with the Sermon on the Mount and the second would treat the Pauline corpus. The end result was intended to show no conflict between the two.¹ Although this end is met, due to the book's altered organization it is not as clearly discernible as the primary intention of the work.

1. Defining discipleship

We have seen the problem of power consistently throughout our discussion of Bonhoeffer. By power we mean the power of the ego-function: thinking, rational, deciding, projecting, organizing, analyzing, calculating, regulating, etc., when used for the self against the other. We have seen the problem of power as a state of unfreedom linked to both the individual and the community as well as to Hitler, the state, peace, and international relations, i.e., to church and state. Although many feel The Cost of Discipleship to be a temporary aberration in Bonhoeffer's work and thought, it is not. "Everything he thought before holds good now; in fact, discipleship is quite simply the existential element of obedience which has been added on to all previous thought. Discipleship is what actualizes faith, hence "only he who believes is obedient, and only he who is obedient believes."² Discipleship is what frees men.

Bonhoeffer's fallen Adam is a powerful, godlike figure, not a medieval penitent at his wit's end. Dominance, not guilt; power, not self-doubt; self-congratulation and vanity, not despair; God's self-appointed champion, not the hater of the heavenly Father with inordinate demands--these are the attributes of Bonhoeffer's Adam. To follow Mr. Rupp's lead, we are dealing not with "Mr. Fearing," but with "Mr. Success," "Mr. Self-Made Man."³

¹See John Godsy, "Reading Bonhoeffer in English Translation: Some Difficulties" in World Come of Age, ed. by Ronald Gregor Smith.

²Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, translated by R. H. Fuller, p. 69. (hereinafter referred to as CD)

³Green, pp. 59-60.

Under discipleship, Bonhoeffer sought to unite justification, sanctification, and faith. We are familiar with the third nota of community which Bonhoeffer always added to those of Word and Sacrament. By grounding sola fide and sola gratia in concrete reality under the rubric of discipleship, he hoped to reassert their validity.¹

Justification enables the believer to break away from his sinful past, sanctification enables him to abide in Christ, to persevere in faith and to grow in love. We may perhaps think of justification and sanctification as bearing the same relation to each other as creation and preservation. Justification is the new creation of the new man, and sanctification his preservation until the day of Jesus Christ.²

Bonhoeffer holds fast to the idea that discipleship--justification, sanctification, and faith grounded in concrete reality--cannot take place except in community. For Bonhoeffer, that community is the Church.

No one can become a new man except by entering the Church, and becoming a member of the Body of Christ. It is impossible to become a new man as a solitary individual. The new man means more than the individual believer after he has been justified and sanctified. It means the Church, the Body of Christ, in fact it means Christ himself.³

Although the call of Jesus is heard in the individual, it cannot be turned into a programme of faith or an idea; this would lead immediately to the failure of discipleship.

It was not the justification of sin, but the justification of the sinner that drove Luther from the cloister back into the world. The grace he had received was costly grace. It was grace, for it was like water on parched ground, comfort in tribulation, freedom from a self-chosen way, and forgiveness of all his sins. And it was costly, for . . . it meant that he must take the call to discipleship more seriously than ever before.⁴ (*italics mine*)

Discipleship is the response to the call of Jesus, it is obedience; and as such, it is costly. Cheap grace is the self-chosen way, the programme that the self-centered I works out all alone in order to "come to Christ." The conscience of that I short-circuits the process of the call from the other and the response of obedience, and man once again comes upon himself. He is the cor curvum in se, he is sicut deus.

¹Biography, p. 372. ²CD, p. 312. ³CD, pp. 270-71. ⁴CD, p. 52.

Justification must take place in the social context, for social organization is the result of self-abandonment.¹

Discipleship is not something one may pursue, nor is it something one may flaunt. Bonhoeffer discusses the hidden righteousness of the disciple:

There are of course proper grounds for insisting on the visible nature of Christian discipleship, but the visibility is never an end in itself; and if it becomes so we have lost sight of our primary aim, which is to follow Jesus. . . . We are therefore confronted with a paradox. Our activity must be visible, but never be done for the sake of making it visible. "Let your light so shine before men" (Matt. 5:16) and yet: Take care that you hide it!²

For Bonhoeffer, discipleship and churchmanship are synonymous. During these years, church meant the Confessing Church in Germany and the Ecumenical Church on the international scene. But Bonhoeffer here is espousing a very demanding and serious exclusivity of the Church. He maintains the separation of the community of saints from the world. This line of demarcation between the Church and the world proves that "the Church is in the state of sanctification."³

2. The matrices of this work

The importance accorded the Sermon on the Mount in this work only reflects the prominence which it held in his life. In view of this fact it is no wonder that his thoughts concerning discipleship would be based on an exegesis of the Sermon. But this exegesis did not occur in a vacuum. At this point in time, Bonhoeffer saw the world as a dangerous place to be traversed.⁴ In his own personal matrix, the world of the self-centered, knowing I, which he saw as being the most dangerous threat to himself, was laid to rest by means of discipleship. The Sermon spoke to Bonhoeffer personally about abandoning ambitions. In the broader social matrix of Germany at that time, Bonhoeffer must have viewed the Confessing Church as the last holdout from Nazism in a world which had seemingly gone crazy. Hence, the emphasis on the exclusivity of the Church. His view of the world had undergone change since 1933,

¹Biography, p. 373. ²CD, p. 175. ³CD, p. 314.

⁴Biography, p. 378.

acquiring very negative connotations. That the emphasis previously laid upon a theology of creation has been abandoned in favour of one of eschatology reflects his feeling that, at that time, to dwell on orders of preservation is to miss the seriousness of what was happening in the present. For the moment, it was more important to forget where man had come from and to start thinking of the direction he was heading in. The idea of orders of preservation is now dropped altogether, just at the time when others were beginning to incorporate them into their own doctrine of the two realms.¹ For the first time, Bonhoeffer is making an allusion to the later formulation of the Ethics where he distinguishes between the ultimate and the penultimate. During these years, Bonhoeffer had his face turned resolutely towards the ultimate; and yet, his concern for the grounding of faith in the concretion of reality kept him close to the penultimate.²

In The Cost of Discipleship the soteriological problem remains the same, though it is intensified to an extreme due, of course, to Bonhoeffer's personal and social matrices. In direct proportion to the increase of soteriological problems, and hence also to the condition of the anthropology, we have a shift in Christology. As man moves farther into the realm of power unleashed and totally unchecked, so too the demand of Christ for obedience becomes stronger.

In the anthropology, the theology of sociality--freedom--is maintained. All previous concepts are again repeated, although they tend to be consistently overlooked by scholars. The concept of person, as applied individually and corporately, is repeated. It still holds the notion of socio-historical responsibility. Kollektivperson finds expression,³ discipleship is "adherence to the person of Christ,"⁴ the other is at "every moment a living claim to our love and service,"⁵ the life of the other is "a boundary which he dare not pass,"⁶ and Christ is still the Mediator,⁷ etc.. Therefore we see the basic premises of the anthropology have remained the same, but the condition of it has deteriorated, i.e. the soteriological problem of power has.

¹Biography, p. 377. ²CD, pp. 71-73. ³CD, pp. 337-38.

⁴CD, p. 96. ⁵CD, p. 204. ⁶CD, p. 143. ⁷CD, p. 64.

visibly worsened in Bonhoeffer's eyes, thus eliciting a different Christological tone.

His is consistently a Christology of the theologia crucis yet it is also markedly expanded beyond the Lutheran heritage of the theologia crucis because Bonhoeffer's vision is that of the Christus Pantocrator. Bonhoeffer thus develops a theology of the cross with a Christocratic understanding of all reality.¹

Expanding the theologia crucis to include Christ as Christus Pantocrator allows for the following quotes to be understood in context and not as a total aberration of the theologia crucis previously presented. The Church is still understood to be the concrete social form of Christ on earth;² Christ as Mediator still "stands in the centre between my neighbour and myself. He divides but also unites";³ this Church is the Body of Christ,⁴ etc.. But there is a violence of language which we have not met before and never meet again. We now meet a strong Christ whose power defeats the strong self-will of man. There is a power struggle between man and Christ, between disciples and the world;⁵ "only in the doing [of the Word] does the word of Jesus retain its honour, might, and power among us";⁶ the visible church "invades the world and robs it of its children";⁷ Christ is the power which so angrily comes between a man and the natural life";⁸ "either we are the salt of the earth or else we are annihilated";⁹ "If we love God, we hate the world; if we love the world, we hate God";¹⁰ Christ overcomes us by his grace,¹¹ etc.. A careful reading of the preceding quotes reveals a harsh, combative language, one which Bonhoeffer obviously felt compelled to call upon in order to reflect his own strong feelings. The response of obedience to the command of Christ brings out the power of Christ, allowing him to overcome man's power, i.e. allows man to become weak. To be a true disciple, one must make a clean and complete break with his former life. This involves, of course, a complete surrender of his own will to that of Christ.

There is something else that the disciple must do to conform to

¹Rasmussen, pp. 21-22. ²CD, p. 112. ³CD, p. 112.

⁴CD, p. 263. ⁵CD, p. 107. ⁶CD, p. 219. ⁷CD, p. 286.

⁸CD, p. 106. ⁹CD, p. 131. ¹⁰CD, p. 196. ¹¹CD, p. 60.

Christ: uphold non-violence and even non-resistance.

Jesus, however, tells us that it is just because we live in the world, and just because the world is evil, that the precept of non-resistance must be put into practice . . . If we took the precept of non-resistance as an ethical blueprint for general application, we should indeed be indulging in idealistic dreams: we should be dreaming of a utopia with laws which the world would never obey. To make non-resistance a principle for secular life is to deny God, by undermining his gracious ordinance for the preservation of the world. But Jesus is no draughtsman of political blueprints, he is the one who vanquished evil through suffering.¹

There is a distinct two realms theory at work here which has never been explicitly expressed before. The world as a whole is now called evil and the Christian disciple must hold himself separate from it. His call is to be non-violent and non-resistant, however he is not to try to convert the world to this attitude for it denies God, and "in the outside world such an ideal appears to wear the blinkers of perfectionism."²

Bonhoeffer seems to be holding to a dualism here, where a double standard allows for a kind of parasitism whereby the disciple is not allowed to indulge in any kind of political defence and yet clearly profits by the efforts made by those who are not disciples. There are also conflicts in his Christology, to the point that some have claimed that two separate Christologies exist in this work.³ As well, there is something not quite whole in the anthropology, and this was evident even prior to The Cost of Discipleship. The answer to this dilemma of the Christology and the anthropology lies in Bonhoeffer's definition of the soteriological problem.

The problem, as Bonhoeffer sees it, is the power of the ego. Thus defined, and when confronted with his own personal situation before his turning and his consequent response of discipleship, and compounded by the situation in Germany at that time, it was bound to have repercussions on his Christology and anthropology. By condemning the ego out of hand as a source of unchecked, domineering power, he also condemned the other functions of the ego. At this point in time, Bonhoeffer seems

¹CD, pp. 160-61. ²CD, p. 160.

³eg. John Phillips, as cited by Green, pp. 20-23.

unable to affirm healthy ego strengths while at the same time censuring selfish power. It is for this reason that Christ rises up as a power figure in this work. He is one who demands self-denial of the disciple. Bonhoeffer throws out the baby with the bath water, and attempts to suppress ego strengths which are healthy and mature, both psychologically and theologically. It got to the point where a two realms theory took hold and consequently coloured everything. Although these themes are definitely aberrations in Bonhoeffer's thought, the basic premise of the theology of sociality is present in this book. The reason for the deviation is that he felt it the proper response for his utmost concern: preparation for community and freedom. In the next two chapters we shall see these tensions worked out and resolved.

Conclusion

We have now traced Bonhoeffer from his turning point through to his actively responding to his call, from his leaving the university to action in both the Confessing Church and the Ecumenical Church.

During the academic period, we have followed Bonhoeffer as he started out on his career and worked from an ambitious desire to succeed academically. He described his turning as one from "phraseology to reality,"¹ though for a time he remained at the university as a lecturer. But the lectures Creation and Fall and Christology do reflect his new-found reliance on the Bible since they attempt to ground his "purely academic" work in biblical exegesis. Turning to the real for Bonhoeffer meant leaving academia and entering into the service of the Church, i.e. action.

We have seen Bonhoeffer so thoroughly tighten his theology that every Christological formulation has its anthropological correlate; we have also seen the problem of soteriology affect changes in them both, since in Bonhoeffer Christology and anthropology are never unaffected by each other but remain inextricably connected. We have seen his quest for the freedom of community bring changes in his thought and his life.

¹Letter of 22-4-44, LPP, p. 275.

The changes are responses to what he perceived as reality and as such are interesting. But it is not so much the changes in themselves which attract us, but how these changes are all in line with the overriding concern for freedom.

Mention was made in passing that Bonhoeffer came to find that the Confessing Church in Germany could not, or would not, go far enough for him in order to fulfill his understanding of its calling. It is for this reason that Bonhoeffer soon directed his energies into that kind of action--political involvement and eventually, conspiratorial activity--which would lead him to suffering. But it was a suffering love, and one which he freely engaged in as the kind of response he saw as befitting the moment. The character of the suffering is the topic of the next chapter.

"Action"

Daring to do what is right, not what fancy may tell you,
valiantly grasping occasions, not cravenly doubting-
freedom comes only through deeds, not through thoughts taking-
wing,

Faint not nor fear, but go out to the storm and the action,
trusting in God whose commandment you faithfully follow;
freedom, exultant, will welcome your spirit with joy.

CHAPTER III

TOWARDS SUFFERING

Ethics was written over a period stretching from 1939 through 1943. The book we now have is comprised of four separate attempts written over four different time periods within these years. Each reflects the old concerns we have chronicled in this paper, but there are distinguishing differences among them as they reflect a growing politicization of both the man and his thought. The Ethics, then, is composed of fragmentary attempts on Bonhoeffer's part to ground his theology of freedom ethically in the concretion of reality. We traced Bonhoeffer in chapter one as he dogmatically theorized his theology, and throughout chapter two we saw him seek exegetically to legitimize it. But the turning "from the phraseological to the real" demanded more than a biblical basis for theology. The constant and thorough correlation between Christology and anthropology needed expression in the realm of the real, of the socio-historical, ethical life of this world.

Ethics begins very close to the language of The Cost of Discipleship and ends theologically on the threshold of Letters and Papers from Prison. As such, Ethics may be seen as a bridge between the two. Regardless of how fragmentary the Ethics we have today is, there is clearly discernible within the entire text a radically serious concern for the maxim finitum capax infiniti. This maxim is now as much a question of ethics as it is of dogmatics, and deputyship is now a theological and moral force. The concern for reality comes to the fore at this time and never recedes.

In order to understand the implications of this concern, we should first be clear what Bonhoeffer means by reality. Christ, the Mediator and Preserver of the world, represents the reconciliation of God and man. Hence, for Bonhoeffer, Christ is the only true and complete reality. Therefore Bonhoeffer's concern of conforming to reality becomes

the question of conforming to Christ. And the ethical question becomes "How do I conform to reality?" or, more precisely, "How do I conform to Jesus Christ?"

The answers to this question underwent change as did Bonhoeffer and the political and social contexts within which he found himself, thus the several attempts at an ethics. A short summary of the main movement in Bonhoeffer's life during these four years will serve to highlight the politicization of this Lutheran pastor and theologian.

The year 1937 saw the publication of The Cost of Discipleship as well as the official closing of the ordinands' training centres, including Finkenwalde, by the Gestapo. But these training centres for ordinands continued to operate illegally and were known as Collective Pastorates. Except for a brief trip to America in 1939, Bonhoeffer remained in charge of his pastorate until they were all closed down for good.

It was during this time that Bonhoeffer feared his age group would be called up for military service. For this and other reasons, Bonhoeffer made hasty plans to return to America in 1939 and did so in June of that year. The personal turmoil this created within him during his brief stay at Union Theological Seminary caused him to turn down an American lecture tour and return home within six weeks. Bonhoeffer felt that if he did not join his country in her hour of need, he would have no right to aid in her reconstruction after the war. That war would come was something of which he was convinced, and a few brief weeks proved him right.

And so Bonhoeffer returned to his Collective Pastorate and remained there until 1940, when all the Pastorates were closed for the final time. It was between the time of his return to Germany and that of the termination of the pastorates that Bonhoeffer became aware of the conspiracy against Hitler through his brother-in-law, Hans von Dohnanyi, who as a well-placed government employee had had ample opportunity from 1934 onwards to observe much of what went on and had compiled a "Chronicle of Shame" which recorded the evil of the regime in detail. Dohnanyi was recruited into the military conspiracy eventually, and

Bonhoeffer never tried to set Dohnanyi right by dissuading him from his course of action. The position had been plain to him from the spring of 1938: someone had to take on the shady busi-

ness. And if he, Pastor Bonhoeffer, was not called upon to be one of those directly involved, it could at least be his business to set their conscience straight.¹

Conscientious objection in Nazi Germany was not a legal status for military exemption but was considered a personal frame of mind--one that was decidedly treasonous. When caught in the triangle of unemployment, conscription, and conscientious objection, a rather timely intimation came through Dohnanyi from his superior, Colonel Hans Oster, that the Military Intelligence were interested in Bonhoeffer's journeys near the border and the eastern front, journeys undertaken for the Confessing Church. He was thus placed on the staff of the Abwehr as a civilian employee and his way into the circle of active resistance had begun by September 1940. In this way he was assured an income as well as protection from the draft, the Abwehr having declared him and his local and international ties indispensable to the military. Thus the double life of Pastor Bonhoeffer began, where he was ostensibly working for Military Intelligence, but in reality serving as a sort of double agent for the military conspiracy under the cover of civilian employee of the Abwehr.

Between 1941 and 1943 Bonhoeffer undertook several international journeys. Officially, these were to use his international ecumenical ties to further the purposes of the German war effort but in reality they were for the cause of the resistance: to feel out responses to the peace proposals from the resistance, to keep the Allies informed of resistance activity, and at times simply to convince the Allies that a resistance movement existed at all.

The ecumenical community in Germany had had hopes for establishing a peace "first by hook or by crook, and only then to see whether, and how, Hitler could be got rid of. Bonhoeffer mistrusted this; for him the only right course of action was to eliminate Hitler and then negotiate a peace."² Being privy to inside information, as time went on Bonhoeffer realized, along with his civilian colleagues, that the elimination of Hitler meant only one thing--his death. To this cause, Bonhoeffer offered whatever services he could. He and Dohnanyi even-

¹Biography, p. 533. ²Biography, p. 573.

tually came under suspicion in 1943 and were arrested in April of that year.

Bonhoeffer's ideas of ethics and his active politics fed into each other. To be aware of this fact will throw a new light on his Ethics, enabling the reader to weigh and judge and understand more clearly what is being discussed. As we shall see, Bonhoeffer more than ever was emphatic about ethics being a contextual affair. We, as readers, must also be aware of the context within which Bonhoeffer, the writer and activist, worked.

This chapter will treat separately the four attempts Bonhoeffer made to write. Though the book Ethics we have today is by no means something Bonhoeffer would have considered for publication, it remains very instructive in that his progression is more discernible here than it would have been in a polished, finished product. As we have it, it is rather repetitious in parts since there are beliefs and ideas which are carried over from one attempt to the other. It is the purpose of this chapter to select an appropriate mixture of old elements as well as new ones in order to show continuity and progression in Bonhoeffer's thought. There are new responses here called into the battle for the freedom of community.

A. First Attempt: 1939 - 1940

The language in this first attempt is that of The Cost of Discipleship, and we find here the repetition of themes previously seen. The knowledge of good and evil is separation from God.¹ Man's likeness to God is now a stolen one.² Man's life is now disunion with everyone: with God, with other men, with things, and with himself.³

Along with the old themes of conscience, Bonhoeffer now treats the idea of shame. Adam perceived his disunion with God because "Their eyes were opened" (Gen. 3:7), and thus found himself naked. The new covering which replaced the old one of community with God and fellow men is shame.

¹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Ethics, ed. by Eberhard Bethg , p. 18. (hereinafter referred to as E)

²E, p. 18. ³E, p. 20.

Hence there arises shame. Shame is man's ineffaceable recollection of his estrangement from the origin; it is grief for this estrangement, and the powerless longing to return to unity with the origin.¹

The overcoming of shame is "only in the shaming through the forgiveness of sin, that is to say, through the restoration of fellowship with God and man."² In forgiveness, man will be clothed with the grace of God, with the new man he puts on, and with the fellowship of Christ's Church.³

Conscience, however, is the sign of man's disunion with himself and is farther from the origin than shame.⁴ Conscience is concerned with man's relation to himself and not others. It is the sign of the man who is sicut deus. The knowledge of good and evil leads man to understand himself from himself and, from this, all knowledge has become self-knowledge.⁵

Bonhoeffer uses the example of the Pharisee to further elaborate these themes. With his legalistic understanding of religious life, the Pharisee "is the man to whom only the knowledge of good and evil has come to be of importance in his entire life; in other words, he is simply the man of disunion."⁶ "Judge not, that ye may not be judged" (Matt. 7:1) is aimed at the heart of those who know good and evil, as is Matt. 6:3 where man is warned not to boast of almsgiving. Even those who render thanks to God for their own good deeds are operating from the principle of self-knowledge.⁷ But:

The new knowledge of the reconciliation which is accomplished in Jesus, the knowledge of the voiding of the disunion, itself entirely voids man's own knowledge of his own goodness. The knowledge of Jesus is entirely transformed into action, without any reflection upon a man's self.⁸

In the section captioned "Proving," Bonhoeffer quotes three biblical texts (Rom. 2:18; Phil. 1:9 and 10; Eph. 5:8ff.) where man is called to prove the will of God, prove the different situations, and prove what is acceptable unto the Lord.⁹ He calls upon these texts to

¹E, p. 20. ²E, p. 23. ³E, p. 23. ⁴E, p. 24.

⁵E, p. 25. ⁶E, p. 27. ⁷E, p. 34. ⁸E, pp. 34-35.

⁹E, p. 37.

make the point that being reconciled in Christ does not automatically render the reconciled man "in the know" with regards to the will of God. To be reconciled is not to have an intuition of the will of God without any sort of reflection. The will of God is not a "system of rules established from the outset," but rather

. . . it is something new and different in each different situation in life, and for this reason a man must ever anew examine what the will of God may be . . . The voice of the heart is not to be confused with the will of God, nor is any kind of inspiration or any general principle, for the will of God discloses itself ever anew only to him who proves it ever anew . . . The crucial precondition for this is that this proving takes place solely on the basis of a 'metamorphosis' . . . This metamorphosis of man can only be the overcoming of the form of the fallen man, Adam, and conformation with the form of the new man, Christ.¹

We again meet the Kollektivpersons of Adam and Christ, where the latter overcomes the former. But what is new here is that healthy, normal ego strengths are called into play for discerning and proving the will of God. Bonhoeffer here is truly grounding his theology in concretion for the first time in explicit terms:

But when all this has been said it is still necessary really to examine what is the will of God, what is rightful in a given situation, what course is truly pleasing to God; for, after all, there has to be concrete life and action. Intelligence, discernment, attentive observation of the given facts, all these now come into lively operation, all will be embraced and pervaded by prayer.²

The concrete command of God is always freedom: proper relationship of man to God, other men, things, and himself. But each new situation in life presents a new opportunity to establish this freedom and it is up to man to discern the will of God for the means to establish it. We came upon this before when Bonhoeffer was discussing peace and pacifism.³ Pacifism was what Bonhoeffer saw as the concrete will of God in 1934; it was the correct response of the day to the eternal command for peace. As time went on, however, a different response was deemed necessary to meet the command for peace and freedom of community.

Bonhoeffer's love affair with the Sermon on the Mount is here strengthened. The Sermon is there only for the purpose of being done,

¹E, p. 38. ²E, p. 40. ³Supra, p. 49.

for "Only in doing can there be submission to the will of God."¹ Action is the "irreconcilable opposite" of judgement.

There does not therefore remain, in addition to action or through action, some ultimate possibility of judgement; action is and must continue to be the only possible attitude towards the law of God; any residue of judgement would disrupt this action entirely and transmute it into false action, into hypocrisy.²

"The doer is the man who simply knows no other possible attitude to the word of God when he has heard it than to do it."³

But the doing is nothing unless it is through love. Any "good" may arise without love, such as the will to fellowship, feeling, service or action. Love is the distinction between the man of disunion and the man of the origin.

Love . . . is the revelation of God. And the revelation of God is Jesus Christ . . . God's revelation in Jesus Christ, God's revelation of His love, precedes all our love towards Him. Love has its origin not in us but in God. Love is not an attitude of men but an attitude of God.⁴

Here we have a restatement of the analogia relationis. We are to love others as God loves us, and the proof and example par excellence of God's love is Jesus Christ.

Love is not what He does and what He suffers, but it is what He does and what He suffers. Love is always He Himself. Love is always God Himself. Love is always the revelation of God in Jesus Christ . . . Love is the reconciliation of man with God in Jesus Christ . . . Love, therefore, is the name for what God does to man in overcoming the disunion in which man lives. This deed of God is Jesus Christ, is reconciliation.⁵

We have here a radically contextual ethic whereby we are not led to a naive and simplistic imitatio Christi whereby man could relive the life of Jesus 2000 years later. We instead are directed towards the person Jesus and not his deeds, for these deeds must be interpreted in Jesus's own context. Man must look to the person of Jesus in order to discern the will of God today.

Bonhoeffer goes on to examine the total and exclusive claim of Christ by discussing Mark 9:40 ("He that is not against us is for us") and Matt. 12:30 ("He that is not with me is against me"). He holds

¹E, p. 43. ²E, p. 45. ³E, p. 46. ⁴E, pp. 50-51.

⁵E, pp. 51-52.

that abstract analysis of these two sayings will show them to be irreconcilable contradictions but that they must be held in tension as the claims to the exclusiveness and the totality of Christ. Bonhoeffer himself was holding these two concepts in tension at this point. Matt. 12:30 is more the language and feel of The Cost of Discipleship, where the exclusivity of the church is absolute and thinking in two realms tends to hold sway, whereas Mark 9:40 is to become the core of the later writings of Ethics and of Letters and Papers from Prison, where we find a radical affirmation of the "secular" and of the "whole" man's duty to live life fully. These two factors are the hinge upon which the turning point from pacifism to active resistance hang. As the Confessing Church turned out to be sterile in its attempts at re-establishing community and peace, Bonhoeffer found himself in a circle of lay and non-Christian friends and co-conspirators who had steadfastly resolved themselves to do the "Christian" thing at all costs, even of their lives.*

When discussing "Christ and Good People," Bonhoeffer examines Matt. 5:10--"Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The wedge is put in place: the interpretation of this in a secular sense is the chink in the wall that will eventually become the door through which Bonhoeffer will pass. One must risk action for any just cause, and in doing so one also risks persecution.

This beatitude puts those Christians entirely in the wrong who, in their mistaken anxiety to act rightly, seek to avoid any suffering for the sake of a just, good and true cause, because, as they maintain, they could with a clear conscience suffer only an explicit profession of faith in Christ . . . Jesus gives his support to those who suffer for the sake of a just cause, even if this is not precisely the confession of His name; He takes them under his protection, He accepts responsibility for them, and He lays claim to them.¹

With this interpretation of Matt. 5:10, we can see that Bonhoeffer is leaning more towards Mark 9:40: "He that is not against us is for us."

Bonhoeffer, in the last few pages of this first attempt, expresses

¹E, p. 60.

concern for the claim of Christ on the good man. Good in this sense has an extremely wide range of gradations, but nonetheless it serves to point to the distinction between the call of the gospel to the "good" and the call to the "drunkards, adulterers, and vicious men of every kind."¹ What exactly has been said about the conversion of the good man?

Bonhoeffer didn't answer this question in this first attempt, but the problem it posed continued to plague him as, more and more, the "Christians" acquiesced under Hitler's regime and it was the "good" non-Christian, i.e. the conspirators in the military resistance, who turned up to do the "Christian" thing. Bonhoeffer further wrestles with this question in his later attempts, the second of which we shall now turn our attention to.

B. Second Attempt: Sept./Oct. 1940

Bonhoeffer's second attempt at his Ethics began following his August meeting with Oster and Dohnanyi to discuss his status in the Abwehr. On September the fourth he was forbidden to speak in public and required to report regularly to the police. These two factors cannot but have had an effect on his frame of mind as he entered into an intense period of writing.

The opening paragraphs of this section blast the concept of a theoretical ethics, as "the academic question of a system of ethics seems to be of all questions the most superfluous."² This is because

Today there are once more villains and saints, and they are not hidden from public view. Instead of the uniform greyness of the rainy day we now have the black storm-cloud and the brilliant lightning-flash. The outlines stand out with exaggerated sharpness. Reality lays itself bare. Shakespeare's characters walk in our midst. But the villain and the saint have little or nothing to do with systematic ethical studies.³

There is from the outset of this section a stark picture drawn for the reader whereby the point is made that this time is an exceptional one and that the response to the times must also be exceptional. "What is worse than doing evil is being evil. It is worse for a liar to tell

¹E, p. 62. ²E, p. 64. ³E, p. 64.

the truth than for a lover of truth to lie . . . One sin, then, is not like another."¹ In times such as these, reason, moral fanaticism, conscience, duty, and silent virtue have become rusty swords and need to be replaced with sharp ones--simplicity and wisdom. The simple man turns his eyes solely upon the simple truth of God and is set free from the conflicts of ethical decisions. By looking solely to God he is able to look at the reality of the world free from prejudice, and in this way simplicity becomes wisdom. The wise man sees the reality of the world as it is; he can see into the depths of things.²

No man can look with undivided vision at God and at the world of reality so long as God and the world are torn asunder. Try as he may, he can only let his eyes wander distractedly from one to the other. But there is a place at which God and the cosmic reality are reconciled, a place at which God and man have become one . . . It lies in Jesus Christ, the Reconciler of the world.³

The perfect love of God reconciles the world. The figure of the Reconciler comes between the world and God and fills the centre of history.⁴ This is not a new theme, but there is a new emphasis on God's wiping out the guilt of the world by declaring himself guilty towards the world. He takes up the path of humiliation and atonement and thereby absolves the world.⁵ This theme of guilt is one we shall meet later on.

And here is the proof that God loves man and the world as it is; God doesn't love any concept of the ideal world, but loves the real thing.

God became man, real man. While we are trying to grow out beyond our manhood, to leave the man behind us, God becomes man and we have to recognize that God wishes us men, too, to be real men. While we are distinguishing the pious from the ungodly, the good from the wicked, the noble from the mean, God makes no distinction at all in his love for the real man. He does not permit us to classify men and the world according to our own standards and to set ourselves up as judges over them.⁶

We are not to be despisers of men, either of the tyrannical type who exploits the baseness of the human heart, or the good who sees through all this wickedness and withdraws in disgust to leave men to their own

¹E, p. 65. ²E, p. 69. ³E, p. 69. ⁴E, p. 70.

⁵E, pp. 70-71. ⁶E, p. 71.

devices and minds his own business.¹ It is clear that Bonhoeffer here is referring to his own situation at the time. The obvious evil in his presence is Hitler and his regime; the subtle evil is the aloofness of the good man from any responsibility or response. Though a more respectable position, it is still one of contempt for the world; and as such it is contemptuous of what God has loved.

It is only through God's being made man that it is possible to know the real man and not despise him. The real man can live before God, and we can allow the real man to live before God side by side with ourselves without either despising or deifying him . . . the reason why we can live as real men and can love the real man at our side is to be found solely in the incarnation of God . . .²

But what is it "to be real"? Bonhoeffer's answer to this question comes as no surprise: Christ. Conformation to Christ is conformation to reality:

This is not achieved by dint of efforts 'to become like Jesus', which is the way we usually interpret it . . . To be conformed with the Incarnate--that is to be a real man . . . To be conformed with the Incarnate is to have the right to be the man one really is. Now there is no more pretense, no more hypocrisy or self-violence, no more compulsion to be something other, better and more ideal than what one is. God loves the real man. God became a real man.³

It is possible that it is at this point that Bonhoeffer begins to see that the sheltered life together at Finkenwalde may have been this striving to be something other than real: the tone of The Cost of Discipleship lent itself to this interpretation, with its emphasis on the differentiation between the disciple and the "otherness" of the non-disciple. We found in that book strong language concerning subsuming oneself into the role of disciple at the cost of relinquishing some normal and valuable human strengths, whereas here Bonhoeffer is affirming the "real" man in his wholeness.

Concomitant with this, we also find the Church taking on a broader form and meaning. "The Church is nothing but a section of humanity in which Christ has really taken form."⁴ The Church has essentially nothing whatsoever to do with so-called religious functions, but she concerns herself with the world of man and with all the implications of

¹E, p. 73. ²E, p. 74. ³E, pp. 80-81. ⁴E, p. 83.

what it means to be thoroughly and totally human. What worried Christ was not theories of moral action, but whether "my action at this moment is helping my neighbour to become a man before God."¹

The form of Christ is one and the same at all times and in all places . . . And yet Christ is not a principle in accordance with which the whole world must be shaped. Christ is not the proclaimer of a system of what would be good today, here and at all times. Christ teaches no abstract ethics such as must at all costs be put into practice. Christ was not essentially a teacher and a legislator, but a man, a real man like ourselves.²

Throughout these quotes we are once again made aware of the social nature of the human condition. The real man is himself as well as the neighbour. The real man is not to be despised but loved for his realness. This world is not to be shunned for the next world, but lived in and loved for what it is. Man is to be responsible for himself, his neighbour, and the world in concrete, social, and historical terms.

Ethics as formation entails the confession and the recognition of guilt. Indeed, this is the starting point for reconciliation:

There can be recognition of guilt only because of Christ's grace . . . In this recognition of guilt there begins the process by which man is conformed to Christ. This recognition of guilt differs from any other such recognition which is self-effected and sterile. The place where this recognition of guilt becomes real is the Church.³

Bonhoeffer then proceeds to impute guilt on the Church for having broken all ten commandments.⁴ In his eyes, she has failed in her appointed duty. Bonhoeffer condemns the Church for her silence, the silence by which she sought to protect her last remaining assets of public worship and parish life at the expense of the world--more succinctly, at the expense of freedom of community.

Once the guilt has been assumed, there is the possibility of healing and justification through the partaking in the form of Christ.⁵ To be a partaker in the form of Christ means that the Church does not despise the earth by holding herself aloof from it. It means that she earnestly assumes her role as the centre of history, calling the political-historical life of the earth to its proper function. Guilt, violence and lawlessness will then become healing, justice and order. When

¹E, p. 85. ²E, pp. 84-85. ³E, pp. 110-11. ⁴E, p. 115.

⁵E, p. 116.

war becomes peace there will be forgiveness.¹

C. Third Attempt: Nov. '40 - Summer '41

The concern of the second attempt was conformation. Bonhoeffer leaves us with a short discussion of guilt and justification at the end, and it is justification once again that serves as the starting point in the third attempt. With the breaking in of Jesus, "the labyrinth of life he has so far led falls in ruin. Man is free for God and his brothers. He becomes aware that there is a God who loves him; that a brother is standing at his side, . . ."² Justification, therefore, is the essence and origin of all Christian life since it sets man free for community. To be justified means to be in faith. "Faith means founding my life upon a foundation which is outside myself, upon an eternal and holy foundation, upon Christ."³ Bonhoeffer's relational brand of the imitatio Christi brooks no method which will lead one to be Christian; only faith can do that.⁴

As we just saw, there is no room in the Christian community for despisers of men and the world; both must be affirmed for what they really are. Likewise, we now find Bonhoeffer addressing himself to those who affirm the world as it is too readily. Bonhoeffer is once again attempting to resolve the quandary of thinking in two realms without doing damage to either one. The this-worldly he labels the penultimate, the things before the last, and the last things, the ultimate. These must be affirmed and held in tension simultaneously.

The dangers of holding only to the ultimate lead to radicalism, whereby there is a breaking off of the penultimate.

The radical solution sees only the ultimate . . . Christ is the destroyer and enemy of everything penultimate, and everything penultimate is enmity towards Christ. Christ is the sign that the world is ripe for burning. There are no distinctions. Everything must go to the judgement.⁵

On the other hand, we have the compromise solution--which Bonhoeffer sees as just as "radical" a response. By it, things are just-

¹E, p. 119. ²E, p. 120. ³E, p. 121. ⁴E, p. 124.

⁵E, p. 127.

fied exactly as they are.

Here the last word is on principle set apart from all preceding words. The penultimate retains its right on its own account, and is not threatened or imperilled by the ultimate . . . The ultimate remains totally on the far side of the everyday; it is thus, in fact, an eternal justification for things as they are . . .¹

Bonhoeffer very succinctly sums it up:

Radicalism hates time, and compromise hates eternity. Radicalism hates patience, and compromise hates decision. Radicalism hates wisdom, and compromise hates simplicity. Radicalism hates moderation and measure, and compromise hates the immeasurable. Radicalism hates the real, and compromise hates the word.²

There are, therefore, pairs of unacceptable behaviour which are ruled out as normative: servility and revolt, sanction and destruction, and compromise and radicalism. They are not, however, ruled out altogether since Bonhoeffer abhors anything but a contextual ethic. Hence, they are not ruled out as exceptions.

The third, and alternative, response to radicalism and compromise is reference to Jesus Christ.³ This is because we find in Christ that we have faith in the incarnate, crucified, and risen God:

In the incarnation we learn of the love of God for his creation; in the crucifixion we learn of the judgement of God upon all flesh; and in the resurrection we learn of God's will for a new world. There could be no greater error than to tear these three elements apart; for each of them comprises the whole . . . A Christian ethic constructed solely on the basis of the incarnation would lead directly to the compromise solution. An ethic which was based solely on the cross or the resurrection of Jesus would fall victim to radicalism and enthusiasm. Only in the unity is the conflict resolved.⁴

When all three elements are held in tension, there is an interplay of them in responsible life. The response of the incarnation is affirmation and co-operation; that of the crucifixion is judgement and rejection; finally, that of the resurrection is newness and creativity. A contextual ethic will place the onus on the responsible man to elicit the proper response according to what is pleasing to God. Once again, anthropology finds its delineation in Christology.

The penultimate, therefore, must be taken seriously and for the sake of the ultimate, it must be preserved. At the same time, it must

¹E, p. 127. ²E, p. 130. ³E, p. 130. ⁴E, p. 131.

be remembered that the penultimate does not justify itself: "a thing becomes penultimate only through the ultimate, that is to say, at the moment when it has already lost its own validity."¹ The preparation of the way for Christ, the ultimate, is not merely the establishment of social order nor of certain desirable conditions in the realm of the penultimate. Although these are essential, they are the acts of "good" without the qualification of love. "Only a spiritual preparation of the way will be followed by the merciful coming of the Lord."² Preparation of the way means repentance (Matt. 3:lff.) and repentance means "a concrete turning back; repentance demands action."³

Unlike all methods, the preparation of the way sets out from the clear awareness that Christ Himself must go this way: it is not our way to Him but His way to us that has to be prepared and it can be prepared through my knowledge that He Himself must prepare it. Method is a way from the penultimate to the ultimate. Preparation of the way is a way from the ultimate to the penultimate.⁴

"Christian life is the dawning of the ultimate in me; it is the life of Jesus Christ in me. But it is always also life in the penultimate which waits for the ultimate."⁵ The strict division of life into two spheres creates the possibility that one may live life exclusively in one or the other. Bonhoeffer's reality takes into account only the one sphere of Christ where both penultimate and the ultimate are held in tension.

The problem of a Christian ethic does not pose the question of "How can I be good?" or "How can I do good?", but rather asks "What is the will of God?"⁶

The point of departure for Christian ethics is not the reality of one's own self, or the reality of the world; nor is it the reality of standards and values. It is the reality of God as He reveals Himself in Jesus Christ.⁷

A useful method of interpreting Bonhoeffer's ethics is to look at it with the help of the distinction first put forward by Max Weber, and used since by others.⁸ On the one hand, we can have a Gesinnungsethik whereby we are to put emphasis on the disposition of the moral agent. On the other hand, we can have an Objektivethik which denotes an ethic

¹E, p. 133. ²E, p. 138. ³E, p. 138. ⁴E, p. 141.

⁵E, p. 140. ⁶E, p. 188. ⁷E, p. 190.

⁸Rasmussen, pp. 157-58.

of norms and principles evaluating deeds independently of the moral agent. The former may be labeled "right disposition to action" and the latter, "disposition to right action."¹ It is clear that Bonhoeffer's concern for conformation to Christ rules out interpreting his ethics pietistically as an Objektivethik. There are no ready-made internal dispositional yardsticks.

The question arises as to how we are to maintain the separation of the ultimate and the penultimate without lapsing into spatial terms and thinking in two spheres. Bonhoeffer offers us a conception of distinction without two spheres in the form of the mandates. Previously, we met this same notion in the form of the orders of preservation.

This relativeness of the world to Christ assumes concrete form in certain mandates of God in the world. The Scripture names four such mandates: labour, marriage, government and the Church.² They are termed mandates rather than orders because "the word mandate refers more clearly to a divinely imposed task rather than a determination of being."³

The mandate of labour is found in Gen. 2:15 where Adam is told to dress and keep the garden of Eden. After the fall, of course, man must wrestle his living from the earth, and labour includes everything from agriculture and economy to science and art. "The labour which is instituted in Paradise is a participation by man in the action of creation."⁴

Marriage, as well, confronts us in the realm of creation. "God bestows on this union the blessing of fruitfulness, the creation of new life. Man enters into the will of the Creator in sharing in the process of creation."⁵

The mandate of government presupposes the previous two, for government on its own cannot produce life or values. Whereas the first two are creative in nature, government's task is to preserve that which has been created. Government is to maintain order; that is its assigned task.⁶

The mandate of the Church is different from the above three in

¹Rasmussen, p. 158. ²E, p. 207. ³E, p. 207.

⁴E, p. 209. ⁵E, pp. 209-10. ⁶E, p. 210.

that its task is to enable "the reality of Jesus Christ to become real in the preaching and organization of the Church and Christian life."¹

Man is at the same time a labourer, a partner in marriage, and the subject of a government, so that there is an overlapping of the three mandates in man and all three must be fulfilled simultaneously; and the mandate of the Church impinges on all these mandates, for now it is the Christian who is at once labourer, partner in marriage, and subject of a government. No division into separate spheres or spaces is permissible here.²

The preservation of the penultimate is ensured by the divine mandates, and at the same time there is preparation for the ultimate within the penultimate. Fulfilling the demands of the mandates allows people to be "real" people in the eyes of God. There is no artificial distinction drawn between what does and does not belong in this world, nor between what is and is not pleasing to God. We can discern what is pleasing to God through faith in Jesus Christ, a real man who lived a real, truly human life: a man who did not live his life by rules and regulations but formulated responses to life's situations ever anew. Christ only commanded love and a life of community. For Bonhoeffer, the fulfillment of this command to be free in his own time came to demand extraordinary and exceptional responses, not normative ones. We know that in his case the exceptional response is tyrannicide, and the following quote is buried deep and anonymous within this third attempt:

The destruction of the life of another may only be undertaken on the basis of an unconditional necessity; when this necessity is present, then the killing must be performed, no matter how numerous or how good the reasons which weigh against it. But the taking of the life of another must never be merely one possibility among other possibilities . . .³

It must be the only possible response. The last attempt at an Ethics is also the most political. In it we shall find more discussion of necessità, that unconditional necessity which knows no other possibilities, couched in terms of deputyship and the venture of the responsible deed.

D. Fourth Attempt: Nov. '41 - March '43

¹E, p. 211. ²E, p. 211. ³E, p. 160.

This final approach of Bonhoeffer's was undertaken sporadically during the height of his involvement in the conspiracy. As Bonhoeffer became more and more embroiled in politics, the military conspiracy to assassinate Hitler, and international intrigue, so his ethics became more and more concretely grounded.

The question of good is posed and is decided in the midst of each definite, yet uncompleted, unique and transient situation of our lives, in the midst of our living relationships with men, things, institutions and powers, in other words in the midst of our historical existence. The question of good cannot now be separated from the question of life, the question of history.¹

This quote is from the opening paragraph and sets the tone for the entire section. The repetition of the prime importance of the contextual could not be stated more strongly. The social cast of the question of good is clear since:

It is, to say the least, very questionable whether one can at all regard as ethically relevant the notion of an isolated individual in detachment from his historical situation and from historical influences . . . [instead] the whole man, complete with his knowledge and his will, [must seek and find] the good in the equivocal complexity of a historical situation solely through the venture of the deed.²

The decision of what is good, then, is to be found in life; but life can only be lived, not defined, for Jesus did not say "I have life" but rather "I am the life"; therefore, life can never be separated from the I, the person, of Jesus.³ It is only our relation to Jesus which provides the basis for our relation to men and to God."⁴ In the life of Jesus we have the elements of the incarnation, the crucifixion, and the resurrection which point respectively to the creation of man and the world, to the judgement placed on them, and to the affirmation of a new life which is reconciled. The condemnation of death leads not to death but to renewed life, hence our life is a tension between the "yes" and the "no."⁵ But it is a tension held in unity in Christ; "the contradiction of 'yes' and 'no' is indeed still present, but it is continually overcome in the concrete action of the man who believes in Christ."⁶ (italics mine) The name given for the life lived in the ten-

¹E, p. 214. ²E, p. 217. ³E, p. 217. ⁴E, p. 221.

⁵E, p. 219. ⁶E, p. 221.

sion of the "yes" and the "no" is responsibility.¹ "Responsibility means, therefore, that the totality of life is pledged and that our action becomes a matter of life and death."²

The fact that responsibility is fundamentally a matter of deputyship is demonstrated most clearly in those circumstances in which a man is directly obliged to act in the place of other men . . . Not the individual in isolation but the responsible man is the subject, the agent, with whom ethical reflexion must concern itself . . . Deputyship, and therefore also responsibility, lies only in the complete surrender of one's own life to the other man. Only the selfless man lives responsibly, and this means that only the selfless man lives. Wherever the divine 'yes' and 'no' become one in man, there is responsible living.³

It is in the responsible life that the "yes" and the "no" are held in tension. The response to reality in history may require the affirming yes or the condemning/creative no, but in order to be a true Christian response it must be undertaken in deputyship and responsibility.

Jesus, life, our life, lived in deputyship for us . . . All His living, His action and His dying was deputyship. In Him there is fulfilled what the living, the action, and the suffering of men ought to be. In the real deputyship which constitutes His human existence He is the responsible person par excellence. Because He is life all life is determined by Him to be deputyship.⁴

Here we find the analogia relationis concretely grounded not only in community, but in all of history in all its facets. "Responsibility, as life and action in deputyship, is essentially a relation of man to man."⁵

The responsible man, therefore, is the real man who corresponds to reality; "our conclusion from this must be that action which is in accordance with Christ is action which is in accordance with reality."⁶ Deciding between the "yes" or the "no" often entails breaking laws-- sometimes civil laws and sometimes divine ones: "obedience is rendered to the one law at the price of guilt in respect of the other law."⁷ To contrast a Christian and a secular principle is to fall from Christian reality back into the reality of antiquity; and yet, to regard these two as forming a unity in principle is equally as wrong. This unity is

¹E, p. 222. ²E, p. 222. ³E, pp. 224-25. ⁴E, p. 225.

⁵E, p. 226. ⁶E, p. 229. ⁷E, p. 231.

solely to be found in Jesus Christ, the 'responsible' man, the real man, the deputy.¹ The responsibility of man is not limitless: "One's task is not to turn the world upside-down, but to do what is necessary at the given place and with a due consideration of reality."²

Ultimate ignorance of one's own good and evil, and with it a complete reliance upon grace, is an essential property of responsible historical action. The man who acts ideologically sees himself justified in his idea; the responsible man commits his action into the hands of God and lives by God's grace and favour.³

Irresponsible action disregards the divine Other as well as the human one. In effect, this makes responsible action necessarily limited, for to be responsible it must respect the other as limit while at the same time recognizing that the other as centre is the origin of responsibility. "Responsible action derives its unity, and ultimately also its certainty, from the fact that it is limited in this way by God and by our neighbour."⁴

It is not only on the basis of our relation to God and to other men that responsibility rests, but also on the basis of our relation to things, and this Bonhoeffer calls pertinence.⁵ In the life of the historical world there often comes a point where

responsible and pertinent action leaves behind it the . . . domain of the normal and regular, and is confronted by the extraordinary situation of ultimate necessities, a situation which no law can control. It was for this situation that Machiavelli in his political theory coined the term necessità.⁶

These situations appeal directly to the agent of free responsibility and "no longer leave a multiplicity of courses open to human reason but they confront it with the question of the ultima ratio."⁷ It is for necessità and the ultima ratio that radicalism and compromise are not ruled out as exceptions for exceptional times. There is no law under which the agent of free responsibility can take cover in these situations, for the freedom of the responsible man leads him to infringe and violate laws: "necessity obeys no commandments."⁸ There is, then, an implicit acceptance of guilt along with the acceptance of free-

¹E, p. 232. ²E, p. 233. ³E, p. 234. ⁴E, p. 235.

⁵E, p. 235. ⁶E, p. 238. ⁷E, p. 239. ⁸E, p. 239.

dom.¹ This is due to the fact that since Jesus Christ acted responsibly and accepted the guilt of humanity as if it were his own, so the responsible, free agent must do the same.²

There is a new conscience in the deputy and it is not the call of the self as in the man who is sicut deus. Since Christ is the unity of all reality, the conscience of the real, responsible, free man is now Christ Himself; unity with the self is now found only in the total surrender of the ego to God and other men.³

"Responsibility is the freedom of men which is given only in the obligation to God and to our neighbour."⁴

The free deed knows itself in the end as the deed of God; the decision knows itself as guidance; the free venture knows itself as divine necessity. It is in the free abandonment of knowledge of his own good that a man performs the good of God. It is only from this last point of view that one can speak of good in historical action.⁵

The relation of responsibility to obedience is not one where the former takes up where the latter leaves off; rather, "obedience is rendered in responsibility."⁶ Obedience can be rendered even where laws are broken.

Thus we have the structure of the responsible life defined in terms of deputyship, correspondence with reality, acceptance of guilt, and freedom. The question of obedience to divine law takes second place to free responsibility, for even though government is a divine mandate, obedience to it is not a principle. For the sake of God and the neighbour, i.e. for the sake of Christ, there is the possibility of disobedience of all and any laws.

But since this is a deed which arises from freedom, man is not torn asunder in deadly conflict, but in certainty and in unity with himself he can dare to hallow the law truly even by breaking it.⁷
(italics mine)

"The commandment of God is the permission to live as man before God . . . It differs from all human laws in that it commands freedom."⁸ Dogmatics and ethics now flow in and out of each other, feeding one another. The Bonhoeffer of 1930 was truly and consistently Lutheran in his abhorrence of the anarchy which disobedience might bring. The more matured Bonhoeffer assigns disobedience a rightful place in the quest for freedom.

¹E, p. 240. ²E, p. 241. ³E, p. 244. ⁴E, p. 248.

⁵E, p. 249. ⁶E, p. 252. ⁷E, p. 262. ⁸E, p. 281.

Life for him is no holding action which takes second place to the second coming. Deputyship is the master mark of responsibility, but acceptance of guilt as a full transfer is the heart of it.

. . . the final referent is not divine law but Jesus Christ. In The Cost of Discipleship it is because Jesus Christ is the Author, Giver, and Fulfiller of divine law that it is an impassable boundary. In Ethics Bonhoeffer found Jesus Christ as the Responsible Man par excellence, the Bestower of Freedom, and the Redeemer of man who incurs guilt in venturing the deeds of free responsibility.¹

It is only through a Christological change that the anthropological condition may change. The soteriology remains the same, as it always does and always will: unfreedom, the disruption of community, the power of the unrestricted ego unleashed irresponsibly. However, the venturesome ego is no longer condemned out of hand, as men are called to be fully human and real before God. The real man is the whole man, one who through Christ can correspond with reality in deputyship and responsibility.

E. Biographica

Bonhoeffer and his brother-in-law Dohnanyi were arrested April 5, 1943, not as a result of the failed attempt on Hitler's life but because of political infighting between the Abwehr and Himmler and his Reich Security Office. The latter wanted to curtail the independence of the former, and as such played one person off against the other with the result that during interrogations the names of Bonhoeffer and Dohnanyi came up. Both men were warned that they were under surveillance and that their phones were tapped, and so they were not unprepared for any eventuality. Rather than try to protect themselves, they put all their energies into protecting the conspiracy so that in the future there might be one more, successful attempt on Hitler.

These two men spent a full sixteen months in jail before this next--and unsuccessful--attempt took place. This nerve-racking time was spent being interrogated and preparing for a trial that never came. Being kept fully informed by friends on the outside about the coming coup, they did their best not to inadvertently jeopardize its success,

¹Rasmussen, p. 51.

nor the lives of those involved, during these interrogations. Spouting loyalties to Hitler and his Germany and the Hitler salute became mere bagatelles, part and parcel of the charade. Deputyship and the free response could no longer entail action for Bonheffer, but if speaking untruths could serve the cause of freedom and community, he felt it was his responsibility to do so.

"Suffering"

A change has come indeed. Your hands, so strong and active, are bound; in helplessness now you see your action is ended; you sigh in relief, your cause committing to stronger hands; so now, you may rest contented. Only for one blissful moment could you draw near to touch freedom; then, that it might be perfected in glory, you gave it to God.

CHAPTER IV

TOWARDS DEATH

For seven months after his arrest, Bonhoeffer had little contact with his family and none with his friends. He divided his time between preparing for the trial that never came and trying to recapture his past, with all the friends and family and love that went with it. In the limited correspondence allowed him, he tried his best to remain in touch with family events--the marriage of Eberh rd Bethg  to Bonhoeffer's niece Renate Schleicher and the subsequent birth of their son Dietrich being the main focus of his attention. For Bonhoeffer, his own engagement shortly before the arrest, and Bethg 's marriage, were unequivocal affirmations of life in the midst of destruction. The period immediately after his arrest remained rather unproductive theologically for him as he believed that his trial and release were, and must be, imminent. The state had not discovered any evidence of treason against him and his continued imprisonment was a result of suspicions. But in November 1943, a sympathetic guard agreed to smuggle correspondence for Bonhoeffer. And thus, we have the famous letters from prison, the bulk of which are letters which were exchanged between Bonhoeffer and Bethg  and bear a distinctly theological stamp.

I feel it is important to establish Bonhoeffer's frame of mind at this time because it is so reflective of his life outlook and theological bent.

Now I want to assure you that I haven't for a moment regretted coming back in 1939--nor any of the consequences either. I knew quite well what I was doing, and I acted with a clear conscience. I've no wish to cross out of my life anything that has happened since, either to me personally (would I have got engaged otherwise? would you have married? . . .), or as regards events in general. And I regard my being kept here . . . as being involved in Germany's fate, as I was resolved to be . . . All we can do is live in assurance and faith--you out there with the soldiers, and

I in my cell.¹

Bonhoeffer phrases it another way later on when he refers to the fully grown, whole man as one who is characterized by his ability to find his centre of gravity wherever he may be and is able to live fully in the present, facing each situation squarely.² God does not lay on us more than we can bear.³

In earlier times, even one of the problems that we are now having to deal with would have been enough to take up all our time. Now we have to reduce to a common denominator war, marriage, church, profession, housing [the bombing of Berlin], the possible death of those nearest and dearest to us and, added to that, my present situation. No doubt most people would regard these simply as separate problems, but for the Christian and the 'cultured' man that is impossible; he cannot split up his life or dismember it, and the common denominator must be sought in both thought and in a personal and integrated attitude to life. The man who allows himself to be torn into fragments by events and by questions has not passed the test for the present and the future . . . We can never achieve this 'wholeness' simply by ourselves, but only together with others . . .⁴

The wholeness Bonhoeffer pursued was comprised of tremendously divergent and devastating factors; every facet of his life and the lives of those he loved had, at best, a tenuity. For him, this tenuity was more than offset by the common denominator of Christ and the social category.

The year before his arrest, Bonhoeffer undertook a journey to Sweden to meet with George Bell, Bishop of Chichester and member of the British parliament, to confirm the existence of the resistance by providing a list of names of those involved as well as to discuss the possibility of the cessation of hostilities should the removal of Hitler become a fait accompli. These two good friends spent a great deal of time discussing the structure of a defeated and rebuilt Germany, and in particular the restructure of the Church. But with the failure of the July 20, 1944 attempted assassination, Bonhoeffer realized that the last chance to save Germany from a total destruction had passed. Until

¹Letter of 22-12-43, LPP, p. 174.

²Letter of 19-3-44, LPP, p. 233.

³Letter of 14-8-44, LPP, p. 387.

⁴Letter of 29-1-44, LPP, p. 200.

that point, he had regarded Ethics as his life work, and had longed to complete it.¹ Now, he entered into a new avenue of work, one which he saw as a necessary preliminary to the completion of Ethics.² All we have left of this work is "An Outline for a Book"³ and, to some, a few scintillating and shocking theological tidbits dispersed throughout the letters. It is clear that Bonhoeffer had in mind "the preparing of the way" after the ground zero of Germany's total defeat.

This book is one that Bonhoeffer worked on from the time of the July 1944 failure until his death. It was so important to him that although he cleared all other papers out of his cell for safekeeping, he chose to keep this work with him and hence it disappeared along with his body. It was to be a work of no more than 100 pages and was to have three chapters entitled: 1) A Stocktaking of Christianity, 2) The Real Meaning of Christian Faith, and 3) Conclusions. Bonhoeffer himself said that the first part was very critical and that he was anxious to move on to the more constructive part, and that what he had to say sometimes even shocked himself.⁴ But all that is guesswork to us now. That parts of the Letters and Papers from Prison have indeed shocked the theological world and have caused some to claim some kind of radical change in Bonhoeffer is due in part to an unfamiliarity with the development of Bonhoeffer as a whole. To understand Bonhoeffer is to take up his path and follow his intentions and the tendency of his work. All too often, people have tried to stifle his work by attempting systematizations, picking and choosing to highlight one period or work over the rest in order to suit their own personal bent. The prison period did not represent an unforeseeable entry into a thoroughly untried and untrodden theological ground. Radical as it may be, it does not by any means represent any kind of a 180° turnabout but rather an enthusiastic plunge ahead into the future where a new answer had to be found to the same old questions: "What is bothering me incessantly is the question what

¹Letter of 15-12-43, LPP, p. 163.

²Letter of 23-8-44, LPP, p. 394.

³"Outline for a Book", LPP, pp. 380-83.

⁴Letter of 23-8-44, LPP, p. 393.

Christianity really is, or indeed who Christ really is, for us today."¹ For those of us who have followed Bonhoeffer, this question is all too familiar. The answer, as well, does not come as too much of a surprise. In this chapter, it is the questions as much as the answers that command our attention; because we are missing the actual manuscript, the fragments of the letters will have to suffice as pointers to both.

A. Religion

We recall Bonhoeffer in his discussion of the preparation of the way stating that it was "a way from the ultimate to the penultimate," whereas any sort of methodism was the reverse.² Bonhoeffer levels the charge of methodism against religion because he sees it as man's attempt to reach God by trying to make something of himself that he is not:

To be a Christian does not mean to be religious in a particular way, to make something of oneself (a sinner, a penitent, a saint) on the basis of some method or other--not a type of man, but the man that Christ creates in us.³

Bonhoeffer was not the first to draw a distinction between religion and faith, but no one else has done it with his particular Christology nor his anthropology. Since Bonhoeffer had resolved his own dilemma of thinking in two spheres, he had mercilessly attacked any kind of shunning of the world. "I fear that Christians who stand with only one leg upon the earth also stand with only one leg in heaven."⁴ He felt that religiosity had been taken on as a garment, and that this religious a priori "does not exist at all, but was a historically conditioned and transient form of human expression."⁵ The question this raises is: What happens to Christianity when the garment falls away?

This leads us directly to Bonhoeffer's controversial, and often misunderstood, concept of the "world come of age." His perception of the world as having come of age is the reason for which he claims that the time of religion is over, that the garment has of its own accord dropped away. By "come of age" he does not mean that man has neces-

¹Letter of 30-4-44, LPP, p. 279. ²E, p. 141.

³Letter of 18-7-44, LPP, p. 361.

⁴Letter of 12-8-43, LPP, p. 415.

⁵Letter of 30-4-44, LPP, p. 280.

sarily reached moral maturity, but rather that he is in a state of moral responsibility.

We begin with a concept which is not new to us--that of Christ's having affirmed the world: "In Jesus God has said Yes and Amen to it all, and that Yes and Amen is the firm ground on which we stand."¹ "Jesus claims for himself and the Kingdom of God the whole of human life in all its manifestations."² The Yes and Amen is the permission man has, and is indeed commanded, to live as whole men before God.³ Living as whole man does not entail stagnation, but requires development in all areas of endeavour throughout history. Bonhoeffer calls this a movement of man towards autonomy, and sees it as having begun during the thirteenth century and having "in our time reached an undoubted completion."⁴ Man has discovered the laws which govern the life of the world in areas such as science, sociology, politics, art, ethics, and religion. Man has learned to deal with himself and the world without recourse to anything outside himself, including God.⁵ Again, what does this mean in terms of, and for the fate of, Christianity?

The attack by Christian apologetic on the adulthood of the world I consider to be in the first place pointless, in the second place ignoble, and in the third place unchristian. Pointless, because it seems to me like an attempt to put a grown-up man back into adolescence, i.e. to make him dependent on things on which he is, in fact, no longer dependent, and thrusting him into problems that are, in fact, no longer problems to him. Ignoble, because it amounts to an attempt to exploit man's weakness for purposes that are alien to him and to which he has not freely assented. Unchristian, because it confuses Christ with one particular stage in man's religiousness, i.e. with a human law.⁶

In other words, when religion is stripped away from Christianity we are left with Christ and the world come of age. The question of who Christ is for man today is not new, but the context of "today" is. Bonhoeffer works through the history of religion--pietists, methodists, fundamen-

¹Letter of 21-8-44, LPP, p. 391

²Letter of 30-6-44, LPP, p. 342. ³E, p. 281.

⁴Letter of 8-6-44, LPP, p. 325.

⁵Letter of 8-6-44, LPP, p. 325.

⁶Letter of 8-6-44, LPP, p. 327.

talists, Luther and the Reformation, Tillich, Barth, and right up to the Confessing Church. Against them all he levels the charge that none of them have understood the problem; in a world which has come of age, it is reactionary to try for some kind of "religious" revival.

When the world come of age is thrown up against "religion," it is thrown up against the deus ex machina, the God-of-the-gaps. As time goes on and man answers more and more questions on his own, the province of God becomes smaller and smaller and ever more remote until what is religious in the lives of men is one tiny province among others. God is used when human knowledge has run up against its limits, or when human weakness needs a boost of divine strength. God is called upon to answer those "ultimate" questions, but as time goes on the realm of the ultimate questions grows more distant. In effect, in this world God is continually in retreat.¹ Daniel Berrigan puts it in contemporary terms: Jesus teaches us to live "as though God were God, not scorekeeper, Band-Aid, bonbon, celestial oracle, Good Humour Man."² God does not provide us with answers; He wants man to know Him in what man knows, not in what he doesn't know.³ Bonhoeffer's tight and exclusive Christology has already established for us that we cannot know God except through Christ, and so once again we are left with the elements of Christ and the world come of age.

Since God does not supply us with answers, will Jesus? In a theologian who is radically contextual in his ethics, we could not possibly hope to find any pat answers. Indeed, we don't; we have seen enough of Bonhoeffer's Christology to know that Jesus is the limit and the centre of men's lives, of history, and of nature. He is total reality as he represents a reconciled man to God, and as such is unity. Conforming to Christ is conforming to reality; and as real, whole people we must conform. Conform to Whom? "Who is Christ for us today?" Man is to con-

¹Letter of 29-5-44, LPP, p. 311.

²Daniel Berrigan, "The Passion of Dietrich Bonhoeffer", Saturday Review (May 30, 1970), p. 20, cited by Thomas I. Day, "Conviviality and Common Sense: The Meaning of Christian Community for Dietrich Bonhoeffer", in A Bonhoeffer Legacy, ed. by A. J. Klassen, p. 221.

³Letter of 29-5-44, LPP, p. 311.

form to Jesus, "the man for others."¹ He is the one who lives out of the transcendent, where the transcendent is "the neighbour who is within reach in any given situation."² Christ today is Jesus, the man for others. Participation in the being of Jesus--incarnation, cross, and resurrection--is faith. "Our relation to God is a new life in 'existence for others', through participation in the being of Jesus."³ Christ is the Vicarious One, who acts vicariously for the other in responsibility. But "he certainly didn't 'come' to answer our unsolved problems."⁴ As to the idea of 'solving' problems, "it may be that the Christian answers are just as unconvincing--or convincing--as any others."⁵ Jesus himself died asking why. So where does that leave man? It leaves him with the question "how." How are we to conform to Jesus, the man for others, in a world come of age?

B. The Meaning of Christianity

Being non-religious does not mean scuttling all the so-called "religious concepts that Christianity has espoused during its nineteen hundred year history. Nor does it mean that man is no longer in need of any biblical precepts. Rather, what is called for is a "non-religious interpretation" of these precepts. "I'm only gradually working my way to the non-religious interpretation on biblical concepts; the job is too big for me to finish just yet."⁶

Here is the decisive difference between Christianity and all religions. Man's religiosity makes him look in distress to the power of God in the world: God is the deus ex machina. The Bible directs man to God's powerlessness and suffering; only the suffering God can help. To that extent we may say that the development towards the world's coming of age outlined above, which has done away with a false conception of God, opens up a way of seeing the God of the Bible, who wins space and power in the world by his weakness. This will probably be the starting point for our 'sec-

¹"Outline for a Book", LPP, p. 382.

²"Outline for a Book", LPP, p. 381.

³"Outline for a Book", LPP, p. 381.

⁴Letter of 29-5-44, LPP, p. 312.

⁵Letter of 29-5-44, LPP, pp. 311-12.

⁶Letter of 16-7-44, LPP, p. 359.

ular interpretation'.¹

Unfortunately for us, we do not have very much more than this about the non-religious interpretation, for if Bonhoeffer did work it out more fully, the papers haven't survived. But we do have a few allusions to the concept to work on.

As always, Bonhoeffer was looking for concretion and it was his main concern that biblical precepts have meaning for man in his daily life. He wanted to interpret "in a 'wordly' sense--in the sense of the Old Testament and of John 1:14 [The word became flesh]--the concepts of repentance, faith, justification, rebirth, and sanctification."²

Now that we know specifically what Bonhoeffer meant by biblical precepts, we are allowed a little more insight into what he planned to do. It is certain to my mind that they were to be cast into the mold of freedom as we have defined it. To be concrete in man's daily life, these precepts must be reinterpreted in terms of what man's daily life holds for him: relation to himself, other men, and nature. It is certain that once again Bonhoeffer would be thorough in anchoring his anthropology firmly in Christology; since Jesus Christ was the man for others, the call to freedom for man must be the same.

To disregard everything "religious" in the precepts is not to "secularize" them, for Bonhoeffer is clear that the myth is the message. The fault of liberal theology is that:

. . . the 'mythological' elements of Christianity are dropped, and Christianity is reduced to its 'essence'. -My view is that the full content, including the 'mythological' concepts, must be kept - the New Testament is not a mythological clothing of a universal truth; this mythology (resurrection, etc.) is the thing itself - but the concepts must be interpreted in such a way as not to make religion a precondition of faith . . .³

There can be no updating of the precepts; there must, however, be made clear their relevancy. What is their relevancy for man and the world come of age? Bonhoeffer answers this question with another:

The most important question for the future is how we can find a basis for human life together, what spiritual laws and realities

¹Letter of 16-7-44, LPP, p. 361.

²Letter of 5-5-44, LPP, pp. 286-87.

³Letter of 8-6-44, LPP, p. 329.

we accept as the foundations of a meaningful human life.¹

Surely Bonhoeffer would have found biblical precepts to be at least part of those "realities."

How is man to live in a world come of age? Man's coming of age leads him to recognize his true situation before God. ". . . we cannot be honest unless we recognize that we have to live in the world etsi deus non daretur. And this is what we have to recognize - before God!"; God compels man to recognize that "Before God and with God we live without God."² The Yes and Amen of God in Jesus is the firm ground upon which man stands.

What I mean is that God wants us to love him eternally with our whole hearts - not in such a way as to injure or weaken our earthly love, but to provide a kind of cantus firmus to which the other melodies of life provide the counterpoint . . . that is the only way to a full and perfect sound, when the counterpoint has a firm support and can't come adrift or get out of tune, while remaining a distinct whole in its own right. Only a polyphony of this kind can give life a wholeness and at the same time assure us that nothing calamitous can happen as long as the cantus firmus is kept going.³

While standing upon this firm ground it is possible for man to live a fully "secular" life in a world come of age, without fear of divine reprisals in the next world. Secularity has been affirmed as a necessary counterpoint in God's symphony. This is of such a multi-dimensional bent that it goes well beyond the mandates of Ethics.

What remains true to Ethics, however, is that human life remains truly this-worldly and redemption is interpreted in terms of historical liberation.

. . . the redemption myths referred to here [in the Old Testament] are historical, i.e. on this side of death, whereas everywhere else the myths about redemption are concerned to overcome the barrier of death. Israel is delivered out of Egypt so that it may live before God as God's people on earth . . . The decisive factor is said to be that in Christianity the hope of resurrection is proclaimed, and that means the emergence of a genuine religion of redemption, the main emphasis now being on the far side of the boundary drawn by death. But it seems to me that this is just where the

¹Letter of 2-6-44, LPP, p. 414.

²Letter of 16-7-44, LPP, p. 360.

³Letter of 20-5-44, LPP, p. 303.

mistake and danger lie . . . is this really the essential character of the proclamation of Christ in the gospels and Paul? I should say it is not. The difference between the Christian hope of resurrection and the mythological hope is that the former sends a man back to his life on earth in a wholly new way . . . The Christian . . . has no last line of escape available from earthly tasks and difficulties into the eternal, but, like Christ himself ('My God, why hast thou forsaken me?'), he must drink the earthly cup to the dregs . . .¹

Finally, the last concern we shall investigate was also the first: what of the Church? Bonhoeffer's concern for the Church never receded, though his approach to it did undergo change. We have traced over his beginnings when the approach was sociological, went on to the ecumenical, then through the years of the Confessing Church and its eventual rejection as sterile. Through political conspiracy, Bonhoeffer fulfilled the command of freedom and devoted his energy to the preparation of the way. Finally, in prison, he marshalled all his forces and reflected on where he had started and where he had ended and on the meaning that the events of his lifetime had--events both personal and historical. What did it all mean for his Church? All of the foregoing (death of religion, world come of age, non-religious interpretation of the Bible, Christ as the man for others, men living as men before God yet without God) had to have a concrete resolution in the reality of the world.

We have spent too much time in thinking, supposing that if we weigh in advance the possibilities of any action, it will happen automatically. We have learnt, rather too late, that action comes, not from thought, but from a readiness for responsibility . . . That is our own fault. Our church, which has been fighting in these years only for its self-preservation, as though that were an end in itself, is incapable of taking the word of reconciliation and redemption to mankind and the world. Our earlier words are therefore bound to lose their force and cease, and our being Christian today will be limited to two things: prayer and righteous action among men.²

The importance of action to Bonhoeffer is well enough attested to by both his works and his life, for only through action is freedom a possibility. For those who have chosen to highlight the more radical

¹Letter of 27-6-44, LPP, pp. 336-37.

²"Thoughts on the Day of the Baptism of Dietrich Wilhelm Rudiger Bethg ", May 1944, LPP, p. 298 and p. 300.

and secular elements in the mature Bonhoeffer of the prison period, they have done so at the expense of the whole Bonhoeffer. When he discusses the non-religious interpretation he is quite clear that it does not mean simple secularization, but that "a secret discipline must be restored whereby the mysteries of the Christian faith are protected against profanation."¹

The secret discipline is the arcanum, which seeks to preserve the content of faith. "Arkandisziplin and non-religious interpretation belong close together. The one without the other is pure 'ghetto', and the other without the one is pure 'boulevard.'² Bonhoeffer by no means intends to discard the worshipping church nor abolish the sacraments and preaching. We may well ask what the decidedly different factor will be in this church for the world come of age.

The adult church is one which recognizes the adulthood of the world. It does not seek to keep it in tutelage.

The displacement of God from the world, and from the public part of human life, led to the attempt to keep his place secure at least in the sphere of the 'personal', the 'inner', and the 'private'. And as every man still has a private sphere somewhere, that is where he was thought to be the most vulnerable. The secrets known to a man's valet - that is to put it crudely, the range of his intimate life, from prayer to his sexual life - have become the hunting ground of modern pastoral workers. In that way they resemble (though with quite different intentions) the dirtiest gutter journalists - . . . forgive me, but I can't put it more mildly . . . [It is] what one might call the 'clerical' sniffing-around-after-people's-sins in order to catch them out.³

Although man is certainly a sinner, this attitude assumes that man can only be addressed as a sinner, after his weakness and meanness have been spied out. As well, it confirms the error that a person's true life is indeed his inner life and because this is so, it is the secret place where God must have his domain.⁴

The church, having shown herself to have failed so miserably in

¹Letter of 5-5-44, LPP, p. 286.

²Eberhard Bethge, "The Challenge of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Life and Theology", in World Come of Age, ed. by Ronald Gregor Smith, p. 82.

³Letter of 8-7-44, LPP, pp. 344-45.

⁴Letter of 8-7-44, LPP, p. 345.

her calling in Germany, must not hawk her wares cheaply. She must proclaim the evils of power worship and envy as the roots of all evil, She must speak of "moderation, purity, trust, loyalty, constancy, patience, discipline, humility, contentment, and modesty"--but it all must be spoken softly and quietly, through action and human example.¹ The church must help and serve, not dominate; for "the church is the church only when it exists for others."² Gone is the air of privilege. For the simple Christian, the road to action does not lead through scruple but through prayer. The abuse of power is now on equal footing with the failure to act. It is a great sin to remain neutral. It is within the realm of the Church to call men away from neutrality and direct them towards life . . . this life, and the freedom to live it.

"Death"

Come now, thou greatest of feasts on the journey to freedom eternal;
 death, cast aside all the burdensome chains and demolish
 the walls of our temporal body, the walls of our souls that are
 blinded,
 so that at last we may see that which here remains hidden.
 Freedom, how long we have sought thee in discipline, action, and
 suffering;
 dying, we now may behold thee revealed in the Lord.

C. Epilogue

The question remains to be asked: after discipline, action, and suffering, where does Bonhoeffer's death leave us?

. . . not only action, but also suffering is a way to freedom. In suffering, the deliverance consists in our being allowed to put the matter out of our own hands into God's hands. In this sense death is the crowning of human freedom. Whether the human deed is a matter of faith or not depends on whether we understand our suffering as an extension of our action and a completion of freedom. I think that is very important and very comforting . . . Death is the supreme festival on the road to freedom.³

We have evidence that this sure knowledge Bonhoeffer had of his

¹"Outline for a Book", LPP, pp. 382-83.

²"Outline for a Book", LPP, pp. 382-83.

³Letter of 28-7-44, LPP, pp. 375-76.

life did truly comfort him till the last; an eyewitness said he had never seen a man die so totally submissive to the will of God,¹ and being the camp doctor at the place where Bonhoeffer was hanged it is certain he had seen a lot of death. And so we have come to the end of Bonhoeffer the man. But the mature Bonhoeffer died leaving us a premature theology. If it was to survive, it needed careful nursing. Unfortunately this was not to come from his own church, nor was it to come for some time.

In a solemn declaration by the newly established church government on the occasion of the first anniversary of the attempted assassination of Hitler on July 20, 1944 Dietrich Bonhoeffer's name was not mentioned . . . This declaration made a revealing distinction when it informed the congregation of the church "that this church could never approve of the plot of July 20, 1944, whatever its purpose may have been, and that amongst those who have suffered in consequence were countless persons who never wished this attempted assassination to take place."²

In their haste to regain some order in the devastated country, the Allies quickly reestablished the German churches to their prewar status. What of the hope Bonhoeffer clung to so dearly that the new church beyond ground zero would be adult?

. . . in 1948, in the German town of Bielefeld, certain streets were to be renamed in memory of members of the German resistance movement. Local pastors, however, sought to prevent the names of their fellow clergy from appearing together with those of socialists and atheists who were part of the resistance. They wrote to Dietrich's father [then nearly eighty years old and still suffering from the loss of four family members at the hands of the Gestapo for their parts in the conspiracy]: 'We, the pastors of this town, have grave misgivings about the choice of both these names [Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Paul Schneider], as we should not like the names of our fellow pastors who died for their faith to appear side by side with political martyrs.'³

What was to become of the world come of age? Just where would the church make its entry?

Some years ago, a bishop of standing refused to attend the dedication of a memorial tablet in Flossenburg where Bonhoeffer's death

¹Biography, pp. 830-31.

²Eberhard Bethgé, "Turning Points in Bonhoeffer's Life and Thought", in Bonhoeffer in a World Come of Age, ed. by Peter Vorhink II, pp. 74-75.

³ibid., p. 75.

camp was located on the grounds that it carried the name of a--so the bishop wrote--'political, not a Christian martyr.'¹

In later years, the German rejection of Bonhoeffer was counter-balanced by an almost cult following of him, his life, and his ideas. But in a lot of cases, it was just as radical and erroneous. Many sought, in their lapidarian attempts, to proclaim Bonhoeffer either as a forerunner or as a back-up source for their own peculiar brand of religious thought. This has made of Bonhoeffer's theology a veritable Ouija board, whereby it has been used as a springboard to all kinds of theories in myriad directions.² Bonhoeffer has provided food for thought in all sorts of areas, and much of this has been fruitful. But there has also been much abuse. He has been laid claim to by sociologists, secularists, epistemologists, ecclesiastics, religionists, and even the "God is Dead" movement of the 1960's. There are also those who point to Bonhoeffer and claim the religious revival we have been experiencing is proof positive that he was dead-wrong about the world come of age and the death of religion. These people are quite obviously wrong. Where is it written that an adult will always act responsibly and never fall back into childishness and irresponsibility? Bonhoeffer was not claiming that the world had become more morally mature, but instead he argued that it had reached its majority. It is foolish to assume that adulthood necessarily entails being an improved human being. But it does imply responsibility, and nobody can make adults children again.

There are those who resent Bonhoeffer and gloat over his "failure in his predictions," and there are those who idolize him because of his life but neglect the careful thought that directed it. It has been my intention here to point up the unity of both his life and thought under the umbrella of freedom. We have traced Bonhoeffer through four stages, and in each his thought was reflected in his action. The academic period saw a youthful Bonhoeffer remaining true to his own thought by purposely and successfully pulling together divergent, and at times opposing, schools of thought and maintaining them

¹ibid., pp. 75-76.

²Thomas I. Day, "Conviviality and Common Sense", in A Bonhoeffer Legacy, ed. by A. J. Klassen, p. 213.

in a tense yet cohesive whole. The second period is that in which Bonhoeffer followed his own academic voice into the fray. The church, in its German-Confessing and its universal-ecumenical forms, became the battleground upon which Bonhoeffer fought the world around him in the name of freedom. When he found the church to be as sterile and as hopeless as the world he thought it would lead, he "reentered the world" surrounded by secular non-Christians who were bent on the same goal as he: the removal of Hitler by whatever means necessary. It was here the secular finally received its due. In the end, Bonhoeffer suffered imprisonment for his part in the conspiracy. But he did so all the while with an eye for the future, planning bold new ventures for the world and the church for the cause of Christ and freedom. With his death and the end of the war, he also suffered scorn and abandonment by many of his fellow countrymen and churchmen.

Bonhoeffer lived the way he did precisely because of what he believed and thought. He also died because of it, not an innocent martyr but a guilty one. He took on life in its wholeness in one of the worst periods the world has yet seen, and remained an integral human being. It remains an open question as to whether man thirsts enough for this freedom to survive the future. Perhaps in death, Bonhoeffer has still more to say.

One man asks: "What is to come?"
 The other: "What is right?"
 And that is the difference
 Between the free man and the slave.¹

¹Gerhard Jacobi, "Drawn Towards Suffering", in IKDB, p. 71.

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