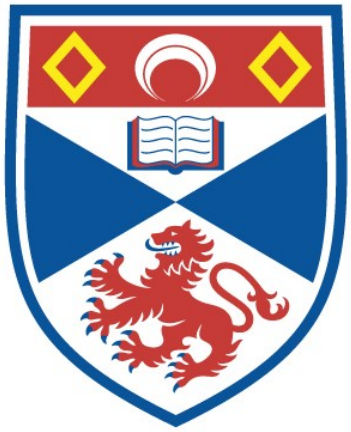
Theology as witness to the living Christ: mapping the social implications of justification by faith with Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Koert Verhagen

A thesis submitted for the degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



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Thesis Abstract

For Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Christian doctrine must bear witness to the living Christ who calls people to a specific form of life. The implication here is that doctrine is only genuinely Christian when it is Christologically oriented and its concrete bearing on human existence is taken seriously. Although many have noted the central import of the doctrine of justification for Bonhoeffer's theology, there are few extended treatments of the topic and none that specifically attend to how justification fundamentally informs his anthropology and ethics. As such, this study aims to fill that gap by exploring the social implications of justification in Bonhoeffer's thought. The thesis unfolds in two overlapping parts, which signal both development and continuity in Bonhoeffer's thought. Chapters one through three pertain primarily to theological anthropology and constitute the first part. Here, Bonhoeffer's early theology is engaged in order to suggest that justification fundamentally shapes his theological anthropology and, as such, informs his resistance to the racializing ideology of National Socialism. Chapters four through six comprise the second part, marking a shift toward ethics. They survey recent developments in Pauline theology in order to provide a lens through which to read *Discipleship* as an exposition of justification's formative significance for the Christian life, before turning to *Ethics* and arguing that justification establishes Christians in the world as participants in Christ's reconciling work. The conclusion of chapter six serves as a case study, which considers how re-orienting the church to the social implications of justification by faith might play an important role in its confrontation of white supremacy. By giving voice to the social implications of justification in Bonhoeffer's theology, this thesis offers fresh and vital insights regarding how the doctrine bears witness to the living Christ who calls to discipleship.

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I, Koert Verhagen, do hereby certify that this thesis, submitted for the degree of PhD, which is approximately 80,000 words in length, has been written by me, and that it is the record of work carried out by me, or principally by myself in collaboration with others as acknowledged, and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree.

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Acknowledgements

A few years before he passed away, my Opa, Arie Dirk Verhagen, let me raid his book collection. He was a medical doctor with a PhD in medicine, but in his free time he was also an avid reader of theology. In the stack of books I took from him was a 1966 mass market paperback edition of *The Cost of Discipleship*. I would not crack that book until several years later after finishing my undergraduate degree, but when I did it was the proverbial spark that, once fanned, became the fire that resulted in this thesis. So, for providing the tinder and encouraging my interests at a formative stage, I dedicate this thesis to Opa.

At the risk of watering down what dedication-potency this work may hold, it is necessary to not only recognize the past spark but also the person in the present who has done more to keep the fire alive than I could ever properly express. That would be my wife, Diana. She has shouldered the brunt of my endless hours in the office with characteristic grace and fierce loyalty, even as she mothers Everett (with another on the way!) and works full time. I have been blown away that time and again throughout this process she has had strength enough for both of us. Along with Everett, she has provided the joy that made it easy to put limits on my work, which in turn made the work more enjoyable. So, with all my thanks and love, I also dedicate this thesis to Diana.

Of course, Bonhoeffer would have fallen on deaf ears if it were not for my parents, Mark and Becky Verhagen, who, from the start, faithfully taught me to love God, people, and the church. They did not bat an eye when I switched from majoring in biology to philosophy in college, which is indicative of their constant love, support, and encouragement over the years. Similarly crucial has been the support of my sisters, Lydia Honken and Linnea Rico (and their respective families), who have always been more than indulgent when it comes to my penchant for pushing dinner conversations in the direction of the traditionally taboo. Thankfully, we laugh a lot too. In addition, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my in-laws, the Duncans, especially Keith and Tess. From their prophetically Scottish last name to the several rooms in their home which are populated with our things at the moment, their kindness and support has been unwavering.

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the world of analytic theology. Just as important as my formal education during these years was the informal education I received sharing life, and sometimes living quarters, with Russell Johnson, Sam McKnight, Andrew Jones; all excellent theologians in their own rights, and even better friends.

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Since footnotes are often an insufficient way to pay one's debts, special thanks are owed here to two scholars, without whose work I would likely still be searching for a topic. Marc Cortez's description of justification in Luther's anthropology in *Christological Anthropology in Historical Perspective* first triggered my theological imagination with regard to justification. Then, Michael Mawson's article, "Theology and Social Theory: Reevaluating Bonhoeffer's Approach," opened my eyes to the connections between justification in Luther's anthropology and Bonhoeffer's understanding of what it means to be human. It all spun out from there.

Finally, I join with Bonhoeffer and the great cloud of witnesses in giving thanks to Jesus Christ, to whom all theology is beholden and must ultimately bear witness.

Acknowledgment of Published Material

Portions of this thesis, in an earlier form, appear in the following journal article:

Koert Verhagen. 'Justified *ex nihilo*: Retrieving Creation for Theological Anthropology with Luther and Bonhoeffer.' *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 21, no. 2 (2019): 199–216.

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Justification's Ultimacy and the Penultimate Reality of White Supremacy

Abbreviations for Frequently Cited Sources

DBWE 1*	Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*. Edited by Clifford J. Green. Translated by Reinhard Krauss and Nancy Lukens. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009.
DBWE 2	———. *Act and Being: Transcendental Philosophy and Ontology in Systematic Theology*. Edited by Wayne Whitson Floyd, Jr. Translated by H. Martin Rumscheidt. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996.
DBWE 3	———. *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*. Edited by John W. De Gruchy. Translated by Douglas S. Bax. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997.
DBWE 4	———. *Discipleship*. Edited by Geffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey. Translated by Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001.
DBWE 5	———. *Life Together and Prayerbook of the Bible*. Edited by Geffrey B Kelly. Translated by Daniel W. Bloesch and James H. Burtness. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.
DBWE 6	———. *Ethics*. Edited by Clifford J Green. Translated by Reinhard Krauss, Charles C. West, and Douglas W. Stott. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.
DBWE 8	———. *Letters and Papers from Prison*. Edited by John W. De Gruchy. Translated by Isabel Best, Lisa E. Dahill, Reinhard Krauss, and Nancy Lukens. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.
DBWE 9	———. *The Young Bonhoeffer: 1918–1927*. Edited by Paul Duane Matheny, Clifford J. Green, and Marshall D. Johnson. Translated by Mary C. Nebelsick and Douglas W. Stott. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.
DBWE 10	———. *Barcelona, Berlin, New York: 1928–1931*. Edited by Clifford J. Green. Translated by Douglas W. Stott. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008.
DBWE 11	———. *Ecumenical, Academic, and Pastoral Work: 1931–1932*. Edited by Mark S. Brocker and Michael B. Lukens. Translated by Douglas W. Stott, Isabel Best, Anne Schmidt-Lange, Nicholas S. Humphrey, and Marion Pauck. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012.
DBWE 12	———. *Berlin: 1932–1933*. Edited by Larry L. Rasmussen, Isabel Best, and David Higgins. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009.

DBWE 13 ———. *London: 1933–1935*. Edited by Keith Clements. Translated by Isabel Best. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007.

DBWE 14 ———. *Theological Education at Finkenwalde: 1935–1937*. Edited by H. Gaylon Barker and Mark S. Brocker. Translated by Douglas W. Stott. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013.

DBWE 15 ———. *Theological Education Underground: 1937–1940*. Edited by Victoria J. Barnett. Translated by Victoria J. Barnett, Claudia D. Bergmann, Peter Frick, and Scott A. Moore. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012.

DBWE 16 ———. *Conspiracy and Imprisonment: 1940–1945*. Edited by Mark S. Brocker. Translated by Lisa E. Dahill. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006.

LW Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works*. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehmann. 55 vols. St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia Press and Fortress Press, 1955–1986. Cited as *LW*, followed by volume and page number.

* *DBWE* refers to the *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works,* English language edition. *DBW* will designate German language editions corresponding to the volumes above.

Introduction

In March 1928, Dietrich Bonhoeffer delivered his first sermon while serving as the vicar for a church-community of German ex-patriots living in Barcelona.[1] As his text, he selected Romans 11:6—"But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace would no longer be grace."[2] Within moments of launching into the sermon Bonhoeffer asks the following questions:

> Why should we be concerned with talk about justification by grace alone when there are so many other more important and more serious things to talk about? One hears such remarks everywhere today. Are they really right? Should we have gone beyond that which was so serious and important to Paul and to early Christianity, by virtue of the two thousand years separating us from that era?[3]

Like any good preacher, Bonhoeffer's rhetorical questions reflect his perception of his congregants' theological thought patterns. However, this is not to say that these questions merely reflect the theological zeitgeist of 1928. Indeed, 56 years later Oswald Bayer frames the plight of the doctrine of justification in a similar manner: "When the Pauline and Reformation doctrine of justification is passed on without being understood, when it has become merely an empty formula, then we need not be surprised that it is passed on with some embarrassment, and with an apologetic tone."[4] Fifteen years after Bayer penned those words, the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, written collaboratively by delegates from the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation, thrust the doctrine back into the theological limelight. At the same time, the New Perspective on Paul was peaking in the realm of New Testament Studies, offering fresh challenges to Reformation interpretations of justification. One might say, then, that justification is making a comeback, even if there is little clarity on what exactly is coming back under that nomenclature.[5]

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[1] Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, ed. Victoria Barnett, Rev. Ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 116.

[2] *DBWE* 10:480. In what follows, when Bonhoeffer's works provide a rendering of the text, we shall follow that. Otherwise, biblical citations will be drawn from the NRSV.

[3] *DBWE* 10:480–81.

[4] Oswald Bayer, *Living by Faith: Justification and Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), xi. Likewise, Ernst Käsemann notes that in 1963 the Lutheran World Federation declared justification irrelevant. His disdain is evident when he writes: "The World Federation should then have been dissolved as out of date." See "Justification and Freedom," in *On Being a Disciple of the Crucified Nazarene: Unpublished Lectures and Sermons*, ed. Rudolf Landau and Wolfgang Kraus, trans. Roy A. Harrisville (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 52.

[5] Of course, there are pockets of protestants who might push back on this characterization, suggesting that we not call it a comeback.

Yet, there is at least one aspect of the doctrine of justification that has received surprisingly little attention from theologians in recent years—namely, its social implications. Perhaps one reason for this is the fact that the New Perspective has, at times, come close to reducing justification to its social implications by treating it solely in relation to the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles within the church. Protestant theologians, then, have doubled down on the soteriological import and theological centrality of the justification of the sinner.[6] Insofar as this dynamic has played out, it is, indeed, a thoroughly unhelpful impasse. On the one hand, justification is reduced to its communal-ecclesial or ethical import. While, on the other hand, it is relegated to the sphere of individual salvation and pure doctrine. Thus, a situation arises in which justification's social implications are either understood as the heart of the doctrine or are largely neglected.

The challenge, then, is to articulate the social implications of justification in a manner that bridges the gap between doctrine and ethics and between soteriology and social action, while preserving the integrity of both. In the present study, we shall take up this challenge in dialogue with Bonhoeffer's theology.[7] Recalling the rhetorical questions he posed above, the research that follows constitutes an attempt both to sketch the contours of his response to these questions and, ultimately, to provide an endorsement of it: "Most certainly not [*Ganz gewiß nicht*]; in fact quite the opposite is the case."[8] In this emphatic denial, Bonhoeffer marks himself as a theologian of justification, as we shall see in the first and second chapters. However, Bonhoeffer's thought is also particularly ripe for such a project because of the remarkable coherence between the life he lived and the words he wrote. Not only was he deeply committed to the truth that justification only comes by grace through faith, but his

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[6] The substance of this characterization is drawn from John G. Flett's insightful and well-argued article, John G. Flett, "Justification Contra Mission: The Isolation of Justification in the History of Reconciliation," *Zeitschrift Für Dialektische Theologie* Supplement Series 6 (2014): 105–27.

[7] Only one other study has given sustained attention to something like the social implications of justification in Bonhoeffer's thought. Michael DeJonge's recent work, *Bonhoeffer on Resistance: The Word Against the Wheel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), explores the political dimensions of Bonhoeffer's theology with special reference to the Lutheran provenance of his thought throughout. As such, justification plays an important role. However, DeJonge's method is primarily historical and his focus is expressly political-theological, whereas the method of this thesis is theological and its focus is anthropological and ethical in nature. It is also worth mentioning Brian Gregor's *A Philosophical Anthropology of the Cross: The Cruciform Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013). Given that Gregor's presentation of a theological anthropology of the cross interacts extensively with Luther and Bonhoeffer, there are a number of similarities between his project and the first two chapters of this thesis especially. However, Gregor's philosophical-theological method and the variety of interlocuters with whom he engages lead him to overlook key aspects of Bonhoeffer's theological anthropology which feature centrally in the present study, such as Bonhoeffer's real, historical dialectic.

[8] *DBWE* 10:481; *DBW* 10:455. Translation altered.

biography demonstrates a consistent drive to express this truth concretely in the church and for the world.

For Bonhoeffer, Christian doctrine must bear witness to the living Christ who calls people to a specific form of life. The implication here is that doctrine is only genuinely Christian when it is christologically oriented and its concrete bearing on human existence is taken seriously. However, this is not to suggest that Bonhoeffer reduces doctrine to ethics. Indeed, Bonhoeffer would agree with Barth and Jüngel that "a theory of praxis stands in need of dogmatics, not ethics."[9] Thus, a basic assumption of this study is that Philip Ziegler is correct when he writes:

> [B]eing disposed over by sin 'in Adam' and being disposed over by grace 'in Christ' represent two total determinations of human being and so also, for that same reason, of all thought and speech that would do justice to the truth of that being. They provide comprehensive rubrics under which all humanity – and so also all human moral knowing and acting – must be ranged and understood if *theological* understanding is our aim.[10]

Indeed, Ziegler's claim that soteriological considerations govern both Bonhoeffer's anthropology and his ethics points to the basic thematic structure of the thesis.

The study that follows will unfold in two overlapping parts which signal both development and continuity in Bonhoeffer's thought. The first part pertains primarily to anthropology, and is the focus of the first three chapters. Here, we shall engage Bonhoeffer's early theology in order to suggest that justification fundamentally shapes his theological anthropology and, as such, informs his resistance to the racializing ideology of National Socialism. Chapters four through six comprise the second part, marking a shift toward ethics. As such, they survey recent developments in Pauline theology in order to provide a lens through which to read *Discipleship* as an exposition of justification's formative significance for the Christian life, before turning to *Ethics* and arguing that justification establishes Christians in the world as participants in Christ's reconciling work. The conclusion of chapter six will serve as a case study in which we shall consider how re-orienting the church to the social implications of justification by faith might play an important role in its confrontation of white supremacy.

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[9] Eberhard Jüngel, *Karl Barth: A Theological Legacy*, trans. Garrett E. Paul (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 96; cf. John Webster, "Justification, Analogy and Action: Barth and Luther in Jüngel's Anthropology," in *Barth's Moral Theology: Human Action in Barth's Thought* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 182–83.

[10] Philip G. Ziegler, "'Completely Within God's Doing': Soteriology as Meta-Ethics in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer," in *Christ, Church, and World: New Studies in Bonhoeffer's Theology and Ethics*, ed. Michael Mawson and Philip G. Ziegler (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 105.

Ultimately, the goal of this study is to consider an important way in which Bonhoeffer attempts to repeat the word which Christ speaks by the Holy Spirit, through Scripture, concerning justification by faith. Indeed, we shall see that by drawing on justification's social implications, Bonhoeffer offers fresh and vital insights regarding how the doctrine bears witness to the living Christ who calls to discipleship. To this end, Bonhoeffer's elaboration on his "*Ganz gewiß nicht*" in 1928 will set the tone as we begin:

> [O]ur first concern should be to take seriously, in fact, to take extremely seriously, what was once so important to Paul; and we will see that if there is anything at all on this earth that is not ultimately trivial or even comical, however seriously it may present itself, it is the fact of justification. This is so precisely to the extent it reveals God's honor and glory, God's seriousness and goodness. In it our gaze is opened to the entire world, to that which is vain and to that which is serious in that world; in it we understand both ourselves and…our God.[11]

[11] *DBWE* 10:481.

Chapter 1

Backgrounding Bonhoeffer:

Martin Luther on Justification's Import for Anthropology

I. Introduction

Given Bonhoeffer's own intellectual formation, the question of the role of justification in his theology inevitably sends one back to Luther. Indeed, several recent studies have convincingly demonstrated the impossibility of properly understanding Bonhoeffer's theology apart from Luther, who, along with Paul, formed the theological vein in which Bonhoeffer sought to establish himself.[1] Beyond serving as Bonhoeffer's theological baseline, Luther also formulated his theological anthropology explicitly with reference to justification. This is more than can be said for Bonhoeffer, who, although clearly motivated by anthropological considerations, never outlines a theological anthropology as such. Thus, Luther's way of construing anthropology in terms of justification does not simply form an important explanatory backdrop against which Bonhoeffer's anthropology should be understood. Indeed, it also presents a framework within which to interpret the anthropological subtext of Bonhoeffer's early theological writings.[2] The following discussion will begin with a brief consideration of the case for Luther as Bonhoeffer's primary theological influence, before turning to consider how justification shapes what it means to be human in Luther's theology. This will provide a framework for assessing the extent to which justification constitutes a controlling anthropological concept in Bonhoeffer's own thought in the next chapter.

II. Luther as Theological Influence on Bonhoeffer

To claim a significant role for Martin Luther in the shaping of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's theology is relatively uncontroversial. Yet, generally speaking, Bonhoeffer's interaction with dialectical theology, especially that of Karl Barth, has ruled the day in terms of exploration of his thought.[3] Perhaps this is partially due to the fact that it seems self-evident that Bonhoeffer—

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[1] H. Gaylon Barker, *The Cross of Reality: Luther's Theologia Crucis and Bonhoeffer's Christology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015); Michael P. DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Reception of Luther* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Wolf Krötke, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther," in *Bonhoeffer's Intellectual Formation: Theology and Philosophy in His Thought*, ed. Peter Frick (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 53–82.

[2] Following Clifford Green, Bonhoeffer's early theology is understood here as the period between 1927 and 1933. See Clifford J. Green, *Bonhoeffer: A Theology of Sociality*, Rev. Ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 4–7.

[3] See e.g. Christiane Tietz, *Theologian of Resistance: The Life and Thought of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, trans. Victoria Barnett (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 10.

as a German Lutheran who was trained in the Luther Renaissance by the likes of Karl Holl and Reinhold Seeberg—bears the mark of Luther. If this is the case then it may be that Luther's influence on Bonhoeffer has often simply been assumed in anglophone scholarship.[4] Whatever the case may be, a number of recent studies have emerged in English which demonstrate persuasively that Luther plays a central role in shaping Bonhoeffer's theology. We shall comment briefly here on only three of them in order to confirm the legitimacy of reading Bonhoeffer's theology against the background of Luther's influence.

In a recent monograph, Michael DeJonge advances the twofold claim that first, "Bonhoeffer thought his theology was Lutheran" and second, that "he was justified in thinking so."[5] As such, DeJonge's work largely aids in locating Bonhoeffer firmly within the Lutheran confessional tradition, even if his participation in it was often creative in nature.[6] This, however, does not entail a reduction of all aspects of Bonhoeffer's theology to his Lutheran heritage. Rather, it grounds Bonhoeffer's thinking in such a way as to suggest "that interpretations that forget about Luther's importance for Bonhoeffer tend toward misinterpretation."[7] Thus, although DeJonge does not specifically address Bonhoeffer's anthropology—instead he primarily focuses on defending Bonhoeffer's christological appropriation of Luther's two kingdom theology—his account implies that a proper understanding of it must take Luther's influence into consideration.

Second, H. Gaylon Barker's *The Cross of Reality* explores the relationship between Bonhoeffer and Luther in terms of Christology and the *theologia crucis*. Like DeJonge, Barker is careful to note the dynamic nature of Luther's importance for Bonhoeffer, asserting: "Bonhoeffer's goal was not simply to replicate Luther's theology; however, what he finds in Luther is the key to unlocking the church's witness for this new time."[8] According to Barker, then, one must read Bonhoeffer's christocentrism with Luther in the background, yet always

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[4] Unsurprisingly, German scholarship has been more explicit about the connection. See Klaus Grünwaldt, Christiane Tietz, and Udo Hahn, eds., *Bonhoeffer Und Luther: Zentrale Themen Ihrer Theologie* (Hannover: Amt der VELKD, 2007); Hans-Walter Krumwiede, *Glaubenszuversicht Und Weltgestaltung Bei Martin Luther: Mit Einem Ausblick Auf Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983); Christian Gremmels, ed., *Bonhoeffer Und Luther: Zur Sozialgestalt Des Luthertums in Der Moderne* (München: C. Kaiser, 1983). However, in 2007, Kirsten Busch Nielsen noted the relative lack of attention to the connections between Luther and Bonhoeffer even in the German sphere ("Sünde," in *Bonhoeffer Und Luther: Zentrale Themen Ihrer Theologie*, ed. Klaus Grünwaldt, Christiane Tietz, and Udo Hahn [Hannover: Amt der VELKD, 2007], 111).

[5] DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Reception of Luther*, 7. See also DeJonge's prior work on the role of Bonhoeffer's Lutheran self-understanding in *Act and Being* especially, in Michael P. DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation: Berlin, Barth, and Protestant Theology* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[6] DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Reception of Luther*, 8.

[7] DeJonge, 11.

[8] Barker, *The Cross of Reality*, 3.

in a way that foregrounds Bonhoeffer's commitment to the importance of the church's concrete proclamation in the present.

Barker offers particularly convincing evidence for the connection between Bonhoeffer and Luther when he recounts comments made by Eberhard Bethge and Gerhard Ebeling in personal conversations he had with them. Bethge, Bonhoeffer's best friend and biographer, notes the compulsion Bonhoeffer felt in relation to Luther when he suggests: "Bonhoeffer had to find his own Luther."[9] Ebeling, a student of Bonhoeffer's at the preacher's seminary in Finkenwalde and a prominent Luther scholar in his own right, speaks to the deep, theological affinity between Bonhoeffer and Luther when he comments: "In my heart, I believe Bonhoeffer and Luther are one."[10] Barker elaborates further on his conversation with Ebeling, writing: "[He] believed it was Bonhoeffer's intention to 're-win' Luther over against the interpretations of the nineteenth century and of his time to come to the original Luther."[11]

Third and finally, although Wolf Krötke's essay on Luther's presence in Bonhoeffer's theology is considerably shorter than the aforementioned monographs he makes a concise and powerful argument for the importance of understanding Bonhoeffer in light of Luther. Rather than consolidating Bonhoeffer's dependence on Luther thematically, as DeJonge and Barker do, Krötke moves systematically through core tenets of Bonhoeffer's theology—Scripture, Christology, sin, justification and sanctification, ethics, and temptation. In doing so, he ranges across Bonhoeffer's works, showing how Luther's influence shapes every theme. Krötke is honest about where Bonhoeffer departs from Luther, not shying away from identifying where Bonhoeffer's departures were less than successful. However, like DeJonge and Barker, he asserts that "Bonhoeffer considered [Luther] an authority with whom he desires to be in agreement even and especially when he goes beyond him…. His orientation towards Luther's theology evidently constituted for him the objective orientation of the Protestant Church and theology as such."[12] Unlike DeJonge, Krötke balks at locating Bonhoeffer within Lutheran confessionalism, citing both his resistance to the Luther offered him by his Berlin professors and the freedom exercised in his incorporation of Luther into his theology. In light of this freedom, Krötke concludes his essay modestly, claiming that in

[9] Barker, 18; cf. Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, ed. Victoria Barnett, Rev. Ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 54.
[10] Barker, *The Cross of Reality*, 18.
[11] Barker, 18–19.
[12] Krötke, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther," 53–54.

Bonhoeffer "we often encounter Luther. In Bonhoeffer's theology and life we encounter—far from any Luther cult or Lutheran confessionalism—the heartbeat of one who has a living, Reformed faith in the midst of difficult circumstances."[13]

DeJonge, Barker, and Krötke all substantively ground their respective studies in Bonhoeffer's works, giving special attention to the way in which he was shaped by the so-called Luther Renaissance.[14] Yet, it is clear that Bonhoeffer relentlessly sought the "real" Luther, rather than settling for the one presented by Holl, Seeberg, Althaus and others. Even still, Bonhoeffer had little interest in presenting "a harmonious 'picture of Luther.'"[15] Rather, "for him, Luther—who himself rejected such a picture—represented an unparalleled theological, intellectual, and spiritual impulse and source for his own experiences of faith and reality."[16]

From these studies, it might seem that the flexibility with which Bonhoeffer incorporated Luther's theological insights conflicts with the assertion that he sought the "original Luther." However, Bonhoeffer himself provides the key to reconciling these two apparently contradictory lines of thinking in *Letters and Papers from Prison*. There, in a letter to his parents on 31 October, 1943, he writes: "Already one hundred years ago Kierkegaard said that Luther today would say the opposite of what he said back then. I think this is true—*cum grano salis*."[17] By this Bonhoeffer does not mean that he thinks Luther would abandon his core doctrinal insights, but rather that his application of those insights would differ markedly. Thus, in Bonhoeffer's mind, faithfully retrieving the "original Luther" for the sake of the church in the present would, at times, necessarily entail taking up and articulating Luther's core insights in a highly flexible manner. Viewed in this way, slavish adherence to Luther and Lutheranism is, paradoxically, infidelity to Luther. As such, any account of Luther's influence on Bonhoeffer must move beyond sketching corresponding thoughts and ideas to a further articulation of what exactly Bonhoeffer does with those thoughts and ideas in order to put them to theological work for the church situation of his time.

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[13] Krötke, 82.
[14] For a definition of the Luther Renaissance, see James M. Stayer, *Martin Luther, German Saviour: German Evangelical Theological Factions and the Interpretation of Luther, 1917-1933* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 151n41.
[15] Krötke, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther," 57.
[16] Krötke, 57.
[17] *DBWE* 8:173. This signals Bonhoeffer's awareness of Luther's historical situatedness and as such, serves to further separate him from the Luther Renaissance, which tended to read Luther's theology as the logical unfolding of pure idea. On this, see Stayer, *Martin Luther, German Saviour*, 39.

Before moving on to consider Luther's treatment of justification by faith alone as an anthropological concept, it is worth noting that not only are DeJonge, Barker, and Krötke unified in identifying Luther as Bonhoeffer's theological baseline, all three also identify the fundamental importance of Luther's doctrine of justification for understanding Bonhoeffer's theology. For DeJonge, if Bonhoeffer is indeed to be considered within Lutheran confessionalism then his definition of Lutheranism "is focused on justification, a particular account of the person of Christ, and the church community, where the last is defined both in terms of Christ's presence and the correlative concept of the preached and heard word."[18] Giving special attention to the role of the doctrine of justification in *Act and Being* and *Discipleship*, DeJonge concludes that justification is key to the structure of Bonhoeffer's theology.[19] Likewise, Barker asserts that, for Bonhoeffer, "the central theological question was that of justification, which, out of necessity, is tied to Christology, for salvation comes through Christ alone."[20] Finally, Krötke simply states that "Bonhoeffer gained his theological framework and categories from Luther's doctrine of justification."[21] Indeed, far from a static, theological substratum, Bonhoeffer's theological work was driven by the doctrine of justification in a comprehensive manner.[22]

To sum up, it is clear that Luther looms in Bonhoeffer's theology as a dominant presence, especially in terms of Bonhoeffer's devotion to Luther's *solus Christus*.[23] Indeed, Krötke describes it as the "fundamental and crucial aspect in which Bonhoeffer was always in agreement with Luther."[24] Part and parcel with inheriting Luther's christological priority, Bonhoeffer also adopted his emphasis on justification by faith as doctrinally central and basic. Although Bonhoeffer exercised freedom in his translation of Luther for his present context, these two aspects retain their primacy throughout. Just as Christology and justification are two sides of the same coin for Luther, so too are they for Bonhoeffer.[25] Given this connection it follows that, where Bonhoeffer grounds aspects of his theology

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[18] DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Reception of Luther*, 10.
[19] DeJonge, 259.
[20] Barker, *The Cross of Reality*, 74.
[21] Krötke, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther," 57.
[22] Krötke, 71–72. For an attempt to substantiate this in the context of Bonhoeffer's entire body of work, see Hans Pfeifer, "The Forms of Justification: On the Question of the Structure in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Theology," in *A Bonhoeffer Legacy: Essays in Understanding*, ed. A.J. Klassen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 14–47.
[23] See Marc Lienhard's insistence that, for Luther, justification and the *solus Christus* are "two faces of the same reality" in *Luther, Witness to Jesus Christ: Stages and Themes of the Reformer's Christology*, trans. Edwin H. Robertson (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982), 271.
[24] Krötke, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther," 56.
[25] Barker, *The Cross of Reality*, 97.

christologically, one might also then reasonably inquire as to what work justification is doing for Bonhoeffer in that context. It is this line of inquiry that we shall pursue in relation to the role of justification in Bonhoeffer's christologically oriented anthropology. However, we must first consider the anthropological significance that Luther attributes to justification in his own theology.

III. Luther on Justification

Luther's ability to employ justification as an anthropological concept follows from his expansive vision for the doctrine. In turn, this scope stems both from Luther's theological convictions concerning Scripture and his own, powerful experience of being set free by this fundamental Pauline doctrine.[26] Later in his life Luther famously recounts the "before" and "after" of his pivotal "discovery" of justification by faith:

> I hated the word "righteousness of God," which, according to the use and custom of all the teachers, I had been taught to understand philosophically regarding the formal or active righteousness, as they call it, with which God is righteous and punishes the unrighteous sinner…. Nevertheless, I beat importunately upon Paul at that place, most ardently desiring to know what St. Paul wanted. At last, by the mercy of God … I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live." *Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates.*[27]

Following this powerful, existential realization, Luther reports that he mentally began to scan through Scripture and found it to be in perfect alignment with the above understanding of God's righteousness and justification. Thus, for Luther, the centrality of justification was affirmed both textually and existentially.[28] Yet, even 'centrality' as a descriptor falls short of Luther's comprehensive vision for and employment of justification. For Luther justification by faith is not merely central, but also foundational, like the keystone in an arch. Apart from justification, theology and the church will crumble.

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[26] On the relationship between textual reasoning and personal experience, specifically in relation to Luther's anthropology, see Notger Slenczka, "Luther's Anthropology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, ed. Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel, and L'ubomír Batka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 214.

[27] *LW* 34:336–37. Emphasis added.

[28] Klaus Schwarzwäller speaks of Luther's use of justification as a leading into Scripture and reality in "Justification and Reality," *Lutheran Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (2010): 292–93.

This raises the question as to how exactly Luther understands justification. Given its primacy in Luther's thought, this is obviously the key question. Yet, it is one that is virtually impossible to answer tidily. By most accounts a simple definition might go something like this: justification is God's gracious gift of faith by which the human person receives the passive, alien righteousness of Christ.[29] However, for Luther, the import of this simple definition unfolds in such a way as to make it relevant for all aspects of theology and doctrine. Thus, Wolfhart Pannenberg writes: "There is no unanimity in evangelical theology itself concerning the particularity and meaning of the doctrine of justification. There is not 'the' Reformation doctrine of justification, nor is there even 'the' Lutheran doctrine of justification. There are more than a half-dozen of them."[30] Likewise, even as Olli-Pekka Vainio seeks to provide a unified articulation of the Lutheran doctrine of justification, he must acknowledge the existence of at least five models which had already emerged by 1580.[31] This variation is not solely the fault of those who followed after Luther, but is simply a consequence of Luther's theology itself. Affirming this, Bernard Lohse writes: "One significant conclusion to be drawn is that for Luther the doctrine of justification did not involve some sort of definition or formula…. Any description of Luther's doctrine must guard against … summarizing it in mere formulas, however carefully defined."[32] This has led some Lutheran scholars to refer to justification as a meta-doctrine.[33] Although, it may be preferable, following Jonathan Linebaugh, to refer to it as the "grammar of the gospel."[34] Indeed, Oswald Bayer asserts that "[t]he theme of justification is not one theme among many. It has principal significance. It touches on every theme. Justification concerns not merely one's own history, not only world history, but also natural history. It has to do with everything."[35]

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[29] Cf. theses 27–29 of Luther's "The Disputation Concerning Justification" in *LW* 34:153.
[30] Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Hintergründe Des Streites Um Die Rechtfertigungslehre in Der Evangelischen Theologie," vol. 3 (Bayirsche Akademie der Wissenschaften Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, München: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000), 3.
[31] See Olli-Pekka Vainio, *Justification and Participation in Christ: The Development of the Lutheran Doctrine of Justification from Luther to the Formula of Concord (1580)* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008), 223–27.
[32] Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development*, ed. and trans. Roy A. Harrisville (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 259–60. See also Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), xvii.
[33] Mark Mattes, "Luther on Justification as Forensic and Effective," in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, ed. L'ubomír Batka, Irene Dingel, and Robert Kolb (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 270.
[34] See Jonathan Linebaugh, "The Grammar of the Gospel: Justification as a Theological Criterion in the Reformation and in Paul's Letter to the Galatians," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 71, no. 3 (2018): 287–307.
[35] Oswald Bayer, *Living by Faith: Justification and Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), xi.

Contrary to the expansive theological vision Luther maintained for the doctrine, treatments of justification often reflect the calcifying effects, post-Luther, of positioning justification within an *ordo salutis*.[36] When viewed in this way justification's soteriological implications are reduced to matters of personal salvation and relativized as such. While this certainly has the effect of making it a more manageable theological concept—one that is easier to define and situate in the context of a systematic theology—it comes at the expense of the scope and impact which Luther attributed to the doctrine. Thus, it would seem that doing justice to the role of justification in Luther's theology is inimical to the task of providing a formal definition of that doctrine.[37] In this way a sort of impasse is formed between the desiderata of clarity and the breadth and power with which Luther interpreted the doctrine of justification; the danger being that justification becomes so nebulous that it is reduced to an "empty formula … passed on with some embarrassment, and with an apologetic tone."[38]

Yet, this impasse is hardly irresolvable. After all, Lohse points out: "Only by a strict orientation to the subject matter does the oft-asserted principle apply that a link to the doctrine of justification must always be forged when evaluating separate questions of doctrine in Luther. When this does not occur, Luther's position is caricatured."[39] What he means by this is that justification, as the grammar of the gospel, assumes different articulations and inflections depending on the doctrinal subject matter to which it is linked. Thus, something approaching a total form of clarity might only be achieved via a comprehensive treatment of justification as it relates to the massive web of doctrinal content with which Luther dealt. However, this falls outside the scope of this project. Rather, the goal of this chapter is to achieve clarity on the manner in which justification shapes and grounds Luther's theological anthropology. In this way, the myriad other doctrines with which Luther linked justification can, for the most part, be left to the side. We shall then be able to approach some sort of clarity on justification's implications for anthropology, if not justification as a meta-doctrine.

Before moving on to more specifically anthropological considerations, we must note two possible ways of construing Luther's doctrine of justification which have been the

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[36] Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 242.
[37] Cf. Helmut T. Lehmann, "Editor's Introduction to the Disputation Concerning Justification," in *Luther's Works: Career of the Reformer IV* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), 147.
[38] Bayer, *Living by Faith,* xi.
[39] Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 260.

subject of much recent debate—that is, the relationship between forensic and effective models.[40] On the one hand, Lutheranism has traditionally construed justification in strongly forensic terms. Since Luther, this forensic emphasis on the imputation of an alien righteousness has become tightly bound up with law court imagery as a means to demonstrate its mechanisms and significance. However, some critics have responded to such a construal of justification, labeling it a legal fiction. Although a full treatment of this complex topic falls outside of the scope of this study, two things are worth noting. First, legal language pertaining to justification seems to be a contribution of Lutheranism—especially Melanchthon—rather than Luther himself. Thus, Alister McGrath notes: "Whereas Luther consistently employed images and categories of personal relationship to describe the union of the believer and Christ, Melanchthon increasingly employed images and categories drawn from the sphere of Roman law."[41] As such, a retrieval of Luther's doctrine need not entail the granting of priority to law court imagery. Second, although law court imagery is hardly an essential aspect of Luther's doctrine of justification, the presence of a forensic element is indisputable, so one cannot easily minimize or dismiss it.

On the other hand, however, unitive understandings of the atonement and soteriology have recently begun to ascend to theological pride of place. As such, Luther's account of justification has been pressed on whether it can adequately account for the effective or transformative aspects of justification. Again, one must give careful attention to where Luther ends and Lutheranism begins. Indeed, just as Luther's use of legal terminology tends to be overstated, so too is his focus on the extrinsic nature of justification at the expense of all else. McGrath notes that, while Luther never gives up on the extrinsic nature of imputed righteousness, he is also staunchly committed to the fact that "Christ is nonetheless really present within the believer, effecting his renovation and regeneration."[42] For Luther, Christ's mediatorial presence is an essential component of justification, and in this way he reflects the unitive emphasis of the Swiss reformers. Yet, this often goes unacknowledged since Lutheranism quickly abandoned this aspect of Luther's thought.[43] Thus, McGrath can say that, regarding the christological dimension of justification, "the

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[40] On the tension between the Luther Renaissance and Dialectical Theology as a pre-cursor to more recent debates, see Stayer, *Martin Luther, German Saviour*, 122.

[41] Alister E. McGrath, Iustitia Dei: *A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 24. See also Vainio, *Justification and Participation in Christ*, 17.

[42] McGrath, Iustitia Dei, 2:14; cf. *LW* 26:129.

[43] See Tuomo Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith: Luther's View of Justification*, ed. Kirsi Irmeli Stjerna (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 4. Mannermaa attributes this turn of events to the influence of Melanchthon.

Reformed school is considerably closer to Luther (especially 1525 Luther) than Lutheranism."[44]

The recent contributions of Tuomo Mannermaa and the Finnish school of Luther interpretation, while contested, are helpful insofar as they have served to re-emphasize the centrality of union with Christ in Luther's understanding of justification. In his assessment of Luther's theology, Mannermaa asserts that its central idea is "that in faith human beings *really* participate in the person of Christ, and in the divine life and victory that comes with him. Or, to say it the other way around: Christ gives his person to us through faith. "Faith" means participation in Christ, in whom there is no sin, death, or curse."[45] By way of this summary statement, the Finnish school—following Mannermaa—is attempting to counteract what they perceive as a one-sided emphasis on the forensic aspect of justification in the Lutheran tradition. Via an accent on the justificatory centrality of participation, Mannermaa identifies the striking similarity between Luther's doctrine of justification and Eastern Orthodoxy's emphasis on divinization. This is, he believes, not only more accurate to Luther's theology, but it also better accounts for the effective and transformative dimensions of justification.

However, while the Finnish school has been embraced by some prominent Lutheran theologians, like Robert Jenson and Carl Braaten,[46] others maintain it sets up a false dichotomy between the forensic and effective aspects of justification. Reflecting the latter position, Robert Kolb suggests "that such attempts are both historically inaccurate and theologically unnecessary" since "the more 'forensic' Luther's teaching becomes, the more 'effective' it is, because nothing can be more real than that which God's word declares."[47] What Kolb means by this exactly is not entirely clear. His point seems to be, however, that by overstating the ontological reality of union with Christ, the Finnish school has simultaneously identified an important aspect of Luther's doctrine of justification (union) while obscuring another (declaration and imputation).

As stated above, an adjudication of the forensic/effective debate is beside the point of this study. However, the shape of the debate provides helpful context when seeking to evaluate how Bonhoeffer draws on Luther in relation to anthropology and justification. As

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[44] McGrath, Iustitia Dei, 2:51.
[45] Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith*, 16.
[46] See their co-edited volume, *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).
[47] Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther: Confessor of the Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 128.

we seek to show the ways in which Bonhoeffer takes up Luther's justification-based anthropology, we shall do so with an eye to how he, at different times and in different ways, accents both the forensic and the participative dimensions of justification by faith. Furthermore, an awareness of where the accent falls for Bonhoeffer will prove important in chapters four and five when we turn to consider the manner in which he draws on the participative element in Paul's articulation of justification, incorporating it into his theology of discipleship.

IV. Luther on Justification's Import for Anthropology

In his commentary on Psalms 51, Luther provides the following definition of theology: "The proper subject of theology is man guilty of sin and condemned, and God the Justifier and Savior of man the sinner. Whatever is asked or discussed in theology outside this subject, is error and poison."[48] This definition yields two important insights into Luther's understanding of the theological task. First, it is clear that Luther's approach foregrounds the human being's place in the task of theology, setting her in relation to God and marking this relationship as the subject matter of theology. Second, rather than attributing an independent importance to humanity, Luther uses the adjectives "justifying" and "sinning" to qualify God and humanity respectively. In this way, he defines exactly the sort of relationship between God and humanity with which theology is concerned. As such, the connection between anthropology and justification is not an unfortunate side effect of his fixation on the doctrine of justification. Rather, it is a natural entailment of Luther's basic understanding of the theological endeavor.[49] Indeed, theology cannot be abstracted from its soteriological framing.

Far from being a later development, Luther's interpretation of justification as an anthropological concept is foundational to his early understanding of justification as such.[50] However, his fullest and most direct articulation of a justificatory anthropology occurs in the aptly titled, *The Disputation Concerning Man* (hereafter, *DCM*), given in 1536. It is this disputation that will serve as the basis for our discussion here.[51] In *DCM*, Luther articulates

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[48] *LW* 12:311.

[49] Cf. Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology,* 37–39.

[50] McGrath, Iustitia Dei, 12. For a concise and helpful assessment of how Luther grows and changes as a theologian throughout his career, see Gordon Rupp, "*Miles Emeritus?* Continuity and Discontinuity Between the Young and the Old Luther," in *Luther: Theologian for Catholics and Protestants*, ed. George Yule (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), 75–86.

[51] Although it is only a small slice of Luther's massive corpus, there is precedent for such an approach since no less a Luther scholar than Gerhard Ebeling devoted three volumes to this one disputation, with the third volume expanding to the point where it practically became a summary of Luther's theology. See Gerhard

three aspects of the human being which theology must hold firm, framing them in terms of the dispute between philosophy and theology.[52] Bayer notes that "[w]ith masterful conciseness Luther formulated the following theses concerning these three aspects in one single Latin sentence:"[53]

> 21. Namely, that man is a creature of God consisting of body and a living soul, made in the beginning after the image of God, without sin, so that he should procreate and rule over the created things, and never die,
> 22. But after the fall of Adam, certainly, he was subject to the power of the devil, sin and death, a twofold evil for his powers, unconquerable and eternal.
> 23. He can be freed and given eternal life only through the Son of God, Jesus Christ (if he believes in him).[54]

Thus, for Luther, the human being is simultaneously one who is created, fallen, and reconciled through Jesus Christ alone. While these are obviously not mutually exclusive categories—indeed, Luther's *simul justus et peccator* testifies to this fact—neither should they be confused or conflated. According to Luther this is the great error of philosophy, since it supposes, under the auspices of reason, "that natural things have remained untainted after the fall."[55] It follows that, if natural faculties remain intact after the fall, then those faculties are not in need of Christ's redemption, and it is thereby possible to view the human solely through the lens of creation.[56] Thus, while Luther believes that it is necessary to take the human being's status as creature seriously—we shall see below that, for Luther, creation itself is a justificatory event—he also thinks that sin is a total reality for which justification by faith is the only remedy. As such, Luther gives his concise definition of the human person in *DCM*'s 32nd thesis, provocatively asserting that Paul's formulation in Romans 3:28 "briefly sums up the definition of man, saying, 'man is justified by faith.'"[57] Despite the simplicity of

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Ebeling, *Die Theologische Definition Des Menschen: Kommentar Zu These 20-40*, vol. 2:3, Lutherstudien (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989). See also Eberhard Jüngel's development of a justification-based anthropology in "On Becoming Truly Human. The Significance of the Reformation Distinction Between Person and Works for the Self-Understanding of Modern Humanity," in *Theological Essays II*, ed. J.B. Webster, trans. Arnold Neufeldt-Fast and J.B. Webster (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 216–40.

[52] Theses 1-19 deal with philosophy, while 20-40 pertain to theology. For an overview of the relationship between theology and philosophy in Luther's wider theological work, see Lienhard, *Luther, Witness to Jesus Christ*, 346–49.

[53] Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 154.

[54] *LW* 34:138. On the way in which Bonhoeffer takes up these three theses in his assessment of Christian community in *Sanctorum Communio*, see Michael Mawson, "Theology and Social Theory: Reevaluating Bonhoeffer's Approach," *Theology Today* 71, no. 1 (2014): 76–77.

[55] *LW* 34:139.

[56] *LW* 12:308.

[57] *LW* 34:139; cf. Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 155.

the definition, there is much to unpack here, so in what follows we shall examine both the ontological and the epistemological dimensions of these central claims from *DCM*.

a. The Ontological Dimension

Far from negating the reality of sin, Luther goes on, in the 33rd thesis, to show that justification entails *both* the totalizing effect of sin and the reality of salvation by grace alone. Yet, chasms still yawn on either side of this definition, which itself seems to tend either toward universalism or an anthropology that is soteriologically exclusive. In other words, either all humans are justified or only those who have been justified are human. These threats are only real, however, if one divorces Luther's anthropological definition from his expansive vision for the doctrine of justification by faith, since they restrict justification to its role in personal salvation.[58] In a subtle counter to these challenges, Bayer offers an alternative interpretation of *DCM*'s 32nd thesis when he says that "what is fundamental anthropologically and ontologically, since [the thesis] states the essence of a human, his actual *being*, is that he can be justified only by faith."[59] The ontological assumption here, then, is that humans are created in such a way as to require justification and the corresponding means by which this requirement is met is faith. As such, being human does not necessarily entail that one *is* justified by faith in actuality (easing worries concerning universalism). Neither does it mean that only those who are justified by faith in actuality are human (ruling out soteriological exclusivism). Rather, it means that human existence requires justification which only faith can provide.

The danger at this point is to suppose that, for Luther, God creates humans incomplete, with a soteriological void which needs to be filled. By interpreting the doctrine of creation in terms of justification by faith, however, Luther's definition of the human in *DCM* corresponds to a creational reality which, on account of sin, must be soteriologically recapitulated.[60] Although it certainly does not shape the broader Protestant theological imagination, the connection between justification and creation is regularly commented on by

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[58] This appears to be what Marc Cortez does when he suggests that Luther's view entails that only Christians are fully human. See Marc Cortez, *Christological Anthropology in Historical Perspective: Ancient and Contemporary Approaches to Theological Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 230.

[59] Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 100.

[60] Robert Kolb, "Luther's View of Being Human: The Relationship of God and His Human Creatures as the Core of Wittenberg Anthropology," *Word & World* 37, no. 4 (2017): 337. See also Oswald Bayer, "The Doctrine of Justification and Ontology," trans. Christine Helmer, *Neue Zeitschrift Für Systematische Theologie Und Religionsphilosophie* 43, no. 1 (2001): 45.

Luther scholars. Particular attention is given to the first article of Luther's Small Catechism.[61] Here, his statement of belief regarding creation conspicuously employs the language of justification, especially in the final line:

> I believe that God has created me and all that exists; that he has given me and still sustains my body and soul, all my limbs and senses, my reason and all the faculties of my mind, together with food and clothing, house and home, family and property; that he provides me daily and abundantly with all the necessities of life, protects me from all danger, and preserves me from all evil. *All this he does out of his pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness on my part.*[62]

Thus, along with his marked attention to the God-givenness of worldly life, Luther, in a clear allusion to justification, identifies human existence as an undeserved, categorical gift which is passively received.

Luther also weaves elements of justification into his exegetical lectures on the book of Genesis.[63] At times, he does so indirectly, such as when he asserts that a central aspect of humanity's unimpaired, pre-fall nature was their righteousness and uprightness.[64] Yet, he also draws more explicit parallels between the work of God in creation and Christ's redemptive work, stating: "This care and solicitude of God for us, even before we were created, may rightly and profitably be considered here…. There is a similar beneficence of God toward us in His spiritual gifts. Before we were brought to faith, Christ, our Redeemer, is above in the Father's house; He prepares mansions so that when we arrive, we may find a heaven furnished with every kind of joy (John 14:2)."[65] We can thus begin to see a sort of parallel for Luther according to which non-existence and sin are correlates, and God in Christ acts to overcome both, thereby establishing humanity in the righteousness of faith. As such, Johannes Schwanke notes that "[f]or Luther re-creation is of the same order as creation."[66]

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[61] See Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 95; Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 341; Johannes Schwanke, "Luther's Theology of Creation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, ed. Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel, and L'ubomír Batka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 210. In a recent article, Schwanke identifies the dangers implicit in Luther's emphasis on the individual in creation and justification ("Martin Luther's Theology of Creation," trans. Carsten Card-Hyatt, *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 18, no. 4 [2016]: 401–4). While it falls outside the scope of this chapter, one could make the case that Bonhoeffer corrects this individualism in his *analogia relationis*.

[62] Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 345. Emphasis added. On this see Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 95; Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 341; Schwanke, "Luther's Theology of Creation," 210.

[63] Cf. Robert Kolb, "God and His Human Creatures in Luther's Sermons on Genesis: The Reformer's Early Use of His Distinction of Two Kinds of Righteousness," *Concordia Journal* 33, no. 22 (2007): 176–78.

[64] *LW* 1:114.

[65] *LW* 1:39.

[66] Schwanke, "Luther's Theology of Creation," 210.

That is, both creation and re-creation ground human existence in God's categorical gift. Perhaps Luther's fullest explication of this dynamic is when, later in his Genesis lectures and again using confessional language, he writes:

> We believe in God, who is an almighty creator, who makes everything out of nothing, who makes out of evil good, out of the hopeless and lost redemption and salvation. Just as Paul writes in Romans 4:17, 'He who creates new things out of nothing' and 2 Corinthians 4:6 'God, who said, light shall shine out of darkness'. This means: Not out of a gleaming coal a little spark, but 'out of darkness light'; also out of death life, out of sin righteousness, out of the slavery of the devil and hell heaven and the liberty of the children of God.[67]

Here, Luther seizes on the parallel that Paul draws in Romans 4:17—between death and nothing on the one hand, and new things and life on the other.[68] In this way, he ties justification *qua* reality of redemption to justification *qua* reality of creation.

Yet, drawing such a tight parallel between justification by faith in creation, on the one hand, and justification by faith in redemption, on the other hand, raises the question: how, then, do they differ? One might suggest that, whereas creation is a work of God the Father, redemption is a work of God the Son, thereby making a Trinitarian distinction. However, Luther does not allow such a move since his lectures on Genesis clearly identify the Son as the primary operative in creation.[69] Instead, Luther's distinction seems to be a narratival one, which hangs on the intervening reality of sin between pristine creation and redemption. It is here that Luther's affirmation of creation entails a disjunction in the analogy between the material nothingness out of which God creates in the beginning and the sinful nothingness out of which God salvifically recreates. Soteriological justification is distinct from creational justification precisely because it is not a starting over *ex nihilo*. Instead, it is a recreation in which God in Christ affirms his identity as the God who is free for humanity, desiring to be in relationship with them.[70]

By framing the human person in terms of creation, sin, and redemption in *DCM*, Luther is putting forward the three aspects or realities which structure the

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[67] *LW* 8:39.
[68] Cf. Eberhard Jüngel, "The World as Possibility and Actuality. The Ontology of the Doctrine of Justification," in *Theological Essays*, trans. John Webster (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 107.
[69] *LW* 1:21, 50.
[70] On this, see Oswald Bayer, "Martin Luther's Conception of Human Dignity," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity*, ed. Marcus Düwell et al., trans. Naomi van Steenbergen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 102.

relationship in which humans stand to God. Teasing out what this relationality means in reference to creation, Ian McFarland writes: "Precisely because creation is the bestowal of existence where there was nothing existing before, it is not a process that can be described in terms of a sequence of events, it is rather a relationship. Nor is it a onetime act, but rather an enduring bond of intimate and complete dependence on God."[71] Through *creatio ex nihilo*, God justifies human existence by calling it into being, and the nature of this existence is relational insofar as it is God's categorical gift received by humans in the dependence of faith.[72] For Luther this relationality and dependence on God signals humanity's fundamental status as creatures *coram Deo*. While Luther identifies other *coram* relationships, human existence *coram Deo* serves as the relational and ontological starting point according to which all other relationships are ordered.[73] As such, humanity's relational ontology serves as the subject matter of Luther's justification-based anthropology and helps to explain its tri-partite structure.[74] In other words, each aspect—creation, sin, and redemption—informs and contributes to the substance and definition of the human being as one who is justified *coram Deo* by faith.

Yet, how exactly are we to conceptualize the relationship between these three aspects insofar as they form the structure of humanity's relational ontology *coram Deo*? There are two primary ways to answer this question, represented, on the one hand, by Notger Slenczka and, on the other, by Bayer. Slenczka has suggested that they be interpreted in terms of the salvation-historical narrative, which entails a chronological understanding.[75] Such a reading places humanity "in relation to the past—the original image of God—and in relation to the future, in which [the] human essence will be restored."[76] This interpretation is problematic insofar as both creation and ultimate redemption are pushed out of the present, and thus lose their

[71] Ian A. McFarland, *From Nothing: A Theology of Creation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 58.
[72] For an excellent essay that seeks to articulate a relational anthropology in a way that does justice to the doctrine of creation, see Christoph Schwöbel, "Human Being as Relational Being: Twelve Theses for a Christian Anthropology," in *Persons, Divine and Human: King's College Essays in Theological Anthropology*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 141–70. The current study is, largely, consonant with Schwöbel's proposal. However, by accenting justification and the relational dimensions implied by it, we are seeking to develop and lay bare the doctrinal logic undergirding relationality.
[73] Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to His Thought* (London: Collins, 1970), 199–200.
[74] On Luther's relational ontology over against a scholastic substance ontology, see Gerhard Ebeling, "Luther's Understanding of Reality," trans. Scott Celsor, *Lutheran Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (2013): 56–75.
[75] Slenczka, "Luther's Anthropology," 219.
[76] Slenczka, 219.

ontological decisiveness. Bayer offers a more promising interpretation when he suggests that these three aspects are best understood as existing concurrently.[77] More specifically, it is a dynamic concurrence due to the inherent tension introduced by the disruptive realities of sin and grace.[78] Sin disrupts creation, introducing a new and total reality over against it. Likewise, grace disrupts sin, inaugurating the total, eschatological reality of new creation. In this way, on the anthropological level, we might say that Luther is proposing a threefold *simul* in which the human simply is, in relation to God, simultaneously creature, sinner, and reconciled in Christ alone. While teasing out exactly how this simultaneity unfolds is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is sufficient to note that holding these three aspects together prevents the undue consolidation of human ontology into any single aspect at the expense of the others. Thus, they function as theological checks and balances for one another.

At this point we have seen how Luther defines humanity in terms of justification by faith, thereby suggesting a relational anthropology in which human existence *coram Deo* is ontologically fundamental.[79] This relational ontology is presented in terms of a threefold simultaneity according to which the human is one who is created, sinful, and reconciled in Christ alone. However, while we have briefly outlined the contours of justification as a creational and redemptive reality above, we have yet to address how justification by faith can be considered ontologically basic for humans lost in sin.

Above we noted that Luther's basic anthropological definition implies that humans require the sort of justification that only faith can provide. Insofar as faith is created (or re-created) by the Holy Spirit and in Jesus Christ, it is the substance of a properly ordered relational ontology.[80] However, sin intervenes as a total disruption of this reality.[81] While he only speaks of the radical effects of sin in terms of

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[77] On this, see Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 154–55.

[78] Bayer, 155. My thanks to Phil Ziegler who helpfully suggested the conceptuality of sin and grace as disruptive realities.

[79] Cf. Eberhard Jüngel, "Humanity in Correspondence to God: Remarks on the Image of God as a Basic Concept of Theological Anthropology," in *Theological Essays*, trans. John Webster (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 133; John Webster, "Justification, Analogy and Action: Barth and Luther in Jüngel's Anthropology," in *Barth's Moral Theology: Human Action in Barth's Thought* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 211.

[80] Oswald Bayer, "Being in the Image of God," *Lutheran Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (2013): 77; cf. Bayer, "The Doctrine of Justification and Ontology," 46.

[81] Luther distinguishes between actual sin and original sin, but we shall focus only on the latter in order to highlight its total effects. See L'ubomír Batka, "Luther's Teaching on Sin and Evil," in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, ed. Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel, and L'ubomír Batka (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 235.

humanity's natural capacities in *DCM*, Luther fundamentally understands sin in terms of unbelief or unfaith.[82] Insofar as sin is a total reality, it undermines faith as the substance of humanity's relational ontology and in this way destroys humanity's justified existence *coram Deo*. Thus, sin introduces a new reality in which humanity rejects its relational ontology, turning in on itself in search of self-justification.

It is in this quest for self-justification that we begin to see the enduring ontological significance of justification by faith emerge. The reality of sin is not justification-less or faith-less, but rather it is self-justification and faith in self. Apart from God, humans grasp at justification by placing themselves in a faith relationship to someone or something other than God.[83] Ultimately though, even if a person places their faith in something other than themselves, they have set themselves up as the final arbiter concerning what or who is worthy of that faith. As such, Luther picks up on Augustine's description of sin as an incurvature of the self in on itself.[84] When Luther refers to sinful humans as *homo incurvatus in se* he is highlighting the relational nature of sin and its significance as a total ontological reality.[85] Rather than an ontology grounded extrinsically in one's relationship with God, the human being becomes locked within herself, creating her own gods, her own righteousness, and justifying her own existence.

However, while sinful humanity's quest for self-justification demonstrates justification by faith's enduring ontological significance negatively as a need or privation, the doctrine of preservation does so positively.[86] Insofar as Luther's tri-partite anthropology holds, the sinful human always remains the created human. Herein lies Luther's doctrine of preservation. There is no possibility for humanity to reverse the curved inwardness of their sinful, relational ontology. Yet, God, out of sheer mercy, preserves in anticipation of the justificatory, re-creative work of the incarnate Christ and the Holy Spirit. Thus, even though, for the human in sin, justification by faith is solely a divine possibility, it remains ontologically decisive

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[82] *LW* 29:182.

[83] See Bayer on the "dispute of justifications" in *Living by Faith*, 1–7.

[84] While this is by no means the only sin-imagery Luther employs, it most clearly illustrates the effect of sin on humanity's relational ontology. For an excellent overview of Luther on sin, see Batka, "Luther's Teaching on Sin and Evil." For an in-depth study on Luther's use of *homo incurvatus in se,* see Matt Jenson, *The Gravity of Sin: Augustine, Luther and Barth on* homo incurvatus in se (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 47–97.

[85] Luther's use of this formula appears primarily in his *Commentary on Romans*. See *LW* 25:291, 313, 345, 426.

[86] Contra Jüngel, who does not take preservation to be a form of relation, and as such, construes being in sin as relationlessness. See his "The World as Possibility and Actuality," 107–8.

because it is this possibility—grounded in creation and realized in reconciliation—that marks God as being *for* humanity, thereby preserving human existence even as the sinful human turns in on and unmakes herself.

b. The Epistemological Dimension

Up to this point we have discussed justification by faith as a basic ontological reality for humanity. However, a further problem that confronts us in Luther's short definition of the human being is the challenge of distinguishing the ontological question—what does it mean to be human?—from the epistemological question—how do we know what it means to be human? By defining the human person as one who is justified by faith Luther provides an answer to both.[87] In the context of *DCM*, Luther's apparent meaning is ontological, but by making this ontological claim within the context of the dispute between philosophy and theology he is also implicitly commenting on the epistemic framework necessary for providing a theological definition of the human being—namely, the framework of faith. By briefly considering why Luther believes philosophy is epistemically limited in such a way that it is insufficient to the task of describing the human being, we shall see how justification by faith can serve this dual function.

In contradistinction to the diatribes against reason for which Luther is famous,[88] *DCM* contains no less than seven theses (4–9, 24) extoling reason, in relation to other aspects of human life, as "the best and something divine."[89] While this cuts against the popular caricature of Luther as one for whom reason is nothing but a whore which faith must blind, it serves to establish the parameters within which Luther's sharpest polemics against reason take place.[90] For example, in his later commentary on Galatians, Luther goes so far as to suggest that "faith slaughters reason and kills the beast that the whole world and all the creatures cannot kill."[91] His feud with reason here stretches over several pages, yet it is notable—when comparing its enmity toward reason with the praise accorded to reason in

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[87] Cf. Piotr J. Malysz, "Luther and Dionysius: Beyond Mere Negations," *Modern Theology* 24, no. 4 (2008): 687.
[88] While reason and philosophy are clearly not the same thing, Luther seems to identify reason as the primary tool which philosophy uses to evaluate reality, and as such uses them interchangeably. Thus, following Luther's lead in the 11th thesis of *DCM* (*LW* 34:137), I shall also use them synonymously.
[89] *LW* 34:137; cf. Ebeling, *Luther*, 91. However, Luther's esteem for reason also poses some serious theological challenges insofar as it is the primary basis on which Luther invests so much confidence in the state and created orders. On this see Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 245–47.
[90] See *LW* 37:221; 45:39.
[91] *LW* 26:228.

DCM—that his polemic is entirely framed as a dispute between faith and reason.[92] Faith need not slaughter reason as such, but only reason in its impropriety and hubris. Insofar as this is the case, reason becomes the enemy only when it sets itself over against faith and God himself, and in so doing recommends justification by works.

Yet, in *DCM,* Luther praises reason only in relation to the created order and even then in a limited manner. Luther, choosing to speak philosophically about philosophy, works with Aristotle's four causes—efficient, material, formal, and final—as the four ways in which the human being can be known.[93] The material and formal cause roughly correspond to the body and soul respectively and are available to reason as objects of knowledge. However, even in this regard Luther is hesitant to give human reason free reign. This is presumably due to the debilitating effects of sin, which prevent one from distinguishing between true and distorted knowledge of humanity's formal and material cause.[94] Instead, he asserts that "we seem scarcely to perceive his material cause sufficiently," and similarly notes a complete lack of philosophical consensus in relation to the formal cause.[95] In this way, Luther acknowledges some space for philosophical anthropology, but one might be forgiven for a lack of optimism regarding its prospects. As for the efficient and final cause—corresponding to humanity's origin and goal respectively—these are entirely inaccessible to reason, since they are only given to knowledge by means of revelation. Theology, then, exposes and posits three epistemic deficiencies in philosophy that seriously limit its ability to speak anthropologically: lack of knowledge of the efficient cause, ignorance of the reality of sin, and lack of knowledge of the final cause. Thus, Luther shows that a purely philosophical ontology of the human person—which he sums up in terms of "reason, sensation, and body" in the first thesis of *DCM*—is undermined from the outset.

These epistemic limitations cannot be overcome apart from faith. As Eberhard Jüngel puts it: theological anthropology "interprets humanity as defined *a priori* from outside itself, even though this 'outside' can only be recognized *a posteriori.*"[96] Only from within the epistemic framework of faith is it possible to recognize the total reality of sin and its dire effects,[97] God in Christ as the creator and efficient cause,[98] and Christ as the final cause.[99]

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[92] See *LW* 26:227–34.
[93] *LW* 34:138.
[94] Cf. Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 186.
[95] *LW* 34:138.
[96] Jüngel, "Humanity in Correspondence to God," 127.
[97] *LW* 25:215.
[98] *LW* 1:21, 50; 34:138. See also Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 116.
[99] *LW* 1:64, 68; 34:140.

While this is perhaps obvious given the fact that Luther is proposing a specifically *theological* anthropology, it is rarely brought so clearly to the fore. Rather than offering a theological interpretation of reason, sensation, or the body Luther boldly grounds human ontology in a reality that is in no way intrinsic to humanity. Instead, human ontology is defined extrinsically in terms of justification by faith, and this is a reality that can only be known when it is revealed to faith from the outside.

Luther's theological counter-proposal mirrors his description of a philosophical approach to defining the human person in two important ways. First, on Luther's account of philosophical anthropology, reason functions both ontologically, as definitional of the human, and epistemologically, as the means by which human ontology is known. However, this is an insufficient analogue for faith, for the reasons noted above. Faith, as the means by which one is justified, is the substance of one's relationship with God, which Luther takes to be ontologically fundamental. Only from within this relationship, in which humanity exists *coram Deo*, can the human being properly be understood theologically.

Second, it is almost certainly not coincidental that this three-pronged critique of philosophical anthropology corresponds to Luther's tri-partite definition of humanity—outlined above—on all three points. By way of a negative critique of philosophy then, Luther's theological definition of humanity proves robust exactly where philosophy's deficiencies are the most evident. This is because, whereas the structure of philosophy's human is evaluated according to the dictates of reason, the structure of theology's human is understood according to revelation received in and by faith. Whereas theology begins with a human ontology that is given in revelation and structures its anthropological thinking accordingly, philosophy constrains human ontology to what is epistemically accessible to reason. If fundamental aspects of human ontology are basically inaccessible to reason, as Luther asserts in *DCM*, then the external, revelatory word of God about man is the only proper starting point for an anthropology that is not, in Luther's words, "fragmentary, fleeting, and exceedingly material."[100]

Thus, we see that Luther's critique of philosophy functions as a sort of proof that reason's epistemic framework is insufficient to evaluate human ontology. This is because, for Luther, the human being must first and primarily be understood *coram Deo*. Being before God is the basic reality of human ontology and the proper starting point for an

[100] *LW* 34:138.

anthropological epistemology. Ebeling helpfully consolidates and summarizes how Luther interprets human beings in terms of their various *coram*-relationships, so it is worth quoting him at length on this point:

> But it would be quite wrong to isolate this existence in the sight of God from the different ways in which man is involved in a *coram*-relationship. In Luther's language these other *coram*-relationships constantly recur: existence in my own sight (*coram meipso*), existence in the sight of men (*coram hominibus*), and existence in the sight of the world (*corum mundo*). The two latter forms are almost identical, though it is nevertheless worthwhile to pay attention to the difference between them. Even existence 'before myself', by contrast to existence 'before God', can in certain respects be identified with *coram*-existence in relation to men and to the world. On the other hand, existence 'before myself' is taken up into existence before God once man becomes aware that he in fact possesses this existence before God. This means, of course, that he is no longer abandoned to his own forum and judgment, but is rather translated out of himself, and thus possesses his being and existence outside of himself, because he possesses it in the sight of God.[101]

The epistemology of reason in rebellion against faith is, then, when the human is known autonomously, *coram ipso*, in a way that is shaped primarily by human existence *coram hominibus* and *coram mundo*. It brackets out humanity *coram Deo* and in so doing rejects the basic ontological truth according to which all anthropological insights must be ordered. The epistemic framework of reason alone is then given free reign to determine the nature of humanity because, in unbelief, it exists untethered from the only reality that can constrain and discipline it—namely, human ontology *coram Deo*.

However, in keeping with Luther's praise of reason in *DCM*, it must be noted that none of these *coram*-relationships are intrinsically evil. Rather, one must consider each in subordinate relation to humanity *coram Deo* and only in this way can one understand them properly as aspects of human existence. As such, humanity *coram ipso* can only ask the anthropological question accurately when the extrinsic nature of human existence *coram Deo* serves as its presupposition. When this is the case the anthropological question that arises from humanity considered *coram ipso* can no longer be treated as such, but only as mediated by the reality of humanity's basic *coram Deo* ontology. Thus, faith is both the substance of a justified relationship with God in Christ and the epistemic presupposition that makes a genuinely theological anthropology possible.

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[101] Ebeling, *Luther*, 199–200.

V. Conclusion

In looking at Luther's use of justification by faith as an anthropological concept we have seen that it is a fundamentally relational concept. What this means is that justification constitutes the shape and structure of one's relationship with God, with faith defining its substance. Thus, human ontology is extrinsically grounded and defined in terms of this relationship in which humanity exists *coram Deo*. The *coram Deo* relationship involves three aspects which are derived from the salvation-historical narrative: creation, sin, and reconciliation. These three aspects simultaneously inform humanity's relational ontology, but remain distinct and in tension with one another due to the disruptive realities of sin and grace. Despite this tension, God's being *for* humanity in Christ through justification by faith remains ontologically decisive—decisive for creation in the gift of existence *coram Deo*, for sin in preservation, and for reconciliation as repair, recapitulation, and re-creation. Finally, while creation, sin, and reconciliation stand in dynamic tension ontologically, reconciliation must be given epistemic pride of place in theological anthropology since it is only in and through faith that we can know anything of the realities of sin and creation. With these focal points of Luther's theological anthropology in mind, we shall now turn to Bonhoeffer's early theology in order to investigate the extent to which Bonhoeffer picks up on and works within this anthropological framework.

Chapter 2
Justified in Christ and the Church:
The Shape of Bonhoeffer's Early Anthropology

I. Introduction

A survey of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's early theological work reveals that his understanding of theology conforms to Luther's definition: "The proper subject of theology is man guilty of sin and condemned, and God the Justifier and Savior of man the sinner. Whatever is asked or discussed in theology outside this subject, is error and poison."[1] This is borne out both by Bonhoeffer's christocentric approach and his vested interest in theological anthropology. To this definition, when thinking about Bonhoeffer, one must also add the church as a third term. Bonhoeffer's early theology weaves these three strands together in a tight braid, emphasizing the church as the place where Christ encounters humanity and, as such, the context in which theological anthropology becomes a genuine possibility.

Therefore, it is impossible to treat Bonhoeffer's theological anthropology in isolation. Instead it can only be worked out in relation to its christological basis on the one hand and its ecclesial context on the other. Similarly, we shall see that, for Bonhoeffer, the import of justification for human existence is thoroughly christological and only fully grasped within the sphere of the church. As such, picking up where the last chapter left off, we shall focus on the ways in which Luther's justification-based anthropology provides a framework for assessing the shaping influence of justification on Bonhoeffer's theological anthropology. In doing so, we shall give special attention to the unique manner in which Bonhoeffer elaborates on Luther's model by fleshing out Christ's determinative import for the human person and highlighting the central significance of the church for human existence.[2] The goal of this chapter is not to give a thoroughgoing account of Bonhoeffer's anthropology, but rather to show how the doctrine of justification shapes his thinking about humanity in important ways.

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[1] *LW* 12:311.

[2] By "elaborates on," I do not mean that Luther neglected Christology, nor that he had a thin ecclesiology, since neither is the case. Indeed, Luther's Christology is essentially related to his sacramentology and ecclesiology (on this see Brian Lugioyo, "Martin Luther's Eucharistic Christology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Christology*, ed. Francesca Murphy [Oxford, United Kingdom ; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015], 267–83.) Rather, it simply means that Bonhoeffer teases out the christological and justificatory connection between anthropology and ecclesiology in a manner distinct from Luther.

II. Bonhoeffer's Early Theology in the Light of Luther's Theological Anthropology

Given our focus on Luther's *Disputation Concerning Man* (*DCM*) in the previous chapter, it is natural to query whether Bonhoeffer himself was indeed familiar with this small piece of Luther's voluminous written corpus. Of course, reading something and engaging with it in the development of one's own thought are hardly the same thing. So, the primary proving ground for Luther's influence on Bonhoeffer remains in the sphere of thematic resonance. However, it is certainly worthwhile to note the historical evidence for Bonhoeffer's first-hand encounter with *DCM* as we begin to consider the extent to which, following on Luther, justification by faith structures his understanding of the human person.

While a student at the University of Berlin, Bonhoeffer found himself in the thick of the Luther Renaissance. He did not shy away from this reality, but rather set about the task of coming to grips with the 16th century reformer who continued to loom large over and in German theology. This immersion in Luther, especially through his courses with Karl Holl, left an indelible mark on Bonhoeffer. According to Bethge, Bonhoeffer was especially influenced by the way that Holl located justification by faith at the center of theology,[3] although he doubted whether Holl gave sufficient attention to the christological dimension of Luther's theology.[4]

While studying under Holl, Bonhoeffer wrote two lengthy essays on Luther: "Luther's Feelings about His Work as Expressed in the Final Years of His Life Based on His Correspondence of 1540-1546,"[5] and "Luther's Views of the Holy Spirit according to the *Disputationen* of 1535-1545 edited by Drews."[6] While only the latter essay will be discussed here, it is worth noting that both essays focus on the latter portion of Luther's theological career. Although the degree to which Luther's understanding of justification by faith evolves over the course of his life is open to debate, Bonhoeffer was clearly well-versed in his later theology, where *DCM* is situated. Thus, at the very least, Bonhoeffer was familiar with the shape of Luther's theology during the period out of which the reformer's mature theological anthropology emerges. Insofar as the central themes of *DCM* are reiterated elsewhere in Luther's later theology, Bonhoeffer's acquaintance with the broader literature adds historical heft to our central claim—namely, that his anthropology reflects the core concepts of *DCM*.

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[3] Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, ed. Victoria Barnett, Rev. Ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 85–86.
[4] Bethge, 69.
[5] *DBWE* 9:257–84.
[6] *DBWE* 9:325–70.

Yet, on the basis of his essay on Luther's understanding of the Holy Spirit, it is also possible to establish that Bonhoeffer at least read and was directly familiar with *DCM*. Indeed, although it is hardly the focus of the larger essay, Bonhoeffer footnotes one of *DCM's* disputation fragments in his discussion of infant baptism.[7] Needless to say, this comment has little to do with theological anthropology, does not cite an issue central to the disputation itself, and hardly demonstrates Bonhoeffer's enduring interest in *DCM*. However, it does satisfy the minimal historical criteria of familiarity in terms of a direct encounter with the text of *DCM* itself. This familiarity is confirmed and substantiated when, six years later, Bonhoeffer again references *DCM*; this time in his lecture course entitled, "The History of Twentieth-Century Systematic Theology."[8] Here, Bonhoeffer invokes Luther's *DCM* as an example of the inherent tension between theology and philosophy with which theologians must constantly reckon. Thus, it is not only clear that Bonhoeffer was directly familiar with the text of *DCM*, but also that this familiarity was enduring rather than punctuated.

At the end of the previous chapter we outlined the key components of Luther's theological anthropology, centering on its articulation in *DCM*. These components include: the relational implications of justification, human ontology as extrinsically grounded, the tri-partite structure of the human person (under the rubric of creation, fall, and reconciliation), God's being for humanity as ontologically decisive, and faith as the epistemic condition for knowledge of humanity in its tri-partite structuring. In what follows we shall address each of these aspects and the ways in which they surface in Bonhoeffer's early theology under the broader rubrics of Bonhoeffer's relational ontology and, what he calls, the historical dialectic. We shall then demonstrate the manner in which Christology and ecclesiology serve to inform how justification shapes his understanding of the human person.

a. Justification and Relational Ontology

By interpreting justification as an anthropological principle, Luther locates human being *coram Deo*, thereby placing theological anthropology under the umbrella of soteriology. In doing so, he introduces the idea that humans are irreducibly social by virtue of their need for

[7] *DBWE* 9:359. Here and throughout this essay, Bonhoeffer is working with Paul Drew's edited volume of Luther's disputations: Martin Luther, *Disputationen Dr. M. Luthers in den Jahren 1535–1545 an der Universität Wittenberg gehalten*, ed. Paul Drews (Göttingen, 1895). On this, see *DBWE* 9:325n1.

[8] *DBWE* 11:235. Although the text cited is reconstructed from student notes, it is likely that the *DCM* citation is Bonhoeffer's own and not a student's addition.

justification in relation to an other, and that the social relation most basic to personhood is the one in which humans exist *coram Deo* as those who are recognized by God.[9] Identifying a corresponding concern for sociality and relationality in Bonhoeffer's theological anthropology is hardly a revolutionary move. Indeed, his concern for the central importance of responsibly being with and for the other undoubtedly plays a key role in the continuing relevance and compelling nature of his theology over the years.

Even so, exploring the theological roots of Bonhoeffer's theology of sociality, especially under the rubric of justification by faith, has been a largely neglected line of inquiry. This is likely due to the fact that almost 50 years after it was first published, Clifford Green's monograph, *Bonhoeffer: A Theology of Sociality*, continues to provide the standard account of sociality's central import in Bonhoeffer's theology. Green masterfully weaves together the social, theological, and biographical, showing how they are intimately intertwined in Bonhoeffer's thought. However, Green's study is constrained by the historical method which he employs. He adopts this method in intentional contradistinction to the numerous, earlier thematic studies of Bonhoeffer which were unable to "concern [themselves] with the question: what are the distinctive marks and developments which characterize Bonhoeffer's theology *as a whole*, within the framework of which a particular theme or subject is to be investigated?"[10] By examining Bonhoeffer's major works in their historical and biographical context, Green believes that he can overcome these weaknesses and identify sociality as the cohering concept in Bonhoeffer's theology.

While this is not the place for an extended critique of Green's magisterial work—especially since there remains a great deal of consonance between it and the present study—his chosen method results in two blind spots that are worth pointing out. This is especially the case since the line of inquiry we shall follow in this chapter is located behind those blind spots. First, while Green's historical investigation of the texts does justice to the explicit development and trajectory of Bonhoeffer's theology, it is less well equipped to attend to the implicit, subtextual, and theologically normative assumptions that underlie his arguments.[11]

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[9] On God's recognition as integral to justification, see Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to His Thought* (London: Collins, 1970), 197–98.

[10] Clifford J. Green, *Bonhoeffer: A Theology of Sociality*, Rev. Ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 9.

[11] Green is, of course, aware of such theologically normative assumptions. This is evidenced in an editorial footnote he provides for the English, critical edition of *Sanctorum Communio*, where he comments: "For Bonhoeffer the Christian understanding of person at the ontological level is always that of the person in a social and ethical encounter with the other person; this is the Christian basic-relation of I and You, self and other. It presupposes the theological axiom that the human person always exists in relation to an Other, namely God, and that human relations are in some way analogies of this fundamental relation" (*DBWE* 1:50n56). However,

An obvious biblical analogy here would be the case of the *imago Dei*. Many scholars have noted that its explicit formulation only occurs several times in the opening chapters of Genesis, yet the vast majority of theologians assume its ongoing significance and import throughout Scripture. Green's approach seems unable to properly accommodate such theologically normative assumptions in his evaluation of Bonhoeffer's theology. The second blind spot is related to the first, and it is Green's assumption that sociality is a sufficiently basic theological category for Bonhoeffer such that it undergirds his entire theology. To prove this point Green cites the preface to *Sanctorum Communio* twice in the first two chapters of his study. Here, Bonhoeffer writes: "The more this investigation has considered the significance of the sociological category for theology, the more clearly has emerged the social intention of all the basic Christian concepts. 'Person', 'primal state', 'sin', and 'revelation' can be fully comprehended only in reference to sociality."[12] Green then sets out to prove that this programmatic statement establishes a trajectory in which sociality is "formative for Bonhoeffer's whole theological development."[13] Yet, is it not equally possible that sociality is a corollary concern and consequent motif of a more basic theological conviction regarding who God is, the being of humanity, and the relation in which they stand? If this is the case, then Bonhoeffer's theology of sociality bears within it formative doctrinal commitments that must be articulated. This is especially the case because if one gives rise to the other, then for the church to learn from Bonhoeffer it needs both.

A key passage from *Sanctorum Communio* will serve as an example of how my line of inquiry is practically distinguished from Green's. It also serves as clear proof that this line of inquiry is warranted. While laying out what he takes to be the Christian concept of person in the second chapter of his doctoral dissertation, Bonhoeffer is actively engaged in a dispute with German idealist philosophy. In opposition to the philosophical anthropology put forth by idealism, Bonhoeffer asserts: "*For Christian philosophy, the human person originates only in relation to the divine; the divine person transcends the human person,* who both resists and is overwhelmed by the divine…. The Christian person originates only in the absolute duality of God and humanity; only in experiencing the barrier does the awareness of oneself as ethical person arise."[14] Green rightly acknowledges that this is a "crucial" passage, but the fact that "it

even as he gives the theological presuppositions undergirding Bonhoeffer's theology of sociality a nod, he also relegates them to the background of his discussion.

[12] *DBWE* 1:21.

[13] Green, *Bonhoeffer*, 19.

[14] *DBWE* 1:49.

disclose[s] the theological basis for [Bonhoeffer's] anthropology" is only a secondary reason for this.[15] His primary concern is to highlight it as "*the first expression of that characteristic social-ethical-historical understanding of transcendence which remains essentially unchanged throughout Bonhoeffer's theological career.*"[16] This primary concern, along with his historical approach, allows Green to quickly move past the central importance of the God-human relation in the interest of highlighting Bonhoeffer's near-identification of the divine You with the human You as a social-ethical barrier to the human I.[17] Indeed, Green concludes: "The essence of a person is to will in responsible decision in ethical relationships, and such decision manifests the historicity of human life."[18] However, ascribing such an active definition of human being to Bonhoeffer seems to cut against Bonhoeffer's statement, cited above, that human essence is relation to the divine, and in this duality humans are either in active rebellion or passively overwhelmed. It is exactly at this point where our line of inquiry is validated. Indeed, whereas Green continues down the line of sociality, we shall take the road less travelled and consider why, theologically, this duality between God and humanity is the basis for Bonhoeffer's theological anthropology.

Prior to the writing of his doctoral dissertation, there are several instances where Bonhoeffer's conviction that human being is essentially defined in relation to God shines through. Throughout his 1926/27 seminar paper on the problem of suffering in the book of Job, Bonhoeffer stresses that the challenge of the narrative hangs on Job's "ethical-personal concept of God" along with the fact that he doggedly holds onto his personal relationship to God.[19] Here Bonhoeffer is asking after the possibility of justifying God in the midst of God's incomprehensibility and concludes: "Along with the poet of Job, we know of a 'justification of God,' if one is able to use this phrase, only in the sense of a personal relationship to humankind, i.e., in God's justification of the human person."[20] Thus, the only justification of God that a person can know in a situation such as Job's is the fact that God freely and mercifully chooses to be in personal relationship with humanity and Bonhoeffer grounds the possibility of this relationship in God's act of justification. In other words, justification is the basis of God's relationship to humanity.

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[15] Green, *Bonhoeffer*, 35.
[16] Green, 35.
[17] Green, 35–36.
[18] Green, 36.
[19] *DBWE* 9:435.
[20] *DBWE* 9:435.

The basically social nature of humanity is also articulated in close association with justification in Bonhoeffer's 1927 meditation and catechetical lesson on "honor." In the opening meditation, Bonhoeffer explains the relationship between outward and inner honor, giving priority to latter. However, "[h]umanity in itself has no honor but only when God grants it, i.e., it has honor as the creation of God."[21] Although, undertones of justification are already apparent here, they are made explicit when Bonhoeffer further explicates this statement, saying: "Christians' inner honor rests on their relationship with God, God's grace and justification."[22] What this makes clear is that not only does humanity not possess honor of itself, but even when God grants honor he does so in the context of a creative, justificatory relationship. Thus, the honor rests in the relation in which the human stands *coram Deo* and is upheld by grace. It is only on the basis of this inner honorableness,[23] which exists solely in humanity's relationship to God, that Bonhoeffer identifies outward honor as a necessary correlate of the fact that "as God's creation, the individual human exists in the context of social life."[24] Again, we see Bonhoeffer associating the shape and structure of the God-human relationship with justification, and it is from this relation that human sociality springs and is modeled.

As the embryonic meditations of a person barely out of his teens, these first evidences of a theological understanding of what it means to be human—worked out in terms of the absolute, relational duality between God and human beings—are only the beginning. Returning to *Sanctorum Communio*, Bonhoeffer again takes aim at the philosophical anthropology of idealism, but this time in terms of 'value'. Departing from idealism, Bonhoeffer denies the fact that human beings intrinsically bear the highest value within themselves. Instead, he asserts that the concept of value is something that is intelligible only in terms of "the creatureliness of the person."[25] Insofar as the value of a person resides in the fact that she is God's creature, it is necessarily a value-in-relation. Thus, Bonhoeffer draws out the tragic irony of an idealist anthropology, writing: "Every philosophy of value, even where it regards the value of the person as the highest value (Scheler), is in danger of taking away the value of persons as such, as God's creatures, and acknowledging them only

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[21] *DBWE* 9:530.
[22] *DBWE* 9:530. See also 9:536, where Bonhoeffer identifies justification as the means by which original relationship to God is recapitulated.
[23] "Inner honorableness" here does not refer to intrinsic honor. Rather, it refers to honor *coram Deo*, as opposed to outward honorableness *coram Hominibus*.
[24] *DBWE* 9:530. See also 9:534–35.
[25] *DBWE* 1:49.

insofar as the person is the 'bearer' of objective, impersonal value."[26] In the background here is the classic dispute between justification by faith and justification by works. For idealism, the individual possesses the possibility of highest value within herself and thus the justification of her own existence. However, Bonhoeffer counters this philosophical vision with a theological one, asserting that humans cannot possibly justify their own existence since human value is grounded in one's standing *coram Deo* and is realized in the social sphere.[27] As such, suggesting that the God-human relation is fundamentally shaped by justification is not an empty assertion, but corresponds to the reality that it is in this relation that human meaning and value are created, applied, and upheld by God. This has no other basis than the free grace of God given in the person of Jesus Christ.

An emphasis on the justificatory relationship in which the person stands *coram Deo*, however, risks individualizing the person in a way that runs contrary to Bonhoeffer's intent. Indeed, at the forefront of his mind in writing *Sanctorum Communio* are the following questions: "In theological terms, does God intend by community something that absorbs the individual human being into itself, or does God intend *only the individual*? Or are community and individual both intended by God in their distinctive significance?"[28] Michael Mawson sums up well Bonhoeffer's conclusion vis-à-vis these questions: "Our existence as individuals and social beings was in a sense equiprimordial; God created and intended human persons to be simultaneously distinct from and related to one another."[29] Alongside this dialectic of structural openness and structural closedness in the human person, Bonhoeffer posits that the community—which the individual is inherently open to and in relation to—"*can be interpreted as a collective person with the same structure as the individual person.*"[30] Thus, the personhood of a human being is equally formed by her individuality and her identity with collective persons. Or, as Bonhoeffer puts it: "In God's eyes, community and individual exist in the same moment and rest in one another."[31] In what follows, we shall refer to this dynamic reality as the dialectic of personhood.

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[26] *DBWE* 1:49–50.
[27] Cf. *DBWE* 1:54–55.
[28] *DBWE* 1:76.
[29] Michael Mawson, *Christ Existing as Community: Bonhoeffer's Ecclesiology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 79; cf. *DBWE* 1:78. It is worth noting that Bonhoeffer is speaking here in terms of the primal (i.e. created) state of humanity and qualifies his discussion by grounding its possibility in the eschatological revelation in Christ. Because of this "[t]he doctrine of the primal state is hope projected backward" (*DBWE* 1:60–61).
[30] *DBWE* 1:71.
[31] *DBWE* 1:80.

Up to this point we have been emphasizing and drawing out the priority of the God-human relation in Bonhoeffer's theological anthropology.[32] One might wonder, then, if his emphasis on the basic significance of the collective person for human ontology compromises this priority by giving humanity *coram hominibus* and humanity *coram Deo* equal anthropological weight. In other words, if both the human-human relations which makes up the collective person and the God-human relation are properly basic for human ontology, then how can one be accorded priority over the other? Although Bonhoeffer is diligent to insist that individual being should not be prioritized over social being, a prioritization of the person *coram Deo* is in no way equivalent to the elevation of the individual over against the community. Rather than a structurally closed individual, the person *coram Deo* is fundamentally a person in relation. That this is the case is perfectly compatible with Bonhoeffer's dialectic of personhood. Indeed, he seems to affirm this when he writes: "By viewing the individual person in a primal state as an ultimate unit who is created by God's will—but also by seeing individual persons as real only in sociality—we interpret their relations to one another, which are built upon their difference, as willed by God."[33] The key here is that even though individual personhood is only properly realized in sociality, this only becomes meaningful insofar as God creatively wills it to be so. Thus, the person *coram Deo* just is the human understood in terms of the dialectic of personhood. Or, put another way, the person *coram Deo* is never merely an individual, but must always be understood as an individual enmeshed in a network of relations, the chief of which is her relationship to God.

That this is the case and that the status of the person *coram Deo* grounds the dialectic of personhood becomes even more clear when Bonhoeffer seeks to provide a definition of the human species that makes sense of original sin even as it maintains the full culpability of the sinner. To this end he asserts that "[t]he culpability of the individual and the universality of sin should be understood together; that is, the individual culpable act and the culpability of the human race must be connected conceptually."[34] Previously and predominantly an individual's culpability had been rooted in their participation in human nature, that is, in the human species.[35] However, on this account, according to Bonhoeffer, the full significance of

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[32] Cf. Eberhard Jüngel, "Humanity in Correspondence to God: Remarks on the Image of God as a Basic Concept of Theological Anthropology," in *Theological Essays*, trans. John Webster (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 134. Although Jüngel seems to be taking aim at Bonhoeffer as one who prioritizes existence for others over the God-human relation, the way of reading Bonhoeffer proposed here refutes such a characterization.
[33] *DBWE* 1:84.
[34] *DBWE* 1:110–111.
[35] Cf. Mawson, *Christ Existing as Community*, 109–12.

human culpability is disproportionately allocated to the species, thereby taking the pressure off the individual and diminishing the ethical import of sin. In order to remedy this, Bonhoeffer suggests a radical inversion according to which "the concept of the species should be based upon the concept of culpability, not vice versa."[36] In other words, culpability becomes the foundational criterion for defining the human species and the species is culpable because it is made up of culpable persons. However, this is not to make individual culpability the cause of corporate culpability, but rather to co-posit them under the rubric of the dialectic of personhood. Bonhoeffer expresses this theologically in the following way: "'The humanity of sin' is one, *though consisting of nothing but individuals. It is a collective person, yet infinitely fragmented. It is Adam, since all individuals are themselves and Adam.*"[37]

While much more could be said about Bonhoeffer's interpretation of original sin here, the issue of culpability is more central to our line of inquiry because the very concept of culpability carries within itself an 'in-relation-to'.[38] Of course, a person (or collective person) is certainly culpable *for* sin, but, more fundamentally, this culpability is a culpability *before* God. Sin presupposes a relationship with God, albeit a broken one. It follows, then, that the very idea of culpability for sin assumes a standing *coram Deo*. Thus, when Bonhoeffer stresses the need for a link between individual culpability and the culpability of the human race he is reaffirming the relevance of the dialectic of personhood even in the midst of sin. At the same time, he is also identifying the *coram Deo* standing of humanity as the more ontologically basic reality on which the dialectic is based. In other words, the social and relational nature of the human person—entailed by the dialectic—is shaped in a fundamental way by humanity's culpability for sin *coram Deo*.

At this point, the shaping influence of the justificatory relationship between God and humanity on Bonhoeffer's theological anthropology is beginning to emerge. Along the way, we have also sought to show that even as Bonhoeffer draws very close ties between the God-human relationship and human sociality, he continues to accord primary anthropological significance to human standing *coram Deo*. Now we shall turn to the cluster of writings which stretch from *Act and Being* to his 1933 Christology lectures in order to consider in greater depth how justification shapes Bonhoeffer's theological anthropology in a decisive manner.

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[36] *DBWE* 1:114.
[37] *DBWE* 1:121.
[38] Cf. Mawson, *Christ Existing as Community*, 101–18; Tom Greggs, "Bearing Sin in the Church: The Ecclesial Hamartiology of Bonhoeffer," in *Christ, Church, and World: New Studies in Bonhoeffer's Theology and Ethics*, ed. Michael G. Mawson and Philip G. Ziegler (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 80–82.

Act and Being, Bonhoeffer's *Habilitationsschrift*, is structured in three parts. "Part A" analyzes the problem of act and being in relation to transcendental, idealist, and ontological philosophical approaches. Bonhoeffer explicitly frames this first section in terms of epistemology. Since we are, at this point, focused primarily on Bonhoeffer's anthropological convictions concerning the ontological status of humanity in relation to God, we shall set aside this earlier section in order to focus here on some key aspects of "Part B" before addressing "Part C" in a later section.[39] Bonhoeffer begins "Part B" by showing how the problem of act and being emerges in theology's understanding of divine revelation. On the one hand, he identifies Barth and Bultmann as advocates of revelation as pure act, while, on the other, he identifies Catholic theology (especially as it is inflected by the *analogia entis*) and Protestant orthodoxy (in its tendency toward biblicism) as interpretations of revelation in terms of pure being.[40] Theologies of act take revelation seriously as an encounter from the outside which defines human existence, thereby emphasizing the import of relationality. However, they founder, not only in explaining the continuity of being within the tension of the *simul iustus et peccator*, but also in making sense of "being in faith" insofar as "faith is a decision wrought ever anew by God."[41] Theologies of being take seriously the continuity of being, but do so on the basis of an atomistic understanding of the human person which lends to an objectification of revelation.[42]

Picking up where he left off in *Sanctorum Communio*, Bonhoeffer identifies the church as the theological basis for resolving the problem of act and being.[43] Of particular interest is the way in which Bonhoeffer defines "the mode of being of the revelation of God within the church" and "the mode of being of human beings within the church."[44] According to Bonhoeffer, the mode of being of the revelation of God within the church takes the form of Christ existing as church-community.[45] While this formulation seems to hint at a total

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[39] This is not to suggest, however, that "Part A" is superfluous to the overall argument of the book. Indeed, for a description of the crucial role "Part A" plays, see Michael P. DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation: Berlin, Barth, and Protestant Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 21–22.

[40] For quite a different appraisal of Barth around the same time, see Bonhoeffer's seminar paper, "The Theology of Crisis and Its Attitude toward Philosophy and Science," (*DBWE* 10:462–476). There he concludes: "In the following discussion we shall not be able to do justice to Barth, if we do not refer every thought to its theological premise of the justification by faith" (10:476).

[41] *DBWE* 2:98.

[42] Bonhoeffer also presents these definitions *in nuce* at the beginning of the study (*DBWE* 2:29).

[43] Although DeJonge is technically correct to identify Bonhoeffer's "person-concept of revelation" as the solution to the problem of act and being (*Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation*, 7), the theological manner in which Bonhoeffer sees this playing out is in the person of Christ existing as church-community.

[44] *DBWE* 2:109.

[45] *DBWE* 2:111. On the centrality of this formulation in Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology, see Mawson, *Christ Existing as Community*, 138–43.

identification between Christ and the church, Joachim von Soosten is surely correct when he writes:

> This inseparable connection between ecclesiology and Christology … can be pressed by Bonhoeffer to the point where the two become indistinguishable. It must be noted, however, that through this close connection both Bonhoeffer and Luther seek to establish the Christological foundation of the concept of the church. In the unity between Christ and the church the relation of the former to the latter is therefore not reversible.[46]

For Bonhoeffer, what is essential about Christ existing as church-community is the person nature of Christ's mode of being in the church.[47] Through a Spirit-enabled identification of the collective person of the church with the person of Jesus Christ, the problem of act and being finds its solution. "God gives the divine self in Christ to the community of faith and to every individual as member of this community of faith. This happens in such a way that the acting subject in the community of faith, *proclaiming and believing*, is Christ."[48] On the one hand, Christ existing as church-community is the act of revelation in which the person is encountered from the outside, especially in the form of word and sacrament. On the other hand, he is the guarantee of the continuity of being insofar as he is also the collective person who hears and believes the Word which is proclaimed.[49] Thus, recalling the dialectic of personhood discussed above in the context of *Sanctorum Communio*, the individual is genuinely encountered from the outside by Christ in the church-community, but in such a way that the being of the individual's existence is simultaneously bound to the community of faith in Christ.

For Bonhoeffer it is exactly the personal being of God, made known in the person of Christ, which makes encounter with Christ the ontologically decisive reality that it is. By conceiving of revelation in terms of a sociological category, the revelation of Christ does not remain external as either objective or non-objective,[50] but "presents itself as something in correlation with my whole existence."[51] In other words, Bonhoeffer clearly believes that his

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[46] Joachim von Soosten, "Editor's Afterword to the German Edition," in *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*, ed. Clifford J. Green, trans. Reinhard Krauss and Nancy Lukens (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 294; cf. *DBWE* 11:302, where Bonhoeffer stresses that "*Christ also stands over against the church-community.*

[47] Although "person nature" sounds odd and conjures a different sort of conversation with reference to Christology, this rendering highlights Bonhoeffer's intent to show that a person, namely Jesus Christ, serves as the locus of revelation. In other words, revelation is not merely personal. Indeed, it is personal because it is a person. In employing this rendering I am following DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation*, 8–10.

[48] *DBWE* 2:112. Emphasis added.

[49] Cf. *DBWE* 2:113–14.

[50] *DBWE* 2:113.

[51] *DBWE* 2:115.

sociological construal of revelation has serious ontological implications, not only for humanity, but also for God. To this end he asserts, somewhat radically, that "[t]here is no God who 'is there'; God 'is' in the relation of persons, and the being of God is God's being person."[52]

Regarding the anthropological implications of the personal being of God in the person Christ, it is notable that Bonhoeffer shapes his discussion of "the mode of being of human beings in the church" explicitly in terms of Luther's concept of *pati* (passivity).[53] Drawing on Luther's ordering—in which being created is prior to being, which in turn is prior to acting—Bonhoeffer describes the basic posture of humanity in relation to God in terms of passivity.[54] As such, ontological priority is attributed not to being or to act, but to the creative act of God in which God constitutes and encounters the human person. However, it is not as if those who are *not* encountered are ontologically determined in some different, a-relational way. Rather, the relation in which a person stands to Christ—not merely as an individual, but in the dialectic of personhood—is ontologically determinative for all humanity, whether positively or negatively.[55]

So, if the basic reality of human existence *coram Deo* is one of passivity, then how does this reconcile with the act of faith? Bonhoeffer's solution is to reject interpretations of faith purely in terms of act, according to which faith is thought to create or condition the being of the new person.[56] Instead, while maintaining that there is indeed an essential connection between the act of faith and the being of the new person, he asserts that faith must be understood "as something that already understands itself as the mode of being of the new being."[57] Thus, understood as a mode of being, faith is the recognition of what is already the case in Christ. However, insofar as it is the only means to such recognition, Bonhoeffer can confidently assert that "[t]he being of revelation, the community of faith of Christ, 'is' only in faith."[58] Construed in more explicitly christological terms, Bonhoeffer writes: "Their being-'in reference to'-Christ is rooted in their being in Christ, in the

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[52] *DBWE* 2:115.
[53] *DBWE* 2:116. Although *pati* literally means "suffer", it is often conceptualized as "passivity" in Luther studies.
[54] *DBWE* 2:116. Bonhoeffer draws this concept from a quote by Luther in his *Lectures on Romans*. See *LW* 25:104. Cf. Christiane Tietz on the import of passivity in Bonhoeffer's later theology in "Rechtfertigung Und Heiligung," in *Bonhoeffer Und Luther: Zentrale Themen Ihrer Theologie*, ed. Klaus Grünwaldt, Christiane Tietz, and Udo Hahn (Hannover: Amt der VELKD, 2007), 83–84.
[55] See *DBWE* 2:116; cf. 2:141.
[56] *DBWE* 2:118. See also 2:154.
[57] *DBWE* 2:119.
[58] *DBWE* 2:118. See also 2:122.

community of faith, which means that the act is 'suspended' in being just as, conversely, being is not without the act."[59] As such, even the act of faith is an expression of a person's passivity *coram Deo*, insofar as its being "in reference to" Christ is rooted in and made possible by its "being in" the church-community of Christ.

Thus, we have seen that, for Bonhoeffer, the church serves as the locus of continuity for the being of revelation and the being of the new human. It also carries the person nature of Christ existing as church-community and thereby ensures the externality of revelation. We shall look more carefully at the relationship between Christ, the church, and justification in Bonhoeffer's anthropology later in this chapter, but for now it is important to note three things. First, in his account of the person nature of revelation, Bonhoeffer posits an external encounter which is ontologically decisive for the human person.[60] However, it is ontologically decisive precisely in the fact that it (re)establishes a relationship between God and humanity that has its locus in the church.[61] Thus, by according priority to the sociological category, Bonhoeffer provides an account of revelation that is both relational and ontologically constitutive. This, in turn, fundamentally shapes his account of the human person. Second, the role that justification plays in shaping Bonhoeffer's relational ontology is perceived in his emphasis on the priority of human passivity and God's creative act in determining human being. Third, Bonhoeffer speaks of faith as an "act [that] comes from being, just as it proceeds toward being."[62] As such, faith is both the created mode of being for the human in Christ—thereby remaining a passive reality—and the act by which that being is recognized and realized in the church.[63] By drawing these three things together it is evident that in thinking about revelation's determinative import for humanity, Bonhoeffer was thinking anthropologically in terms of relationality and justification by faith. The fact that Bonhoeffer is self-consciously granting soteriological categories priority in the anthropological sphere finds further confirmation toward the end of *Act and Being*.[64] There he writes that "it is only

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[59] *DBWE* 2:120. Since Bonhoeffer speaks of faith suspended in the church-community just prior to this quote (2:118), it is safe to assume that "being-'in reference to'-Christ" here is synonymous with faith.
[60] See *DBWE* 2:127.
[61] By identifying the church both as the seat of the being of revelation and the continuity of new human being, Bonhoeffer presents some fascinating possibilities for resolving recent debates regarding the tension between forensic and effective interpretations in Luther's theology. We shall return to this briefly at the end of the chapter.
[62] *DBWE* 2:122.
[63] "I am borne (*pati*), therefore I am (*esse*), therefore I believe (*agere*). Here the circle closes. Here even the *agere* is *pati*." *DBWE* 2:121.
[64] Cf. Philip G. Ziegler, "'Completely Within God's Doing': Soteriology as Meta-Ethics in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer," in *Christ, Church, and World: New Studies in Bonhoeffer's Theology and Ethics*, ed. Michael Mawson and Philip G. Ziegler (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 103–5.

in revelation itself that being-a-creature can be defined in terms of being-a-person, insofar as it is the person whose existence has been encountered, judged, or created anew by Christ. Thus, all ontological definitions remain bound to the revelation in Christ; they are appropriate only in the concretions of being-the-sinner and being-justified."[65]

Whereas *Sanctorum Communio* and *Act and Being* tend to combine ecclesial and christological emphases under the rubric of Christ existing as community, the Christology lectures of 1933 and *Creation and Fall* bring Bonhoeffer's christocentrism into sharper focus.[66] Indeed, his reading of the tree of knowledge and the tree of life as references to God's position at the boundary and center of human existence calls to mind where, in the Christology lectures, Bonhoeffer stresses that "it is important that human beings, in recognizing that our limit is in Christ, at the same time see that in this limit we have found our new center."[67] In both cases the ontological structure of human beings is such that they exist in direct reference to and relationship with God in Christ.

In the Christology lectures, Bonhoeffer stresses Christ's being for humanity as the "*pro-me* structure of Christ."[68] This *pro-me* structure has a threefold significance for the relationship between Christ and new humanity. First, it refers to the historical Jesus as the true human who proves his *pro-me* structure in his life, death, and resurrection. Second, it means that Christ not only represents the new humanity, but he *is* the new humanity insofar as he stands in their place as and within the church-community. Third, since Christ stands before God as the new humanity, "in him God both judges the new humanity and pardons it."[69] As such, Christ's being *pro-me* is essentially the ground of the justificatory relationship in which humanity is defined *coram Deo*.

Later in the Christology lectures Bonhoeffer further explicates the way in which the *pro-me* structure of Christ shapes human being:

> The center of our existence is [not] the center of our personality. This is not a psychological statement, but rather an ontological [-] theological one, because it refers not to our personality but rather to the persons we are before God. Christ is not the center that we can see is here but rather the center according to our faith. In the fallen world, however, the center is at the same

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[65] *DBWE* 2:153.

[66] However, this certainly does not come at the expense of his ecclesiology. See *DBWE* 3:77; 12:315.

[67] *DBWE* 3:86; 12:324. It must be noted, however, that in *Creation and Fall* Bonhoeffer is speaking of a pre-fall reality wherein limit and life are held together in the center by God. Thus, the limit must be understood as a gracious reality which is integral to the maintenance and preservation of life. Whereas, in the Christology lectures Bonhoeffer is speaking of Christ as the limit of humanity's old existence and the center of its new existence.

[68] *DBWE* 12:314.

[69] *DBWE* 12:315.

> time a boundary. Human beings stand between law and fulfillment. We have the law but not the possibility of fulfilling the law. Christ as the center means that he is the fulfillment of the law. Thus he is both the limit of human life and the court in which humankind is judged. But Christ is not only the end of our existence—its limit—but also the beginning of the new existence, and that means the center. That Christ is the center of our existence says that he is the judgment and justification.[70]

Here, it is evident that Christ stands at the center of humanity's new existence as the ground and very substance of its justification *coram Deo*. It is important to note that, for Bonhoeffer, Christ's justifying centrality is neither an abstract theological description nor a psychological state of affairs. Rather, it is a determinative ontological reality.

Bonhoeffer's attentiveness to the subject of theological anthropology throughout the early stages of his theological career is further demonstrated by his decision to make it the topic both for his inaugural lecture at the University of Berlin, as well as for the first of what ended up being a three-seminar series on dogmatics.[71] While the subject matter of both is closely related to the central premises of *Act and Being*, the inaugural lecture provides an apt summary of our argument thus far. After strongly critiquing philosophical anthropology as "the true expression of self-questioning human beings in *status corruptionis*," Bonhoeffer lays out the basic and necessary tenets of a theological alternative. First, any serious anthropological inquiry cannot ask about the human being as such, but only the human being before God. Second, the fact that the theologian herself stands before God in her anthropological inquiry is also a necessary epistemic condition. In other words, the task of considering humanity *coram Deo* must itself take place *coram Deo*. The questioner is existentially wrapped up in the questioning in such a way that questions about humanity are also questions about herself and vice versa. Third, God constitutes humanity by his creative word of address. As such, a proper understanding of what it means to be human can only be given in and through divine revelation. According to Bonhoeffer, these are not revolutionary claims. Rather, they are generally agreed upon by contemporary theology in light of a reorientation to Luther that came about in the early 20th century.[72] Indeed, Bonhoeffer is affirming Luther's basic insight that human being is relationally constituted *coram Deo* by the Word of God's address.

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[70] *DBWE* 12:324–25.

[71] *DBWE* 10:389–408; 12:213–33; Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 218. The seminar, however, only exists as a reconstruction based on student's notes.

[72] *DBWE* 10:400. It is likely that he has in mind here both the Luther Renaissance and the emergence of Dialectical Theology.

However, despite a basic agreement in this regard, Bonhoeffer asserts that many theologians have ended up interpreting these claims in such a way that locates human possibility at the center of human being.[73] For Bonhoeffer, the category of possibility creates a space in which the person can be understood as self-determining. As such, it is closely related to the Lutheran concept of works righteousness.[74] In strong opposition to this trend Bonhoeffer asserts that "*the concept of possibility has no place in theology and thus no place in theological anthropology*."[75] Or, to state his opposition positively, Bonhoeffer frames his alternative to possibility in the following manner:

> The human being understands himself only by his act-of-relating to God, which only God can establish. The human being sees his own unity grounded in God's word directed toward him, a word whose content is judgment and grace. Here the human being recognizes…that his essence is not his own possibilities but rather is determined by the statements, "You are under sin," or "You are under grace."[76]

That Bonhoeffer believes justification is at the very center of theological anthropology is clear here. Yet, he also knows that it is not enough to simply assert this, since justification is also central for those scholars whom he critiques, such as Holl, Barth, and Gogarten. Herein lies the import of his emphasis on the person nature of revelation in Christ and the church-community. In Christ and the church, the anthropological import of justification is grounded, conditioned, and maintained.[77]

In this section, we have made our way through key texts in Bonhoeffer's early theology, showing how Bonhoeffer's theological anthropology evinces a relational ontology in which the human is essentially one who is justified by faith *coram Deo*. We have highlighted the particular way in which Bonhoeffer articulates this justification-based anthropology in relation to ecclesiology and Christology and shall return to address each of these aspects in greater depth later in the chapter. Now, we shall turn to consider how Bonhoeffer reframes Luther's threefold *simul* in terms of a historical dialectic.

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[73] On this front he is especially critical of Holl's religion of conscience, but also identifies Barth's theological anthropology, as well as Gogarten's, as essentially individualistic and thus based in human possibility. See *DBWE* 10:401–403.
[74] See *DBWE* 10:389.
[75] *DBWE* 10:403.
[76] *DBWE* 10:405.
[77] The lecture concludes with Bonhoeffer's alternative interpretation of theological anthropology in terms of Christology and ecclesiology, respectively (*DBWE* 10:406–408).

b. Creation, Sin, and Reconciliation as a Historical Dialectic

It should be clear enough from the preceding section that Bonhoeffer's concept of the human person is not an abstract description of a timeless ideal. Instead, he seeks to articulate a theological anthropology that takes the historicity of the human being fully into account. He makes this explicit in *Sanctorum Communio*, asserting that "the concepts of person and community, for example, are understood only within an intrinsically broken history, as conveyed in the concepts of primal state, sin, and reconciliation."[78] Bonhoeffer is keen to stress that none of these concepts can be isolated from the others. Rather, they must be understood in terms of a "real historical dialectic."[79] What he means by this is that human being must be "understood only within an intrinsically broken history, as conveyed in the concepts of primal state, sin, and reconciliation."[80] The dialectic then entails that theological anthropology must operate in light of humanity's postlapsarian state because the reality of sin is its presupposition and, according to Bonhoeffer, the presupposition of history itself.[81] With all of this we are firmly in the sphere of Luther's tri-partite definition of the human person outlined in chapter one. However, the extent to which this historical dialectic informs and shapes the God-human relation, so central to Bonhoeffer's justification-based anthropology, remains to be seen. In what follows, rather than focusing on Bonhoeffer's major works sequentially, we shall proceed thematically, looking at each aspect of the dialectic in turn. Additionally, instead of sequencing the discussion according to the chronology given with the historical dialectic of creation, fall, and reconciliation, we shall begin with sin, followed by reconciliation—giving special attention to the centrality of Luther's *simul iustus et peccator*—before concluding with creation. The reason for this is that the anthropological significance of the *simul* for Bonhoeffer's anthropology is widely recognized. However, creation, as the third aspect of the historical dialectic, is rarely discussed. As such, we shall devote more time to this latter feature.

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[78] *DBWE* 1:62. Here, Bonhoeffer is borrowing a concept from Grisebach that involves an implicit critique of idealist philosophy's formal dialectic, which is abstract in nature. On this see 1:62n2.

[79] Because of his understanding of the church as the collective person of Christ, this dialectic has both anthropological and ecclesiological implications and the latter are evinced in the structure of the dissertation itself. For a recent and excellent treatment of the import of this dialectic for Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology, see Mawson, *Christ Existing as Community*.

[80] *DBWE* 1:62.

[81] See *DBWE* 1:63; cf. 1:44. On the postlapsarian context in which Bonhoeffer locates his dialectical concept of person, see Mawson, *Christ Existing as Community*, 74–76.

Historical Dialectic: Sin

Although no aspect of the historical dialectic can be separated from the others, sin features centrally for Bonhoeffer as a universal and total reality for humanity. It is both the break which precludes the possibility of identifying a human ideal in creation and that which is overcome by faith in Christ. In this way it is the historical reality which contradicts any approach to anthropology that seeks to define the human person in terms of an ahistorical, unified essence.[82] As such, Mawson is surely right when he refers to Bonhoeffer's description of the human being as "an account of how God encounters and constitutes human being as person *within the state of sin*."[83]

When Bonhoeffer speaks about the anthropological significance of sin he is careful to distinguish between the epistemic conditions necessary for recognizing sin and sin as an ontological category. Regarding the former Bonhoeffer is insistent that one can only recognize sin from within the context of faith.[84] From the start, then, it is evident that a definition of the human person within the historical dialectic of creation, sin, and reconciliation is not a general piece of knowledge which is universally accessible. Rather, it is a specifically theological judgment which only becomes intelligible in Christ and the church-community. On the ontological significance of sin for anthropology, Bonhoeffer maintains Luther's identification of sin as a total reality for humanity, variously stating that "the necessity of sin must be timeless,"[85] sin has the "weight of infinity,"[86] the human being "is sinner in his whole existence,"[87] and that sin must be understood "as a permanent state,"[88] to cite only a few. While Bonhoeffer certainly does not deny the reality of actual sins, the ontological import of sin cannot be ignored.[89] Thus, in a passage on sin from the Bethel confession he writes: "We reject the false doctrine that would see sins only as moral or biological errors or imperfections or ignorance, which human beings could correct by doing

[82] *DBWE* 1:60.
[83] Mawson, *Christ Existing as Community*, 74.
[84] *DBWE* 2:131; 9:300; 10:405.
[85] *DBWE* 9:319.
[86] *DBWE* 10:404.
[87] *DBWE* 10:473.
[88] *DBWE* 12:229.
[89] On Bonhoeffer's basic agreement with Luther in identifying sin both as original and as act, see *DBWE* 2:144–47. Kirsten Busch Nielsen suggests that the original, being nature of sin recedes into the background in Bonhoeffer's later work, but even if this is the case, it remains an implicit and important presupposition for him. See "Sünde," in *Bonhoeffer Und Luther: Zentrale Themen Ihrer Theologie*, ed. Klaus Grünwaldt, Christiane Tietz, and Udo Hahn (Hannover: Amt der VELKD, 2007), 116.

better the next time. Our sins brought Christ to the cross, and only through the death of Christ are sins forgiven."[90]

If sin has ontological significance, how is this then made manifest in the being of humanity? In his 1932 essay, "Concerning the Christian Idea of God," Bonhoeffer paints a grim picture: "Man 'in' and 'after' the fall refers everything to himself, puts himself in the center of the world, does violence to reality, makes himself God, and God and the other man his creatures."[91] This is essentially Bonhoeffer's interpretation of Luther's definition of sin in terms of incurvature or the *cur curvum en se*, as he renders it throughout *Act and Being*.[92] By turning in on herself, the person in sin elevates herself as the primary reference point for all reality, thereby denying the relationality which is proper to human being.[93] In *Creation and Fall,* Bonhoeffer refers to this as being *sicut deus* and asserts that, in being *sicut deus*, the sinner cuts herself off from God and others.[94] The resultant state is one of intense isolation.[95] However, crucially for Bonhoeffer—given the central significance he attributes to sociality—even this isolation is an isolation in solidarity. Sin does not cancel out the reality of the dialectic of personhood, but rather entails a collective person marked by infinite fragmentation due to individual sin.[96] As such, sin involves both an individual and a corporate aspect. These are both acknowledged in the anthropological designation "being in Adam", which, according to Bonhoeffer in "Part C" of *Act and Being*, "is a more pointed ontological, and a more biblically based (1 Cor. 15:22; cf. 15:45; Rom. 5:12-14), designation for *esse peccator*."[97] The fact that being in Adam is an ontological designation which encompasses all of humanity renders two things impossible. First, because the individual always also exists dialectically in the collective person of Adam, the possibility of being made righteous through one's acts is rejected. Second, in much the same way, the individual cannot excuse her acts of sin on the basis of some sort of sinless personal core because her individual being is dialectically bound up with her being in Adam.[98]

Bonhoeffer sums up the resultant picture of humanity in Adam in the following way:

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[90] *DBWE* 12:395. While the Bethel confession was a collaborative effort among a number of members of the Confessing Church, Bonhoeffer penned this particular section along with Hans Fischer. For a specific breakdown of authorship, see 12:374n2.
[91] *DBWE* 10:453; cf. 3:115.
[92] *DBWE* 2:41, 58, 80, 137.
[93] Cf. *DBWE* 3:122–24.
[94] *DBWE* 3:141–43.
[95] *DBWE* 1:108, 149; 3:108; cf. 10:405.
[96] *DBWE* 1:121; cf. Mawson, *Christ Existing as Community*, 113–18.
[97] *DBWE* 2:136.
[98] *DBWE* 2:146.

> Here is their limit: human beings cling to themselves, and thus their knowledge of themselves is imprisoned in untruth. To be placed into truth before God means to be dead or to live; neither of these can human beings give themselves. They are conferred on them only by the encounter with Christ in *contritio passiva* and faith. Only when Christ has broken through the solitude of human beings will they know themselves placed into truth.[99]

Sin is not a possibility in relation to God which human beings can remedy, or from which they can withdraw. Rather, it is an actuality grounded in human being in Adam and affirmed time and again in sinful acts. As such, the solitude of the *cor curvum in se* and the fragmented solidarity of being in Adam endure unless the human person is encountered from the outside, put to death in her activity, and passively resurrected in Christ and the faith community of the church. Insofar as this encounter reconstitutes the human being in faith it is both ontologically decisive and epistemically creative with regard to the conditions necessary for speaking of the human being in sin. For this reason one cannot speak about human being in Adam without already presupposing the reality of human being in Christ. It is to this we now turn.

Historical Dialectic: Reconciliation

If the entrance of sin into the world through the Fall is the historical event which ensures a fragmented understanding of the human person, then reconciliation is the eschatological event in history which ensures that sin does not have the last word. As such, it holds forth the possibility of a unitive—albeit dialectical—definition of human being. In this way, reconciliation is decisive both epistemically and ontologically.[100] However, although reconciliation in Christ is a recapitulation of creation in important respects, it does not entail the reification of a creaturely ideal for theological anthropology.[101] In other words, sin as a total reality remains anthropologically significant insofar as the broken history which conditions humanity persists.[102] This is due to the eschatological nature of reconciliation. Indeed, reconciliation effects "the new creation of the new human being of the future, which here is an event already occurring in faith, and there perfected for view…. It is the new

[99] *DBWE* 2:141.
[100] Cf. *DBWE* 2:102–103.
[101] Regarding new creation as recapitulation, albeit with key differences, see *DBWE* 11:438. On the consonance between Bonhoeffer's soteriology and Irenaeus's assertion that the incarnation is a recapitulation of humanity, see Jens Zimmermann, "Being Human, Becoming Human: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christological Humanism," in *Being Human, Becoming Human: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Social Thought*, ed. Jens Zimmermann and Brian Gregor (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 31.
[102] See *DBWE* 10:467.

creation of those born from out of the world's confines into the wideness of heaven, becoming what they were or never were, a creature of God, a child."[103] The being of new creation is something that the human has in faith, in Christ, and in the church-community, rather than in themselves or in ideality. In this manner it too is a total reality. Yet, even though the new being of humanity is indeed an established reality in Christ, it does not abolish the humanity of Adam, but rather stands over against it as God's final word concerning the being of sin.[104] As such, one exists "in the community of faith as one who bears the old human in me until death."[105]

Despite the fact that Bonhoeffer never explicitly invokes Luther's *simul iustus et peccator* designation for redeemed humanity, it is clearly present in the structure of his theological anthropology.[106] It also follows naturally from the historical dialectic.[107] Therefore, the possibility of basing a theological anthropology on the redeemed person as such is precluded as ideal and ahistorical because it realizes the eschatological new humanity in a way that does violence to the given reality in which real human beings live, move, and have their being. Instead, the *simul iustus et peccator* nature of being in Christ is utterly dependent on the justificatory word of God:

> It is in being known by God that human beings know God. But to be known by God means to become a new person. It is the justified and the sinner in one who knows God. It is not because the word of God is in itself 'meaning' that it affects the existence of human beings, but because it is *God's* word, the word of the creator, reconciler, and redeemer…. Thus human beings, when they understand themselves in faith, are entirely wrenched away from themselves and are directed towards God.[108]

Thus, on this side of the eschaton, redeemed humanity exists *coram Deo* in the simultaneity of sin and justification.[109]

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[103] *DBWE* 2:161.
[104] Cf. *DBWE* 1:107.
[105] *DBWE* 2:123.
[106] See Hans Richard-Reuter, "Editor's Afterword to the German Edition," in *Act and Being: Transcendental Philosophy and Ontology in Systematic Theology*, ed. Wayne Whitson Floyd, Jr., trans. H. Martin Rumscheidt, DBWE (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 168–69.
[107] Cf. James W. Woelfel, *Bonhoeffer's Theology: Classical and Revolutionary* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), 77–83. It is notable, however, that in identifying Bonhoeffer's anthropological dialectic, Woelfel ignores Bonhoeffer's tri-partite formulation in *Sanctorum Communio* and focuses solely on the *simul*.
[108] *DBWE* 2:135.
[109] In "Church and Eschatology," an early paper from his student days at the University of Berlin, Bonhoeffer also employs something like the *simul* in order to explain the relationship between the coming kingdom of God and the present church (*DBWE* 9:323).

One might object and suggest that the *simul* is merely of soteriological significance for Bonhoeffer, but he makes it clear that anthropology and soteriology are not mutually exclusive: "We must ask, in other words, whether there is in fact a being of human beings in general that is not already determined in every instance as their 'being-in-Adam' or 'being-in-Christ', as their being-guilty or being-pardoned, and only as such could lead to an understanding of the being of human beings."[110] Like Luther, Bonhoeffer rejects the possibility that human being can be described in solely formal or material terms, holding instead to the anthropological significance of God as the efficient and final cause. Insofar as this highlights the basic significance of the God-human relationship for human ontology, soteriology must necessarily take on anthropological significance because what else does it deal with, if not the relationship between God and humanity? This is not to say that soteriology and anthropology are identical. Indeed, Bonhoeffer himself recognizes a need for a distinction when he writes: "The human being only 'is' in Adam or [*oder*] in Christ, in unfaith or [*oder*] faith, in Adamic humanity and [*und*] in Christ's community; God only 'is' as the creator, reconciler, and redeemer, and that being as such is personal being."[111] It is subtle, but, of the three pairs, he presents the first two in terms of mutual exclusivity—the decisive eschatological reality which defines a person is either in Adam or in Christ, either in unfaith or faith.[112] This is the soteriological situation. However, the third pair is inclusive—joined by *und* rather than *oder*—and thereby indicates the anthropological simultaneity entailed for those who are in Christ and in faith.

Alongside his emphasis on the *simul*, Bonhoeffer also identifies creatureliness as an aspect of being in Christ. Being a creature is not a convenient way of grounding the *simul* in a more basic ontology that is somehow immune to the disruptions of sin and grace.[113] Instead, it is a third term which stretches back to creation but is only realized in faith. "As those living in Christ, the new human beings know themselves in identity with the old human beings that have passed through death—as God's creatures. That sinners too are still creatures is something that can be expressed only by a believer; as long as this is an insight of sinners, it stays an idea in untruth."[114] Here it is evident that being in Christ is not only still marked by the threefold historical dialectic which interprets the human's relational being,

[110] *DBWE* 2:74; cf. Philip G. Ziegler, *Militant Grace: The Apocalyptic Turn and the Future of Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 178.
[111] *DBWE* 2:153; *DBW* 2:152.
[112] On "unfaith" [*Unglaube*] as characteristic of Bonhoeffer's hamartiology, see Nielsen, "Sünde," 113–14.
[113] On Bonhoeffer's identification of this way of thinking with Catholicism, see *DBWE* 2:151.
[114] *DBWE* 2:151.

but it also reveals to faith that humanity in Adam remain God's creatures by virtue of God's gracious preservation.[115] In order to more fully flesh this out, we shall now turn to the role that creation plays in the historical dialectic.

Historical Dialectic: Creation

Just as sin and reconciliation are not objects of knowledge that can be known independently of revelation to faith, so too with creation.[116] With this in mind, Bonhoeffer begins *Creation and Fall* by defining three epistemic standpoints: beginning, middle, and end. These epistemic standpoints correspond, roughly, to three temporal realities, namely, creation, the present, and consummation. Since "[n]o one can speak of the beginning but the one who was in the beginning,"[117] only God knows the beginning as such. The human situation is decidedly different. While all three historical realities are present to God, the human being exists only in the present and on account of this knows reality only from the middle. Thus, "[w]e do not know of this beginning by stepping out of the middle and becoming a beginning ourselves. Because we could accomplish that only by means of a lie, we would then certainly not be in the beginning but only in the middle that is disguised by a lie. … It is only in the middle that we come to learn about the beginning."[118] Yet, from their standpoint in the middle, humanity has lost the beginning and the end because of sin.[119] This is both an ontological and an epistemological claim—humanity in Adam is ontologically fragmented in such a way that epistemic access to the realities of creation and consummation are impossible.

How then can humanity know about creation and God as the creator?[120] For Bonhoeffer, the answer is, quite simply, the resurrection of Christ: "Only in the middle, as those who live from Christ, do we know about the beginning."[121] Like Luther, Bonhoeffer sees *creatio ex nihilo* and the resurrection as closely analogous events. The implications of this are twofold and expressed well by the Old Testament scholar, Wilhelm Vischer: "The Easter

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[115] This latter point is an essential element in the Bethel Confession's section on sin: "We reject the false doctrine that because of sin human beings are no longer God's creatures. For Christ went to the cross for the sake of humankind and there bore witness to God's love for God's fallen creatures" (*DBWE* 12:396). Such an affirmation was necessary in order to undercut any faux-Christian justification of the dehumanizing practices of the Nazi party. See Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 302.
[116] *DBWE* 12:219.
[117] *DBWE* 3:29.
[118] *DBWE* 3:30–31.
[119] *DBWE* 3:30.
[120] *DBWE* 3:30.
[121] *DBWE* 3:62.

message is the verification of the message of the creation story, and the message of the creation story is the presupposition of the Easter message."[122] Thus, God's act of *creatio ex nihilo* is no less a gospel event than the resurrection of Christ. "It is the gospel, it is Christ, it's the resurrected one, who is being spoken of here. That God is in the beginning and will be in the end, that God exists in freedom over the world and that God makes this known to us—that is compassion, grace, forgiveness, and comfort."[123] For Bonhoeffer, as for Luther, then, Christ's resurrection is the justificatory event in which God affirms his identity as the Creator and attests to the fact that he is the same God who created and justified the world *ex nihilo* in the beginning.

That this is more than a clever analogy is made clear when Bonhoeffer discusses God's preservation of the world. "Creation and preservation are two sides of the same activity of God," and preservation is realized in the fact that God looks at what he has made, calls it good, and continues to hold it in his gaze.[124] This goes part and parcel with the justificatory reality of *creatio ex nihilo.*[125] In creation, God's word summons being out of nothing and "God's looking keeps the world from falling back into nothingness, from complete destruction."[126] The favorable posture which God takes toward the world—affirmed and fully revealed in Christ and the resurrection—is the sole reason that a postlapsarian world exists at all. "God's look sees the world as good, as created—even where it is a fallen world. And because of God's look, with which God embraces God's work and does not let it go, we live…. [W]hat it means [that God's work is good] is that the world lives wholly before God, that it lives from God and toward God and that God is its Lord."[127] Even though creation "is upheld not for its own sake but because of God's look," this does not negate the fact that "the work that is upheld is still God's good work."[128] While it is clear that Bonhoeffer is speaking cosmically here, rather than specifically anthropologically, humanity is certainly included in the created order which God justifies in *creatio ex nihilo* and continues to preserve in spite of sin.

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[122] *DBWE* 3:35n32.
[123] *DBWE* 3:36.
[124] *DBWE* 3:45.
[125] Cf. Ebeling, *Luther*, 197–98.
[126] *DBWE* 3:45.
[127] *DBWE* 3:45. This is not to say that prelapsarian preservation of creation is the same as postlapsarian preservation, since the former is an affirmation of goodness, while the latter is an affirmation of hope. See 3:47.
[128] *DBWE* 3:47. On the ecological implications of Bonhoeffer's affirmation of the created world in Christ, see Steven C. van den Heuvel, *Bonhoeffer's Christocentric Theology and Fundamental Debates in Environmental Ethics* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2017).

The fact that God is free for the world in creation and in the resurrection has significant implications for Bonhoeffer's account of the *imago Dei*. "To say that in humankind God creates the image of God on earth means that humankind is like the Creator in that it is free."[129] However, for Bonhoeffer, freedom is not a substance or an essence that one can locate in the person and objectify. Rather, "it is a relation and nothing else. To be more precise, freedom is a relation between two persons. Being free means 'being-free-for-the-other', because I am bound to the other. Only by being in relation with the other am I free."[130] At the heart of this assertion is the fundamentally christological locus of his account of the *imago Dei*. In faith, one only knows about the image of God by looking at Christ, who is the fullness of that image.[131] Since Christ's life, death, and resurrection are marked by being-free-for-humanity, being-free-for-the-other also stands at the center of humanity's being the *imago Dei*. From this, Bonhoeffer coins the *analogia relationis*: "The likeness, the analogia, of humankind to God is not analogia entis but *analogia relationis*. What this means, however, is, firstly, that the relation too is not a human potential or possibility or a structure of human existence; instead it is a given relation, a relation in which human beings are set, justitia passiva!"[132] The image, which is central to theological anthropology, is fundamentally a relational, justificatory reality in which God holds humanity.

In all of this it is clear that, for Bonhoeffer, while creatureliness is a substantial aspect of human personhood, it is not something that one can access from the middle, apart from revelation. If this were possible then one would again risk a form of anthropological idealism, but this time on the side creation, rather than redemption. Instead, it is only in faith—because one knows Christ—that one knows about the beginning and the end. As such, creatureliness becomes meaningful for theological anthropology only from the perspective of one who is reconciled. But, here, creatureliness truly becomes meaningful since reconciliation is a recapitulation of creation, and not merely at the level of cosmology.[133] Bonhoeffer demonstrates this subtly when describing God's relation to the human person as creature in *Act and Being*: "In the idea of the creature, however, the personal-being of God and revelation manifests itself as creative-being and lordly being over my human personal being. And the second of these is the more encompassing of the two latter designations."[134] Both as creator

[129] *DBWE* 3:62.
[130] *DBWE* 3:63.
[131] 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15.
[132] *DBWE* 3:65; cf. Jüngel, "Humanity in Correspondence to God," 135–36.
[133] Cf. *DBWE* 8:229–31.
[134] *DBWE* 2:151–52.

and as lord, God's identity is recapitulated and affirmed in the reconciliation effected through the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. In the beginning, God not only creates and grounds human being but is also lord over that being. Likewise, in reconciliation the being of the new human is found only in Christ who is simultaneously lord of her existence.[135] As such, creatureliness is not merely a redemptive reality but is genuinely informed by the beginning. Thus, Bonhoeffer writes: "Even though I am able through faith alone to know myself as God's creature, I know, nonetheless, that I have been created by God in my entirety, as an I and as humanity, and that I have been placed into nature and history. I know, therefore, that these factors, too, have to do with creatureliness."[136]

So, if humanity is epistemically dependent on reconciliation for knowledge about creation, and reconciliation is the ontological affirmation and recapitulation of creation, then does this entail that creation's role in the historical dialectic is merely formal, rather than substantial? Within Bonhoeffer's theological anthropology there is a degree of ambiguity here. On the one hand, Bonhoeffer clearly thinks of humanity's relation to God primarily in terms of sin and reconciliation.[137] One might suppose that in this schema creation is either collapsed into the "in Christ" of the new humanity or plays a merely negative function as the backdrop against which the dire effects of sin are understood.[138] The problem is that these assumptions are based on the presupposition that human ontology is essentially atomistic and a-relational, which is a presupposition foreign to Bonhoeffer's thought. If the relational aspects of Bonhoeffer's thought are filtered out then it certainly does seem as if theology poses an anthropological binary—between sin and redemption—since creatureliness is, at best, a consequence of reconciliation and, at worst, an inaccessible, prelapsarian reality. However, if one accords relationality the theological centrality that Bonhoeffer does, then the anthropological significance of creation is derived not from creation itself, but from the relationship established between God and humanity in creation. Viewed in this way, creation is an essential aspect of Bonhoeffer's dialectic because it is here where God affirms the world and the human being as creature. If it is removed or minimized in the dialectic, then the world and humanity come untethered from God and are subsumed in sin.[139] Likewise,

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[135] See Luther, "Search for yourself only in Christ and not in yourself, and you shall find yourself for ever in him." *LW* 42:106, cited in *DBWE* 2:139; cf. 11:295.
[136] *DBWE* 2:152.
[137] *DBWE* 2:151.
[138] See *DBWE* 1:62.
[139] Cf. Martin Westerholm, "Creation and the Appropriation of Modernity," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 18, no. 2 (2016): 225.

reconciliation ceases to be re-affirmation—a second *creatio ex nihilo*—and risks becoming redemption *from* creaturely reality, which, thought of in this way, is really nothing more than sinful reality.

As such, it is essential that theological anthropology takes the historical dialectic seriously, recognizing humanity within the framework of creation, sin, and reconciliation, as well as in relation to God as those who are affirmed, judged, and made new in Christ alone. For Bonhoeffer, creation is not merely essential for theological anthropology. It is also of great import for theology more broadly because it "forces [theology's] methodological clarification."[140] Furthermore, "it renders concrete and vivid the real course of things from unity through break to unity."[141] If theology does not take this movement seriously then it is doomed to faulty understandings of both God and humanity.[142] However, Bonhoeffer recognizes that a genuine human ontology is possible only in light of the fullness of who God reveals himself to be in Christ—namely, "the Creator, the Holy, and the Merciful."[143] Thus, we see reflected in God's relation to humanity the three aspects of the historical dialectic in which the human being exists: creature (God as Creator), sinner (God as Holy), and made new in Christ (God as Merciful).

III. Christ, the Address

Before drawing this chapter to a close we need to say a bit more about the role that ecclesiology and Christology play in Bonhoeffer's justification-based account of the human person. The centrality of Christ and the church has certainly been evident in the preceding discussion. However, the main focus was to highlight the way in which Bonhoeffer's concern for justification gives rise to his emphasis on extrinsicality, relationality, and the historical dialectic in his theological anthropology. In what follows, we shall focus on Christ and the church as the theological realities which both entail and make possible Bonhoeffer's articulation of what it means to be human. This is to say that Bonhoeffer does not interpret ecclesiology and Christology through an anthropological lens, but instead presents an understanding of human being that is essentially undergirded by Christ and the church. Thus, the import Bonhoeffer accords Christology and ecclesiology in his anthropology is reflective

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[140] *DBWE* 1:62.
[141] *DBWE* 1:62.
[142] Cf. Michael P. DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer on Resistance: The Word Against the Wheel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 30–36.
[143] *DBWE* 12:256.

of the fact that, for him, justification is essentially related to Christology and is only realized in the context of the church.[144]

In Bonhoeffer's inaugural lecture, he asserts that an understanding of the human person "emerges only from a still *point of unity* [*Einheitspunkt*]."[145] Thus, what is required for genuine anthropological knowledge is the ontological criteria of unity. Generally, however, this point of unity is either identified within the person or in reference to the limits which circumscribe her. Bonhoeffer rejects both approaches because both define human being in terms of possibility.[146] Instead he argues that unity should be understood in terms of continuity and address.[147] Here, we shall discuss the person of Christ as the address before going on to discuss the church as the continuity. Describing the central importance of God's address in the person of Christ for establishing the person in unity, Bonhoeffer writes: "They see their existence to be founded solely by the word of the person of Christ. They live in God's sight and in no other way. *Being is being in Christ, for here alone is unity and wholeness of life.*"[148] What this means is that justified being—living solely by the word of Christ in God's sight—is being in Christ, is unified being. Thus, in the context of recent debates concerning forensic and effective interpretations of justification, one might say that Christ, as the word of God's address, forensically encounters human beings, providing an extrinsic point of unity via participation in his person.[149]

What, then, are we to make of the historical dialectic of creation, fall, and reconciliation in light of the fact that it seems to imply the inherent fragmentation of the human person? Here, it is necessary to recognize that, in faith, the historical dialectic is a dialectical unity rather than three isolated and fragmented parts. "The unity of the I 'is' 'only in faith'."[150] In other words, eschatological unity—made possible by and in Christ—is a reality that, in faith, takes history seriously, rather than relativizing it.[151] Such is the nature of reconciliation when it is effected by the God who becomes incarnate in history. Bonhoeffer further demonstrates the compatibility of unity in Christ with the historical dialectic when

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144 *DBWE* 11:310; cf. 11:221–22.
145 *DBWE* 10:389; *DBW* 10:358.
146 Even though beginning the anthropological endeavor from the perspective of human limits seems to allow for a genuine encounter from the outside, Bonhoeffer goes on to show that even limits collapse into possibilities insofar as they remain posited by the self and are not given in revelation. See *DBWE* 10:399.
147 *DBWE* 10:390.
148 *DBWE* 2:134. Emphasis added. Cf. 10:400; 3:166.
149 *DBWE* 2:128.
150 *DBWE* 2:121.
151 See *DBWE* 1:124.

he writes that "[t]he human being sees his own unity grounded in God's word directed toward him, a word whose content is judgment and grace."[152] Christ, as the word of God, is both the unity and center of human existence, and because of this "he is the judgment and the justification."[153] Thus, Christ does not unify human being in some sort of ideal way. Rather, he does so both as the historical God-man who takes humanity's judgment upon himself and as the singular human in whom the new humanity is synoptically seen as restored to community with God.[154] In this manner, Christ stands at the boundary of human existence and in humanity's place.[155] As such, human unity in Christ must be understood in the light of historical affirmation, as opposed to historical negation. This is because Christ is not only the word of God's address that encounters human being from the outside and reconstitutes it, but he is also the word of God's address through whom humanity is created, judged, and reconciled. Therefore, in Christ, humanity's relationship to God is both restored to unity in justification and described in terms of the historical dialectic of creation, fall, and reconciliation.[156]

IV. Church, the Continuity

So, if unity is established in Christ as the word of God's address, how can this extrinsic unity in Christ achieve any continuity of being in humanity? In other words, how is this unity in Christ not simply a legal fiction that has no ontological purchase on the being of the human person? Herein lies the import of the church for Bonhoeffer's justification-based account of the human person. "The unity of the historical I 'in faith' means unity in the community of faith, the historical community of faith that I believe to be the community of faith in Christ."[157] Unity requires not only address but also continuity, and this continuity is realized in Christ existing as the community of faith.

At this point we must recall two things discussed above. First, as the presence of the person of Christ in the world, the church is the locus of Christ's faith-creating encounter

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[152] *DBWE* 10:405.
[153] *DBWE* 12:325.
[154] *DBWE* 1:157; cf. *DBWE* 12:327.
[155] *DBWE* 12:324; cf. *DBWE* 1:147, SC-A. "SC-A" denotes text that Bonhoeffer excised from his dissertation in preparation for publication.
[156] Cf. Bonhoeffer's assertion that the limited human, whose limits are given to her by God in faith, is the justified human (*DBWE* 10:466–67). Put in the terms of this study: *coram Deo*, humanity is limited as creature, sinner, and reconciled by grace alone. Justification by faith is the dialectical unity of these relational limits, established in Christ and joyfully acknowledged in faith.
[157] *DBWE* 2:121.

with humanity. Second, the church is the collective person of Christ which, in the dialectic of personhood, is decisive for new human being in Christ. Or, more concisely, being in reference to Christ is being in Christ's community, the church; this is act suspended in being.[158] What this means is that the church is the context in which the continuity of being in Christ is truly established in reality. Thus, Bonhoeffer writes that "continuity does not lie in human beings, but rather it is guaranteed suprapersonally through a community of persons."[159] However, because he defines the person in terms of the dialectic of personhood, locating continuity of being in the collective does not make it any less ontologically decisive for the individual human being. The new human really is *in* Christ because "'[t]o be in Christ' is synonymous with 'to be in the church-community'."[160] As such, the church is both the sphere in which humanity is encountered from the outside by the forensic word of God's address and the continuity of the new being in Christ in which humanity participates by grace through faith.[161]

The significance of this for theological anthropology cannot be overestimated. In the church one comes to understand that Christ is both the word of God's address which justifies and the continuity of justified being. Only in this way can that which is extrinsic to humanity also be understood as ontologically constitutive. Justified existence *coram Deo* entails both encounter and incorporation, and the church is the basis on which these two realities are held together and mutually affirmed. As such, the church offers a solution both to the problem of act and being, and to the dispute between forensic and effective interpretations of justification. Indeed, in the church the forensic is suspended in the effective in such a way that you cannot have one without the other. Bonhoeffer articulates this beautifully when discussing the centrality of preaching to the *sanctorum communio*: "The church is 'Christ existing as church-community'; Christ's presence consists in the word of justification. But since Christ's church-community is present where he is, the word of justification implies the reality of the church-community, that is, it demands an assembly of the faithful."[162] Where Christ—the forensic word of justification—encounters humanity, there the church is truly present, ensuring the effective continuity of the new human being in Christ. Thus, the

[158] *DBWE* 2:120.
[159] *DBWE* 2:114.
[160] *DBWE* 1:140; cf. 1:165.
[161] Cf. Hans Pfeifer, "The Forms of Justification: On the Question of the Structure in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Theology," in *A Bonhoeffer Legacy: Essays in Understanding*, ed. A.J. Klassen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 28–29.
[162] *DBWE* 1:231–232.

personal presence of Christ in the church-community establishes a point of unity from which to interpret the human person. This unity is achieved only through the justifying address of Christ and continuity in his body, the church, which sets human being *coram Deo* as creature, sinner, and graciously reconciled.

V. Conclusion

We began this chapter by identifying some potential blindspots in Clifford Green's seminal study of Bonhoeffer's theology of sociality. By considering whether more basic theological commitments undergird Bonhoeffer's emphasis on sociality, we opened up space in which to inquire after the extent to which Bonhoeffer takes after Luther in allowing justification to shape his anthropology. While Luther's more straight-forward articulation of justification's import for theological anthropology serves as a backdrop against which to interpret Bonhoeffer's less-unified theological understanding of the human person, we have seen that Bonhoeffer elaborates on Luther's account in important ways. Setting himself over against German idealist philosophy and a variety of theological accounts which sought to ground human being in human potential, the counterproposal Bonhoeffer sketches identifies the *coram Deo* relationship as ontologically decisive. Here he gives priority to God's freedom and grace in establishing humanity in creation, preserving them in sin, and re-establishing them in reconciliation. However, Bonhoeffer also recognizes that, by making the justificatory, God-human relation anthropologically determinative, real problems are introduced concerning the implications of God's act for human being. It is here that the dialectic of personhood, Christ existing as church-community, and the person nature of Christ *pro me* play pivotal negative roles in fending off individualism, the false dichotomy between act and being, and the objectification of revelation, respectively. Positively, when taken together, they create a space in which human being can be understood by faith as both *in relation to* the person of Christ as the external word of God's address and *in* Christ existing as church-community. In this manner, one can understand the ontologically fundamental justificatory relation between God and humanity as both a forensic encounter and effectively transformative. Thus, by taking seriously the problem of act and being, Bonhoeffer elaborates on Luther by acknowledging the complexity of a justification-based anthropology, and in doing so provides a more fully fleshed out model.

Characteristic of Bonhoeffer in all of this is his concern for history and concrete reality. As such, his anthropological thought seeks to do justice to the historical dialectic in

which humans do not simply exist *coram* Deo as such, but rather as those who are created, sinful, and reconciled by grace in Christ alone. Although reconciled faith serves as a necessary epistemic criterion for recognizing the realities of creation and sin, this does not negate each aspect's distinct, ontological import. While Bonhoeffer's work tends to focus on the simultaneity of sin and reconciliation, we have shown that his thinking evinces a real concern for creatureliness as a third reality that must be considered alongside of them. Here, Bonhoeffer's historical dialectic is analogous to Luther's threefold *simul*. However, by following Bonhoeffer's impulses regarding creation as affirmation, the worldliness of reconciliation is inflected in new and important ways for the discussion to follow.

In conclusion, then, it is evident that although Bonhoeffer complexifies and elaborates on Luther's justificatory account, they are aligned on the basics: the human being is one whose existence is grounded extrinsically *coram Deo*, and this existence is marked by the real historical dialectic of creation, sin, and reconciliation by grace alone. By locating human being solely in its Christ-established relationship to God, Bonhoeffer is self-aware enough to realize that he is setting serious epistemic limits on the anthropological endeavor. He acknowledges that even in the act of reflecting on the self and human being there is an ironic turning away from Christ who is himself the locus of human being. Here, the threat of slipping into a mode of theological anthropology that draws on human possibility looms large. However, for Bonhoeffer, the church is the necessary check which balances theology's tendency to get lost in reflection and in doing so turn away from Christ and faith.[163] Thus, he concludes his inaugural lecture on theological anthropology in the following manner:

> To the extent that this attempt represents a piece of genuine theological thought, it escapes the charge that it too derives from reflection and does not offer any genuine self-understanding, if this is acknowledged without qualification, and only if this theological undertaking is itself incorporated into the reality of the church in which Christ is present. Ultimately, only as the thinking of the church does theological thought remain the only form of thought that does not rationalize reality through the category of possibility. Therefore, every individual theological problem not only points back to the reality of the church of Christ, but theological thought in its entirety also recognizes itself as something that belongs solely to the church.[164]

We must keep in mind Bonhoeffer's emphasis on theology's humility in its beholdeness to the church-community as we turn now to the social implications of Bonhoeffer's

[163] *DBWE* 10:407.
[164] *DBWE* 10:407–408.

justification-based anthropology, especially as they emerge in relation to his debate with German idealism.

Chapter 3

Justification Against Idealism:

Bonhoeffer's Dispute with Philosophy in the Shadow of the Third Reich

I. Introduction

Now that we have established the role that justification plays in shaping Bonhoeffer's theological anthropology, we can turn to consider how this contributes to our articulation of the social implications of justification in his theology. Toward this end, the present chapter shall examine the way in which Bonhoeffer's justification-based anthropology structured and grounded his resistance to the philosophical anthropology of German idealism, and by inference, the racializing impulses of National Socialism.[1] Since the connection between German idealism and racism may not be readily apparent, we shall also spend some time identifying key aspects of the former which were pressed into the service of Nazi ideology. This is not to say that Bonhoeffer resisted German idealism on account of the racism he saw latent in it. However, we shall suggest that Bonhoeffer's justification-based anthropology provided him with a Christian definition of the human person that resisted Nazi cooption in a way that key German idealist accounts of the human person did not. As such, we shall see that, by granting justification by faith anthropological priority, Bonhoeffer was theologically equipped to resist the dehumanizing ideology of the Nazis, and the manner in which it was advanced in the name of Christ by the German Christians (*Deutsche Christen*).[2]

The chapter will proceed in four parts. First, we shall begin by sketching the moral-teleological aspects of idealist anthropology, focusing primarily on Kant, while giving secondary attention to Hegel.[3] The second section will explore and make explicit the

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[1] Peter Frick has recently brought Bonhoeffer's anthropology to bear on the problem of race in "Notes On Bonhoeffer's Theological Anthropology: The Case of Racism," in *Understanding Bonhoeffer* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 185–200. His account is more general that the present study, giving an overview of the relevant aspects of Bonhoeffer's biography before briefly showing how his theology of sin, the *imago Dei*, and the church militate against racism.

[2] Michael DeJonge makes a similar point in relation to Bonhoeffer's imperfect, but real opposition to Nazi persecution of the Jews. In both cases Bonhoeffer's resistance was theologically grounded, particularly by the doctrine of justification. See *Bonhoeffer on Resistance: The Word Against the Wheel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 107–8. For the remainder of the thesis, when I refer to the *Deutsche Christen*, I am referring specifically to the faction of the German Evangelical Church that aligned itself with Nazism.

[3] Wayne Whitson Floyd provides precedent for focusing on Kant and Hegel as the primary philosophical influences on Bonhoeffer in "Encounter with an Other: Immanuel Kant and G.W.F. Hegel in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer," in *Bonhoeffer's Intellectual Formation: Theology and Philosophy in His Thought*, ed. Peter Frick (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 83–119. Of course, the extent to which Kant is properly understood as an idealist philosopher is hardly a matter of scholarly consensus. Indeed, Bonhoeffer makes the distinction between Kant's transcendentalism and German idealism in *Act and Being*. However, he also often groups Kant

connections between an idealist moral teleology and Nazi anti-Semitism. After this we shall turn again to Bonhoeffer, exploring the way in which his justification-based anthropology informs his opposition to German idealism. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a brief excursus on one of the more controversial aspects of Bonhoeffer's thought—namely, the orders of preservation. Here, we shall consider whether or not Bonhoeffer offers a genuine alternative to the *Deutsche Christen* formulations of the orders of creation, since these were consonant with an idealist anthropology and were also used to the advantage of National Socialism.

II. Outlining an Idealist Anthropology

a. Kant

When discussing the relationship between philosophy and theology it is interesting to note that the birth of Kant's transcendental idealism coincided, roughly, with the formation of the modern research university. As such, Terry Pinkard notes that Kant's philosophy was ascendant around the same time that "'philosophy' actually took over from theology, law, and medicine as the anchor and the heart of the [collegiate] enterprise."[4] Running parallel to these developments was the establishment of anthropology as a new field of academic study. In much the same way as philosophy was supplanting theology in the context of the wider university, anthropology was "a product of the larger Enlightenment effort to emancipate the study of human nature from theologically based inquiries."[5] Thus, when Kant asserts on multiple occasions that "what is the human being?" is the fundamental question that undergirds all of philosophy, he is not only signaling the anthropological import of his own philosophical work, but he is also suggesting that philosophy as such is equipped to address this question.[6] This commitment to the philosophical centrality of anthropology marks Kant as both the progenitor of German idealism and the one responsible for the primacy of the human subject in idealist philosophy.

Louden notes that, in a certain sense, "reflection on human nature is the most pervasive and persistent theme in all of Kant's writing, and as a result it is not exaggeration

in with Hegel and the idealists (see e.g. *DBWE* 1:193–98). As such, in the interest of avoiding clunky prose, I shall do the same.

[4] Terry Pinkard, "Idealism," in *The Oxford Handbook of German Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Michael N. Forster and Kristin Gjesdal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 234.

[5] Robert B. Louden, *Kant's Human Being: Essays on His Theory of Human Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 78.

[6] Louden, xvii.

to say that *all* of his works are relevant to this question."[7] However, in his self-consciously anthropological work Kant devotes himself to, what he calls, "pragmatic anthropology." In the preface to *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Kant describes his method in contradistinction to physiological anthropology: "Physiological knowledge of the human being concerns the investigation of what *nature* makes of the human being; pragmatic, the investigation of what *he* as a free-acting being makes of himself, or can and should make of himself."[8] In this way Kant makes it clear that his definition of human being is, or attempts to be, unconditioned by the material world. Yet, even as it is unconditioned by the material world, it is fundamentally empirical and based on observation. Accordingly, it is also not conditioned by the transcendental.[9] As such, Kant's method also serves to delimit his subject matter since, by bracketing out the biological-material and the supersensible, he narrows the scope of philosophical anthropology to, as Louden puts it, "the phenomenal effects of human freedom in the empirical world, not their allegedly non-empirical origins."[10] Furthermore, Kant's desire to define human being in terms of what one makes of oneself in one's freedom is aimed at universals rather than particulars. This is reflected in the preamble to his 1775-1776 *Friedländer* lectures on anthropology: "[A]nthropology is not a description of human beings, but of human nature. Thus we consider the knowledge of human beings in regard to their nature. Knowledge of humanity is at the same time my knowledge. Thus a natural knowledge must lie at the basis, in accordance with which we can judge what is basic to every human being."[11]

While Kant's anthropology is multivalent and hardly static over the course of his life, we shall focus here on four key aspects that emerge in his pragmatic anthropology and are particularly pertinent to our wider study: unsociable sociability, cosmopolitanism, teleology, and morality.[12] Within Kant's thought, there is a significant tension between the cosmopolitan aim of human nature and the unsociable sociability that is necessary to realize this aim. What Kant means by unsociable sociability is the distinctly human "propensity to

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[7] Louden, xviii.
[8] Immanuel Kant, "Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View," in *Anthropology, History, and Education*, ed. Günter Zöller and Robert B. Louden, trans. Robert B. Louden (Cambridge, UK/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 231.
[9] Louden, *Kant's Human Being*, 81.
[10] Louden, 81.
[11] Immanuel Kant, "Lecture of the Winter Semester 1775–1776 Based on the Transcriptions Friedländer 3.3 (Ms 400), Friedländer 2 (Ms 399) and Prieger," in *Lectures on Anthropology*, ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. G. Felicitas Munzel (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 48–49.
[12] For a good overview of the numerous and sometimes conflicting aspects of Kant's anthropology, see Louden, *Kant's Human Being*, xix–xxvi.

enter into society, which, however, is combined with a thoroughgoing resistance that constantly threatens to break up society."[13] In the background here, Kant is critiquing the original, pre-critical state of humanity: "an arcadian pastoral life of perfect concord, contentment and mutual love."[14] The problem with such a primal state is that, by non-reflectively living in a peaceful state, humanity neglects its freedom and self-determination toward moral ends. Thus, in opposition to the concord which humanity non-reflectively wills for itself, nature wills discord.[15] Unsociability, then, creates the conditions according to which "the rude natural predisposition to make moral distinctions" is transformed "into determinate practical principles and hence transform[s] *pathologically* compelled agreement to form a society finally into a *moral* whole."[16] On the one hand, Kant certainly intends nothing more by this than a description of the progression of nature in the context of history. Yet, on the other hand, by making this unsociability a necessary stop on life's way toward its moral telos, it is evident that Kant is offering more than a merely descriptive, phenomenological account. Indeed, the prescriptive necessity of unsociability is further affirmed by the theological justification Kant gives for its purposiveness when he says that it "betray[s] the ordering of a wise creator."[17]

That this unsociability is proper to humanity is also affirmed by their "pragmatic predisposition," which Kant defines as an ability "to use other human beings skillfully for [one's] purposes."[18] Of course, the way in which human beings "use" others is related to and conditioned by their "moral predisposition," which is humanity's ability "to treat [themselves] and others according to the principle of freedom under laws."[19] In order for humanity to rise above its pre-critical, almost sub-human existence, they must begin to exercise their will over against those in their social sphere. Here, they cultivate their rationality and moral freedom in a social context, while, at the same time, seeking to use others unsociably toward their own ends. It is in this tension that all the powers of the human being

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[13] Immanuel Kant, "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim," in *Anthropology, History, and Education*, ed. Günter Zöller and Robert B. Louden, trans. Allen W. Wood (Cambridge, UK/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 111.
[14] Kant, 111–12. See also his disturbing comment on the sub-human nature of Tahitians in Immanuel Kant, "Review of J.G. Herder's *Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Humanity* Parts 1 and 2," in *Anthropology, History, and Education*, ed. Günter Zöller and Robert B. Louden, trans. Allen W. Wood (Cambridge, UK/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 142.
[15] Kant, "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim," 112; Kant, "Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View," 417.
[16] Kant, "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim," 111.
[17] Kant, 112.
[18] Kant, "Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View," 417; cf. Louden, *Kant's Human Being*, 82.
[19] Kant, "Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View," 417.

are activated and genuine movement takes place, in accordance with a moral teleology, drawing humanity toward its cosmopolitan aim.[20]

The cosmopolitanism at which Kant's anthropology aims is notoriously difficult to define. Even though the manner in which Kant writes about it is obviously socio-political, details pertaining to the political structure he envisions are scant.[21] However, it is also clear that for Kant the political structure is not an end in itself. Rather, the "externally perfect state constitution" is the only means by which the hidden plan of nature "can fully develop all its predispositions in humanity."[22] As such, in the context of a "universal cosmopolitan condition" the state enables and makes possible humanity's full realization of its rationality, morality, and freedom, or what Kant frequently calls "talents."[23] Yet, Kant defines cosmopolitanism as a regulative, rather than a constitutive principle. In other words, it is not a guaranteed outcome, but is something hoped for, contingent on the exercise of human freedom.[24] Thus, Kant writes: "[Human beings] feel destined by nature to [develop], through mutual compulsion under laws that come from themselves, into a *cosmopolitan society* (*cosmopolitismus*) that is constantly threatened by disunion but generally progresses toward a coalition."[25]

This leads naturally to Kant's teleological understanding of the human person. Of the nine propositions he lays out in "Idea for Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim," eight deal substantially with the aim, purpose, or end of humanity.[26] Yet, it is important to note that Kant begins the essay by delineating between the aim of humanity and the aim of nature. The former, ironically, is too erratic to establish a historical trajectory that is anthropologically useful.[27] Thus, Kant looks to the aim of nature as the teleological context in which to interpret the human being. Within this framework, the aim of nature guides Kant's interpretation of the history of humanity, undergirding it and lending it coherence. Louden sums this up well when he writes: "The cosmopolitan conception of human nature is in effect a teleological moral map, a practical guide by means of which human beings are

[20] Kant, "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim," 111.
[21] See Louden, *Kant's Human Being*, 89.
[22] Kant, "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim," 116.
[23] Kant, 118.
[24] Louden, *Kant's Human Being*, 89.
[25] Kant, "Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View," 427.
[26] The only exception being the sixth proposition concerning humanity's need for a master to constrain abuses of freedom. See Kant, "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim," 113–14.
[27] Kant, 109.

to orient themselves in both the present and the future."[28] In other words, when Kant speaks of the movement from non-reflective, pastoral life to sociability to unsociability to a gradual realization of cosmopolitanism, he is giving his anthropology a narrative context—and this context is governed by a cosmopolitan telos in which autonomous reason freely chooses morality according to the law.[29] However, even with this telos in place, Kant is careful to maintain human freedom in relation to it. In other words, it is up to human beings to freely will the cosmopolitan end which nature directs them toward.[30]

What then is the nature of Kant's anthropological teleology? Well, it is cosmopolitan, but cosmopolitan human nature is defined in terms of reason, autonomy, and morality. Indeed, for Kant, the anthropological sphere is the arena in which morality moves out of the abstract and is fully realized.[31] Thus, morality and anthropology are mutually interpreting concepts. "The sum total of pragmatic anthropology, in respect to the vocation of the human being and the characteristic of his formation, is the following. The human being is destined by his reason to live in a society with human beings and in it to *cultivate* himself, to *civilize* himself, and to *moralize* himself by means of the arts and sciences."[32] Insofar as pragmatic anthropology pertains to what a human makes of herself, it is about how the human exercises her reason, freely willing morality and the good. The telos for humanity is, as Louden puts it, the creation of a "moral realm, a realm in which each human being as a rational being is viewed as 'a lawgiving member of the universal kingdom of ends'."[33]

Kant offers a Christian religious version of his moral teleology in *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. Here he asserts that it is a universal human duty to elevate oneself to the ideal of moral perfection in Christ.[34] This universal duty exists in tension with the Kant's commitment to the reality of radical evil. As such, he says of the human pursuing

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[28] Louden, *Kant's Human Being*, 90.

[29] Cf. Kant, "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim," 109, where he writes that the goal of a human being's predispositions "is the use of his reason." It is essential that the individual lays claim to her telos by the use of her reason alone, independent of instinct and any external influence (Kant, 110). Furthermore, it is necessary to keep in mind that Kant envisions this progress toward cosmopolitanism as happening over innumerable generations ("Anthropology From a Pragmatic Point of View," 419).

[30] Kant, "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim," 110–11. Here we encounter a potential contradiction in Kant's thought. On the one hand nature wills that the human being *determine* herself, but on the other hand nature is *determining* humanity for this very freedom. For a good discussion of this tension and a potential resolution, see Louden, *Kant's Human Being*, 87.

[31] See Kant, "Friedländer Anthropology," 49.

[32] Kant, "Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View," 420.

[33] Robert B. Louden, "General Introduction," in *Anthropology, History, and Education*, ed. Günter Zöller and Robert B. Louden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1–2.

[34] Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings*, ed. and trans. Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 80.

goodness: "Whatever his state in the acquisition of a good disposition, and, indeed, however steadfastly a human being may have persevered in such a disposition in a life conduct conformable to it, *he nevertheless started from evil*, and this is a debt which is impossible for him to wipe out."[35] However, radical evil, for Kant, is not an *a priori* necessity, but is rather a consequence of the free choice of rational human beings whose self-determined maxims are perverted.[36] Corresponding to their role in radical evil, reason and freedom also serve as the condition of the possibility of fulfilling the universal human duty of moral conformation to Christ. In other words, autonomous reason is both the downfall of humanity and its salvation.

Although in some ways Kant describes Christ as the prototype of humanity in traditionally Christian terms, it is clear that, as the telos of humanity, Christ is primarily a moral exemplar, and movement toward him is rooted in autonomous reason.[37] To illustrate this, it is worth quoting Kant at length:

> There is no need, therefore, of any example from experience to make the idea of a human being morally pleasing to God a model to us; the idea is present as model already in our reason. – If anyone, in order to accept for imitation a human being as such an example of conformity to that idea, asks for more than what he sees, i.e. more than a course of life entirely blameless and as meritorious as indeed one may ever wish; and if, in addition, he also asks for miracles as credentials, to be brought about either through that human being or on his behalf – he who asks for this thereby confesses to his own moral *unbelief*, to a lack of faith in virtue which no faith based on miracles (and thus only historical) can remedy, for only faith in the practical validity of the idea that lies in our reason has moral worth.[38]

In short, the moral telos of humanity is already present to and within the human being. As such, Christ serves as the instantiation of the moral telos which *affirms* its possibility, while autonomous reason alone remains the *condition* of its possibility. "[T]he required prototype always resides only in reason, since outer experience yields no example adequate to the idea; as outer, it does not disclose the inwardness of the disposition but only allows inference to it, though not with strict certainty."[39] For Kant, Christ is both humanity's prototype and their telos, who exists outside of the human being. Thus, he does not deny Christ's externality,

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[35] Kant, 88.
[36] Kant, 78. On the challenge of interpreting Kant's doctrine of radical evil which arises from the tension between the empirical and the universal in his thought, see Patrick R. Frierson, *Freedom and Anthropology in Kant's Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 34–38.
[37] Kant, *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings*, 80.
[38] Kant, 81.
[39] Kant, 81–82.

but rather relativizes the need for salvific encounter by already locating the potential for reconciliation and transformation within the individual. Ultimately, then, "the idea of the moral good in its absolute purity" lies in one's "original predisposition" and Christ assures humans that it is both possible and their duty to freely choose their maxims according to reason in a manner that aligns with this moral good.[40]

b. Hegel

One might reasonably suppose, given his claim that pragmatic anthropology is empirical in nature, that Kant's approach differs considerably from Hegel's more speculative and normative anthropology.[41] It is certainly the case that Kant seeks to restrict himself to regulative principles while Hegel is quite willing to speak more constitutively. However, they do share a common commitment to teleology.[42] For Hegel, the world is not made up of many teleologies which exist in isolation from one another, but rather reality is made up of a vast web of interrelated teleologies—each according to a thing-kind—of which the ultimate end is the self-realization of the world-whole according to its concept.[43] In other words, all individual teleologies intersect and contribute to the telos of reality as a whole. Hegel's revolutionary move is to link teleology as the final cause to the formal cause in the concept. Within the concept of a thing-kind, both the form and the end of it is given.[44] Willem deVries summarizes this when he writes that, "for Hegel, if S does A in order to G, then S does A because A contributes to achieving the goal G, and G must either contribute to or itself be the self-realization of S."[45] Thus, we might say that, when it comes to the concept of the human being, her telos is the self-realization of her form. In other words, the human being as a thing-kind, bears the potential for self-realization within herself as the teleological goal of her form.

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[40] Kant, 98.
[41] See Andreja Novakovic, "Hegel's Anthropology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Hegel*, ed. Dean Moyar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 408.
[42] Willem A. deVries, "The Dialectic of Teleology," *Philosophical Topics* 19, no. 2 (1991): 65. While DeVries is quite right to distinguish between Kant's regulative and Hegel's constitutive approach, he misses important aspects of Kant's teleology by looking only at the *Critique of Judgment* and ignoring his anthropological writings. DeVries posits that Kant's teleology is purely intentional and subjective. However, Kant comes very close to something like Hegel's more objective teleology in "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim" when intentionally traces history according to the aim of nature, rather than the aim of human beings.
[43] deVries, 67.
[44] deVries, 68.
[45] deVries, 62–63.

DeVries also asserts that, "for Hegel, self-realization is an intrinsic good, movement toward which needs no further explanation."[46] The reason self-realization is an intrinsic good is because it is part and parcel with "the standpoint of morality." According to Hegel the standpoint of morality is "the standpoint of the will which is infinite not merely in itself but for itself."[47] In other words, self-realization not only turns the person into a subject, but turns her into a moral subject, and it does so by means of the will. Katerina Deligiori helpfully compresses Hegel in order to summarize the purpose of morality—namely, "to analyze 'the will's self-actualization' '[i]n accordance with *its* concept'… and this concept is nothing less than the good."[48] The content of morality's analysis of the will's self-actualization is as follows:

> For the subjective will, the good and the good alone is the essential, and the subjective will has value and dignity only in so far as its insight and intention accord with the good. Inasmuch as the good is at this point still only this *abstract* Idea of good, the subjective will has not yet been caught up into it and established as according with it. Consequently, it stands in a *relation* to the good, and the relation is that the good *ought* to be substantive for it, i.e. it ought to make the good its aim and realize it completely, while the good on its side has in the subjective will its only means of stepping into actuality.[49]

In short, then, morality, for Hegel, describes the way in which one's subjective will actualizes the good, which is both its goal and ground. Insofar as the good is universal and the subjective will is particular, this means that the universal is substantive of the individual, but only comes to expression through the particularity of that individual.[50] In other words, for Hegel, the good is both the telos of humanity and constitutive of humanity's self-realization according to its concept.

Thus, we have seen that, in different ways, both Kant and Hegel ascribe a rational and moral teleology to humanity. Given the complexity of their respective philosophical systems, one, no doubt, could say much more regarding the manner in which they flesh this out, especially the ways in which their accounts diverge.[51] Yet, their similarities with regard to a rational and moral-teleological way of construing human being are undeniable. Their

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[46] deVries, 68.
[47] G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 75.
[48] Katerina Deligiori, "Hegel's Moral Philosophy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Hegel*, ed. Dean Moyar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 500.
[49] Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 87.
[50] See Hegel, 89.
[51] On this see Deligiori, "Hegel's Moral Philosophy," 496–97.

compatibility on this front is perhaps best summed up in Deligiori's description of the rationalist way of interpreting the meta-ethical implications of Hegel's moral philosophy:

> Granted that when we speak of specific ends, which we judge to be worth pursuing, we already do more than that. We place our faith in our rational capacities and in a progressive rational teleology that supports the practices of criticizing and correcting our reasons for doing things, guaranteeing that we get it right in the long run. The Idea is actualized through such progressive teleology.[52]

Here Hegel's "Idea", while by no means identical to, is analogous with Kant's socio-political cosmopolitanism. The "idea" also serves as the aim of autonomous reason. This is especially clear when Ludwig Siep notes: "In his mature philosophy Hegel developed a theory of the absolute as 'idea', that is, as all-encompassing, self-realizing, and self-reflecting thought. The rational state, then, has to be understood as a manifestation of this idea…. [T]he state itself is absolute reason realized within the world of 'embodied' human beings and their natural needs."[53] These important similarities provide us with sufficient grounds for examining and discussing the ways in which Kant's and Hegel's moral teleologies were ripe for Nazi cooption.[54] After that, we shall look at how Bonhoeffer's justification-based anthropology both critiques and provides an important theological alternative to their moral-teleological way of thinking about the human being.

III. Moral Teleology, Anti-Semitism, and the Third Reich

Michael Mack devotes the first half of his excellent monograph, *German Idealism and the Jew*, to outlining a trajectory from Kant, through Hegel, and onto Richard Wagner, which demonstrates the role that idealist philosophy played in bolstering Nazi anti-Semitism. Mack is quite forthright about the fact that there is no necessary connection between Kant and Hegel's anti-Semitism and the national socialist *Zeitgeist* foreshadowed in Wagner's radical musings.[55] However, he insists that it is important to take seriously the deep and disturbing continuities between Nazi ideology and its German intellectual heritage, rather than

[52] Deligiori, 511.
[53] Ludwig Siep, "Hegel's Liberal, Social, and 'Ethical' State," in *The Oxford Handbook of Hegel*, ed. Dean Moyar (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 523.
[54] Cf. Floyd, "Encounter with an Other," 89.
[55] On Wagner, see Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton/Oxford, UK: Princeton University Press, 2010), 39.

assuming that it was an aberration, totally discontinuous with enlightenment ideals.[56] This preempts suggestions that the Holocaust was fundamentally at odds with enlightenment values concerning the universal dignity of all humanity (a la Kant's categorical imperative).[57] The fact that Nazism demonstrated all the firm conviction of those who assumed a manifest destiny for themselves is not an accident of history, but is rather a historical development rooted in, among other things, the expressly Christian, rational, moral, and teleological visions of Kant and Hegel.

Jonathan Hess draws out the way in which Kant's philosophy of history, guided by his moral teleology, supersedes history as such.[58] He writes that, for Kant, "the empirical details of history need to be replaced by a philosophy of history here in much the same way as literal interpretations of the Bible needed to make for the philosophical theologian's efforts to make scripture conform to the dictates of a rational morality."[59] For Kant, Judaism is part and parcel of the empirical details of history that need to be overcome.[60] Indeed, Kant's conviction is that Christianity alone provides a philosophy of history aimed at the universalization of the good principle.[61] Judaism, however, is merely the "physical occasion for the emergence of Christianity as a rational religion that towers above history."[62] Furthermore, it must be noted that Kant's assertion of Christianity's superiority to Judaism is intimately linked to his underlying assumptions concerning the superiority of enlightened Europeans to the rest of the world.[63] Thus, Thomas McCarthy asserts: "The tendencies

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[56] Mack, 4. For a nuanced discussion concerning the methodological challenges related to drawing connections between enlightenment ideals and Nazi ideology, see Berel Lang, *Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 165–70.

[57] Contra Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (London: Abacus, 1997), 28. On the manner in which Kant's categorical imperative was coopted by Nazism, see Carsten Bagge Lausten and Rasmus Ugilt, "Eichmann's Kant," *Journal for Speculative Philosophy* 21, no. 3 (2007): 166–80. See also John Silber, *Kant's Ethics: The Good, Freedom, and the Will* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 317–23.

[58] Cf. Thomas McCarthy, *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 53–58.

[59] Jonathan M. Hess, *Germans, Jews, and the Claims of Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 153.

[60] Cf. Michael Mack, "Law, Charity and Taboo or Kant's Reversal of St. Paul's Spirit-Letter Opposition and Its Theological Implications," *Modern Theology* 16, no. 4 (2000): 423.

[61] Hess, *Germans, Jews, and the Claims of Modernity*, 152.

[62] Hess, 153.

[63] For recent discussions on the integral role Kant's philosophy played in giving rise to the problems of eurocentrism and white supremacy more generally, see Robert Bernasconi, "Who Invented the Concept of Race? Kant's Role in the Enlightenment Construction of Race," in *Race*, ed. Robert Bernasconi (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), 11–36; Robert Bernasconi, "Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism," in *Philosophers on Race: Critical Essays*, ed. Julie K. Ward and Tommy Lee Lott (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 145–66; Bernard Boxill, "Kantian Racism and Kantian Teleology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Race*, ed. Naomi Zack (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 44–53; J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 79–121; Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, "The Color of Reason: The Idea of 'Race' in Kant's Anthropology," in *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1997), 103–40; Thomas E. Hill, Jr. and Bernard Boxill,

toward monoculturalism that surface in Kant's account of progress, the insignificant role he envisions for *reciprocal* intercultural learning, is prefigured in his fundamentally monological conceptions of reason and rationality…. It would, in short, require a reconstruction of Kant's moral vision to make room for multicultural universalism and multiple modernities."[64]

Paul Lawrence Rose draws out a similar line of thinking in Hegel. Although Hegel evinced an antipathy toward Judaism early in his career, he eventually became a staunch proponent of Jewish emancipation. However, like Kant, Hegel subordinated Judaism to Christianity as a more primitive stage of historical development, especially in the socio-political realm.[65] Over against Judaism "the higher form of the state … would make men free and genuinely social in a regime of reason and love, just as Christianity has superseded Judaism. Hegel, therefore, indirectly came back to his youthful Kantian view that Judaism was ethically inferior to Christianity" and that it must "be interpreted as a superseded phase of world history."[66] Rose, then, concludes that "Hegel's critique of Judaism was of fundamental importance for the history of modern antisemitism up to the present day."[67]

From this, two things are clear. First, Kant's and Hegel's anti-Semitic attitudes were inflected by their Christian commitments. Second, their denigration of the Jews was neither purely cultural, nor accidental, but rather deeply rooted in their philosophical systems. While Nazi anti-Semitism cannot be entirely associated with Christian, philosophical anti-Semitism, the relationship between them is undeniable.[68] Indeed, Susannah Heschel has described the way in which many German Protestant theologians essentially functioned as tools of the state, bolstering its racializing tactics through the *Deutsche Christen*.

> Enthusiastically pro-Nazi, the [German Christian] movement sought to demonstrate its support for Hitler by organizing itself after the model of the Nazi Party, placing a swastika on the altar next to the cross, giving the Nazi salutes at rallies, and celebrating Hitler as sent by God. It was ready and willing to alter fundamental Christian doctrine in order to bring the church into compliance with the Reich, and welcomed the April 1933 order of removing Jews from the civil service by demanding that the church do

"Kant and Race," in *Race and Racism*, ed. Bernard Boxill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 448–71. For a defense of Kant on this front, see Pauline Kleingeld, "Kant's Second Thoughts on Race," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 57, no. 229 (2007): 573–92.

[64] McCarthy, *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development*, 68.

[65] Paul Lawrence Rose, *German Question/Jewish Question: Revolutionary Antisemitism from Kant to Wagner* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 115.

[66] Rose, 115.

[67] Rose, 115–16.

[68] See Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 18–23.

> likewise and remove any non-Aryans, that is, baptized Jews, from positions within the church.[69]

The role that the *Deutsche Christen* played in furthering the moral aims of the state immediately brings to mind Kant's cosmopolitanism and the place he accords Christ as the moral ideal, imitation of whom will lead progressively to the realization of that cosmopolitanism.[70]

Mack is particularly helpful in highlighting the way in which Kant and Hegel secularize and utilize Christianity in their philosophical systems. Indeed, their polemic against Judaism grows out of their portrayal of Christianity as the ideal, moral and rational religion. According to Mack, the Jews "bear the brand of the tension between the ideal (autonomy in Kant's case, dialectics in Hegel's, the total work of art in Wagner's) and the real (heteronomy, the non-dialectical, social-political life that has not become part of 'total art)."[71] Drawing on this negative construal of Judaism, Kant and Hegel construct a pseudo-Christian anthropology which vilifies Jews as the archetype of the Other in two important ways. First, Jews are the problematic Other because of the key role that heteronomy plays in their religious self-understanding. Here heteronomy simply refers to the fact that Jews understand themselves as externally determined, both in relation to a transcendent God and the material world. This, then, stands in direct opposition to the priority Kant places on autonomous reason as the means to self-determination and a truly moral life. Second, insofar as the Jews prioritize their relationship to God over and above their civic identity they remain immutably other in the context of the modern state.[72] Such immutability is problematic because it sets Judaism over and against both autonomous reason and socio-political cosmopolitanism. As such, Kant and Hegel believe that the Jews are enslaved to heteronomy and the illusion of the material. On account of this, they resist the rational and moral teleology of humanity which leads to social and political harmony.[73] Thus, the Jews "embody all that which hinders the construction of a perfect body politic in the here and now. They come to symbolize the worldly, which resists an immanent and imminent transformation into the otherworldly."[74]

Kant's and Hegel's pejorative attitudes toward the Jews were undoubtedly culturally inflected. However, their philosophical anthropologies empower their anti-Semitism in three

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[69] Heschel, 3.
[70] This is not, of course, to suggest that Kant would have necessarily endorsed the racist aims of the *Deutsche Christen*.
[71] Mack, *German Idealism and the Jew*, 64.
[72] Mack, 11.
[73] Mack, 44.
[74] Mack, 4–5.

important ways. First, by translating religious truth into moral and political truth they secularize Christianity while maintaining its pretenses to universality.[75] "The drive for universalization was accompanied, first latently and then explicitly, by the requirement of exclusion and the rejection of particularism—both of these [were] objectified for the Nazis in the identity of the Jews vis-à-vis Germany."[76] Second, by granting their rational definitions of human being moral and teleological heft they imbue their anthropologies with prescriptive power. Such prescriptive power leaves the door open to a wide range of human machinations for moving toward a realization of their moral telos. Here, Kant's unsociable sociability becomes most troubling insofar as it grants the possibility that war, violence, greed, etc. may be necessary means to realizing humanity's cosmopolitan end.[77] Third, by identifying the state as a unifying force which aids in the realization of humanity's moral teleology, Kant and Hegel grant it universalizing power in which particulars are either subsumed (Hegel) or eliminated (Kant).

While there is clearly much that is problematic about the idealist anthropologies of Kant and Hegel, there is at least one aspect from which modern theological anthropology could learn. Both Kant and Hegel firmly resist the impulse to define the human person in a purely atomistic way.[78] One might argue that Kant's system, structured as it is by autonomous rationality, ultimately leads to a sort of atomism. However, his unsociable sociability and cosmopolitan vision point to the irreducibly social nature of human being.[79] Likewise, for Hegel, in self-realization the individual finds herself in her other, thereby unifying the subjective and particular with the objective and universal.[80] Thus, Marina Bykova notes: "This unity of the subjective and objective dimensions of the political life constitutes 'concrete freedom', the highest level of rational self-determination for Hegel."[81] Thus, both Kant and Hegel saw the need to take into account the social sphere as well as the individual when describing human being. As we saw in the previous chapter, this is also foundational to Bonhoeffer's approach to theological anthropology. Yet, Bonhoeffer's justification-based

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[75] Mack, 11.
[76] Lang, *Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide*, 205.
[77] See McCarthy's insightful treatment of the manner in which Kant christianizes unsociable sociability by incorporating into a sort of theodicy in *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development*, 58–64.
[78] Cf. Bonhoeffer's affirmation of Hegel's insights regarding objective spirit in *DBWE* 1:74.
[79] Cf. Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism*, ed. David S. Pacini (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 42.
[80] Willem deVries, "Subjective Spirit: Soul, Consciousness, Intelligence and Will," in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Hegel*, ed. Allegra de Laurentiis and Jeffrey Edwards (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 148.
[81] Marina F. Bykova, "Will and Freedom," in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Hegel*, ed. Allegra de Laurentiis and Jeffrey Edwards (London/New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 268.

account of human being provides a radically Christian alternative to the pseudo-Christian, rational, moral, and teleological definition proffered by Kant and Hegel. It is to this that we now turn.

IV. Bonhoeffer's Justification-Based Anthropology Against Idealism

In an essay on the relational nature of human being, Christoph Schwöbel writes: "[T]heological anthropology has to resist any temptation to understand this perfectibility [of humanity] as one which could in some way be the result of human efforts at staging its self-perfection…. If perfectibility is to be affirmed, it is to be affirmed as a strictly relational perfectibility."[82] The problem of perfectibility also lies at the heart of Bonhoeffer's contention with German idealism. Indeed, what is at stake for Bonhoeffer is whether the perfectibility of humanity is properly the domain of the self or of Christ. By defining humanity in relation to God, Bonhoeffer locates human meaning in Christ alone. However, as we saw above, Kant and Hegel secularize Christianity, integrating it into their philosophical systems in such a way that they too can claim a definition of humanity that takes Christ into account. As such, in what follows we shall first examine the contours of Bonhoeffer's refutation of idealism in a few key texts.[83] Then, we shall demonstrate how Bonhoeffer's justification-based anthropology stands over against the rational and moral teleology of German idealism, thereby undermining any claim it might make to a Christian theological rationale for its views.

a. Against Idealism

Insofar as Bonhoeffer's anthropology seeks to locate human being firmly within the realm of history, there is for him, as for Kant and Hegel, an essential connection between history and anthropology.[84] However, unlike Kant and Hegel, Bonhoeffer follows Luther in his apocalyptic-theological understanding of history. Oswald Bayer sums up Luther's view in the following way:

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[82] Christoph Schwöbel, "Human Being as Relational Being: Twelve Theses for a Christian Anthropology," in *Persons, Divine and Human: King's College Essays in Theological Anthropology*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 169.

[83] For an excellent treatment of Bonhoeffer's interaction with Kant and Hegel in *Sanctorum Communio* and *Act and Being*, see Floyd, "Encounter with an Other," 93–104.

[84] It seems that Bonhoeffer was relatively unfamiliar with Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* until he received it while in prison at the end of his life (*DBWE* 8:98). However, he was familiar with Kant's philosophy of history from his university days. See his reference to "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View," in *DBWE* 1:43.

> Luther's apocalyptic understanding of creation and history bars the door to him, so that he cannot search for a way to explain history from a comprehensive historical-philosophical perspective, particularly as such a view is expressed in the modern concept of progress. The rupture between the old and the new world, which occurs in what happened on the cross of Christ and which marks each one biographically in baptism, ruptures metaphysical concepts of an overall unity as well as historical-theological thinking that one can achieve perfection.[85]

Like Luther, Bonhoeffer is deeply suspicious of the comprehensive claims of philosophy in relation to history and anthropology, as well as notions of self-enabled progress toward perfection.[86]

We have already hinted, in the two previous chapters, that Bonhoeffer's theological critique of philosophy is deeply indebted to Luther. It is now appropriate to make explicit the parallels between Bonhoeffer's approach and the basic elements of Luther's disagreement with philosophy in *DCM*. In chapter one, we discussed Luther's assertion that philosophical anthropology only has access to the formal and material causes of humanity, and even then not infallibly. Yet, the efficient and final causes of human being remain entirely inaccessible to unaided reason. Read in this light, the parallels are apparent in Bonhoeffer's discussion concerning the situatedness of humanity in relation to the beginning and the aim of their existence in *Creation and Fall*.[87] He writes: "Humankind no longer lives in the beginning; instead it has lost the beginning. Now it finds itself in the middle, knowing neither the end nor the beginning, and yet knowing that it is in the middle."[88]

In the middle, humanity, from a philosophical perspective, is only able to engage in anthropology in a descriptive mode, taking the material and form of human being as its subject matter. The beginning and the end are known only in revelation, and as such, are the domain of theology rather than philosophy. As a result, only theological anthropology can provide an adequate definition of what it means to be human. However, Bonhoeffer recognizes that, because of sin, this ideal delimiting of philosophy in relation to theology is impossible to maintain. "Humankind knows itself to be totally deprived of its own self-determination, because it comes from the beginning and is moving toward the end without

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[85] Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 9.
[86] Cf. Peter Frick, "Bonhoeffer and Philosophy," in *Understanding Bonhoeffer* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 181.
[87] Floyd suggests that *Creation and Fall* can be read as a sort of "parable" for what Bonhoeffer took to be the "promise and failure of idealism" ("Encounter with an Other," 108).
[88] *DBWE* 3:28.

knowing what that means. This makes it hate the beginning and rise up in pride against it."[89] For Bonhoeffer, philosophy's grasping after the efficient and final cause of humanity is nothing less than a claim to self-determination. Such self-determination is predicated on the expansion of human reason beyond the limits imposed upon it both by finitude and the noetic effects of sin. Here, Bonhoeffer targets Hegel: "The Hegelian question how are we to make a beginning in philosophy can therefore be answered only by the bold and violent action of enthroning reason in the place of God."[90]

Bonhoeffer sharpens his critique of philosophy in his inaugural lecture on theological anthropology. Indeed, he begins by describing philosophy, with a pejorative, Lutheran edge, as human activity par excellence.[91] He goes on to equate philosophy as a human work with "the concretization of a possibility."[92] In other words, philosophy is the realization of a possibility already embedded within human being. One might suggest, however, that philosophy is capable of identifying the limits of human being, and as such, its own limits. Accordingly, philosophy is capable of imposing certain limits on human possibility. By way of a response, it must be acknowledged that Bonhoeffer does allow for a genuinely Christian philosophy: "*Per se*, a philosophy can concede no room for revelation unless it knows revelation and confesses itself to be Christian philosophy in full recognition that the place it wanted to usurp *is* already occupied by another—namely, by Christ."[93] However, philosophy does not get there by discerning its own limits, because, insofar as those limits are self-imposed, philosophy has already transgressed them in order to identify them.[94] In other words, even these limits are haveable and graspable by the human person, based on her possibilities. Thus, regarding philosophical thought, Bonhoeffer acknowledges that "the human being essentially has no boundaries within himself; he is infinite within himself. To

[89] *DBWE* 3:28.
[90] *DBWE* 3:27. For a recent account which not only nuances Bonhoeffer's critiques of Hegel, but also demonstrates the manner in which Bonhoeffer's thinking was formed by him, see David S. Robinson, *Christ and Revelatory Community in Bonhoeffer's Reception of Hegel* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018). However, even in nuancing Bonhoeffer's critiques Robinson does not fully totally undermine their force. Here, Jorg Rädes' analogy still stands, in which he takes Bonhoeffer to be critically deconstructing Hegel, even as he retains some of Hegel's building blocks for his own theology. See his "Bonhoeffer and Hegel from *Sanctorum Communio* to the Hegel Seminar with Some Perspectives for the Later Works" (University of St Andrews: PhD Thesis, Chapter Draft, 1988), 10–11.
[91] *DBWE* 10:391.
[92] *DBWE* 10:391.
[93] *DBWE* 2:76–78.
[94] *DBWE* 10:399.

that extent, idealism is correct."[95] The boundlessness of thought places the person at the center of her own world as its master.[96] Nothing can stand in the way of reason.

In "Concerning the Christian Idea of God," an article Bonhoeffer published in 1932 during his year abroad in New York City, he contrasts the Christian conception of God as person with idealism's definition of person.[97]

> Idealism defines personality as the subjective realization of objective spirit—that is, of absolute spirit. Each personality is constituted by the same spirit, which is, in the last analysis, reason. Each personality is personality as far as it participates in reason. Thus each one knows the other. Personality is no secret and, therefore, another personality is no real limit for me because, in the last analysis, I have at my disposal the spirit of reason, as does also the other person.[98]

On this account, idealism enthrones reason as that which transcends social boundaries and makes possible universal definitions of what it means to be human. In other words, reason as absolute spirit sweeps aside particularity while elevating the authority of universals. Over against the priority idealism places on reason, the Christian concept of person involves both transcendence and genuine freedom. "God as the absolutely free personality is, therefore, absolutely transcendent."[99] As such, what it means to be human cannot be found in the universal, sovereignty of reason, but can only be received from God in the person of Jesus Christ.

There is also, for Bonhoeffer, a correlation between person and history. Since idealism defines personhood in terms of spirit with little regard for concrete reality, its interpretation of history is more concerned with abstract ideas than facts or events. "History becomes 'symbol,' transparent to the eternal spirit…. The earnestness of ontological consideration is weakened through reinterpretation in axiological judgments."[100] Consequently, revelation is separated from history and the truths it conveys are relegated to the realm of abstract ideas, ripe for reason's picking. This brings us to the crux of Bonhoeffer's critique of an idealist conception of personhood and history. By reducing history to the material husk which houses the spiritual kernel, idealism fails to "take seriously

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[95] *DBWE* 10:399.
[96] Cf. *DBWE* 10:353.
[97] Although Bonhoeffer uses "personality" in the text, rather than "person", this is merely a conformation to the conventions of American English at the time. See *DBWE* 10:455n28.
[98] *DBWE* 10:455.
[99] *DBWE* 10:455.
[100] *DBWE* 10:457.

the ontological category in history. Which means that it does not take history seriously."[101] Bonhoeffer recognizes that this reduction of history to abstract ideas, which can be commanded and accessed by reason, has serious implications in the anthropological realm, especially regarding "the interpretation of the other man, of the neighbor, that is, of present history."[102]

In contrast, the Christian concept of history is necessarily ontological since history cannot be absorbed into the self as an idea. It is the theater of decision where humanity encounters that which stands over against it.[103] History as the place of decision, then, corresponds to Bonhoeffer's definition of personhood as that which is free and transcendent. With this in mind, we can understand Bonhoeffer's definition of the person as one who stands in relation to and is encountered by God. From this follows a definition of history as the existence of humanity *coram Deo*. To be clear, Bonhoeffer is primarily interested here in preserving the integrity of historical revelation from the abstracting influence of German idealism. Yet, preservation of history and personhood in revelation has profound anthropological implications, since, as we have seen, anthropology receives its shape and structure from revelation in Christ. Thus, it is telling that Bonhoeffer concludes his article by identifying justification as the proof and doctrinal affirmation of God's freedom which grounds history and personhood.[104]

So, we have seen that Bonhoeffer directly opposes idealism's enthronement of reason and its corresponding conceptions of history and the human person. But what then of its moral teleology? Perhaps the clearest articulation of Bonhoeffer's critique of idealism on this front is found in some of his earliest theological writing, specifically his 1926 essay, "Church and Eschatology (or Church and the Kingdom of God)". Here, Bonhoeffer identifies and critiques the way in which idealism secularizes the kingdom of God. By replacing the kingdom of God with "the general concept of rational spirit," idealism makes the kingdom visible, which ties its realization to human works and renders the church irrelevant.[105] In this way, idealism presents the kingdom of God as nothing more than the moral telos of humanity. "Through gradual progress evil is removed from the earth. All of humankind will find itself united in the kingdom of God. The history of the world is at the

[101] *DBWE* 10:457–58.
[102] *DBWE* 10:458.
[103] *DBWE* 10:458.
[104] *DBWE* 10:461.
[105] *DBWE* 9:319.

same time the history of the kingdom of God. The church will merge into the world of morality."[106] Insofar, as cosmopolitan culture and the state are central aspects of idealism's realization of this telos, the church gradually dissolves into the socio-political realm as history progresses. Bonhoeffer rebuts this theologically and empirically. Theologically, the incarnation militates against human realizations of the kingdom of God in history. "For the Christian faith, idealism's framework shatters especially upon the thought that God became human: the necessity of sin must be timeless, not something that would eventually disappear."[107] Empirically, Bonhoeffer points to the way in which so-called advanced, western societies often fall prey to rampant "moral disintegration" and "the unhappy course of innumerable grand undertakings."[108] Thus, in opposition to a secular, sociopolitical, and moral conception of the kingdom which can be realized in history, Bonhoeffer asserts that "the empirical church is the sole signpost pointing beyond this world toward the kingdom of God."[109] In other words, the telos of history and humanity, the kingdom of God, is only discovered and encountered in the church's proclamation of the word and administration of the sacraments because that is where Christ *is*.

Before moving on, a word must be said concerning Bonhoeffer's dependence on the Emanuel Hirsch's *Die Reich-Gottes-Begriffe des neruen europäischen Denkens* as an interlocutor for this essay. Hirsch published *Die Reich-Gottes-Begriffe* in 1921, well before the rise of Nazism and his own involvement in that movement. However, his strongly nationalist proclivities emerged in tandem with the beginning of World War I in August 1914.[110] Like Bonhoeffer, Hirsch opposed the way in which idealism secularized Christianity and presented history as a merely human affair.[111] As a result, Bonhoeffer is heavily dependent on Hirsch's critiques of idealism in both "Church and Eschatology" and *Sanctorum Communio*.[112] Unlike Bonhoeffer, however, Hirsch's solution doubled down on idealism's flaws by replacing reason with conscience.[113] For Hirsch, conscience guards against total skepticism regarding

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[106] *DBWE* 9:319.
[107] *DBWE* 9:319. By 'timeless' here Bonhoeffer does not mean that sin is an eternal reality, but rather that it will not be fully done away with until the end of history in the eschaton.
[108] *DBWE* 9:319.
[109] *DBWE* 9:320.
[110] Robert P. Ericksen, *Theologians under Hitler: Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus, and Emanuel Hirsch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 124.
[111] Ericksen, 129.
[112] However, even in *Sanctorum Communio* Bonhoeffer's focus on Christology and the church shows that he had assimilated Hirsch's critique without taking on board his solution. Cf. *DBWE* 1:55n76.
[113] Cf. John Stroup, "Political Theology and Secularization Theory in Germany, 1918-1939: Emanuel Hirsch as a Phenomenon of His Time," *The Harvard Theological Review* 80, no. 3 (1987): 339.

truth by acknowledging God's active presence in history, but preserves "mystery, greatness, the profundity of life."[114] Conscience, then, also comes to function as the universal tie that binds. "This 'community of conscience' crosses all history and peoples, according to Hirsch, so it will give a meaning to history which nothing else can."[115]

Over against Hirsch's emphasis on conscience, Bonhoeffer's critique of idealism is decidedly christological.[116] This is a crucial distinction that Robert Erickson fails fully to account for when he asserts that there is theological similarity between Bonhoeffer and Hirsch.[117] There were indeed similarities given their common context and shared Lutheran background, but by replacing Christ with conscience as the locus of God's revelation to humanity Hirsch places himself at fundamental theological odds with Bonhoeffer.[118] Indeed, this played out in a variety of public ways in the context of Bonhoeffer's ecumenical work and with respect to Hirsch's development of the orders of creation, the latter of which we shall return to below. As such, while Bonhoeffer is dependent on Hirsch for his critique of idealism, their counter-proposals could not be more different.

b. Bonhoeffer's Alternative

We have explored some central aspects of Kant's and Hegel's idealist anthropologies and seen the way in which they were coopted by Nazism. Furthermore, we have seen that Bonhoeffer critiques idealism exactly in relation to its rational, moral, and teleological understanding of history, revelation, and the person. Now, we shall bring Bonhoeffer's justification-based anthropology, outlined in the previous chapter, to bear on the conversation in order to show that it is both basic to his dispute with idealism and the foundation for his positive alternative to idealism's philosophical anthropology.

In *Sanctorum Communio* Bonhoeffer identifies two basic deficiencies in idealist anthropology: "In the last analysis the reason why idealist philosophy fails to understand the concept of person is that it has no *voluntaristic* concept of God, nor a profound concept of sin."[119] We shall take each one of these in turn in relation to Bonhoeffer's justification-based anthropology. By defining humanity *coram Deo*, Bonhoeffers sees anthropology as beginning with God and God's freedom in creation. This freedom forms the ground for God's

[114] Ericksen, *Theologians under Hitler*, 130.
[115] Ericksen, 133.
[116] Cf. Bonhoeffer's critique of Karl Holl in *DBWE* 2:141–43.
[117] Ericksen, *Theologians under Hitler*, 184–85.
[118] Cf. Stroup, "Political Theology and Secularization Theory," 352.
[119] *DBWE* 1:48.

justifying work in *creatio ex nihilo*, preservation in the midst of sin, and reconciliation. Furthermore, for Bonhoeffer, Christ is the word of God's freedom through whom he creates, preserves, and redeems. In contrast, idealism either turns Christ into an abstract, moral exemplar (Kant) or posits the necessity of God entering into history via the world-whole's realization of its own concept (Hegel).[120] Both cases describe the necessary mechanisms of reason in the world. On account of this necessity, reason abolishes the first principle of all properly Christian theology—namely, that God freely became human.[121] Idealism, then, posits that God's revelation can be known independently of Christ. Based on this epistemic judgment, an ontology of human being emerges in which the human is fundamentally autonomous and rational. However, due to his substantial understanding of God's freedom for humanity in Christ, Bonhoeffer arrives at a very different definition of human being. Rather than asserting that humans are free for self-determination, he holds that humans are truly free only when, via justification by faith, they are determined by and in relation to God.[122] Justification, as an anthropological category, necessitates heteronomy in the anthropological sphere because the human person only exists in encounter with an other. Christianity is not the perfect, religious embodiment of rational autonomy, as Kant and Hegel would have it, but rather depends on heteronomous encounter between God and humanity in creation, preservation, and reconciliation. Thus, human ontology is fundamentally marked by relationality, faith, and heteronomous encounter, rather than rationality and autonomy.

Moreover, because God enters into history as a human in the person of Jesus Christ, theological anthropology must refrain from ahistorical interpretations of what it means to be human. The issue of ahistoricity plagues idealist anthropology because it fails to recognize sin as the fundamental disruption that it is. Idealism fails to take sin seriously as an irrational break in which human beings sever their relationship with God, thereby denying their source and meaning. Instead, idealism rationalizes sin as a necessary stage in the development of reason toward its moral telos (Kant's unsociable sociability) or as a necessary unfolding of world history (Hegel). Interpreted against the backdrop of Bonhoeffer's real historical dialectic—in which the human being is simultaneously creature, sinner, and reconciled in Christ alone—idealism's rationalizing of sin is actually evidence that its anthropology only

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120 Cf. *DBWE* 12:317, 337. Oswald Bayer calls Hegel's system a "natural theology of the cross" in *Theology the Lutheran Way*, ed. and trans. Jeffrey G. Silcock and Mark C. Mattes, Lutheran Quarterly Books (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 196.
121 *DBWE* 12:338.
122 Cf. *DBWE* 1:49.

takes into account the human as sinner. In other words, idealism is able to rationalize sin because it has accorded humanity a final cause which is contingent on human self-realization, rather than on Jesus Christ. Creation, sin, and reconciliation are all contained within human being and are epistemically accessible to it. As such, there is no real, historical dialectic in which disruption is possible. Instead, there is only smooth progression from one phase to another. Thus, Bonhoeffer writes:

> The fundamental difference between our position and that of idealism is this knowledge of the inner history of the concept of person in the move from the primal state [creation] to sin—in other words, the weight that we give to sin as having real and qualitative character when connected to history. *For idealism, origin and telos remain in unbroken connection and are brought to synthesis in the concept of 'essence'.* Nothing in between—sin, on the one hand, and Christ on the other—can essentially break this eternal, necessary connection. <<Hegel also seems to me to be no exception here.>> Such a view of history as an unbroken straight line basically eliminates everything specifically Christian. In this view, neither sin nor redemption alters the essence of history.[123]

For Bonhoeffer the human being is only properly understood according to the historical dialectic, but such an understanding is inaccessible to reason as such. Rather, proper understanding of what it means to be human is available only in faith. Here, sin's disruption becomes serious because only in faith can a person recognize that she is cut off from her origin and in need of a second disruption to remedy this. As such, humanity's telos is not something that can be seized rationally and morally. Instead, it can only be given by grace in the person of Jesus Christ. "Since death as the wages of sin (Rom. 6:23) first constitutes *history*, so *life that abides in love* breaks the continuity of the historical process—not empirically, but objectively."[124]

Finally, in his concept of the church, Bonhoeffer challenges and provides a genuinely Christian alternative to Kant's cosmopolitanism and Hegel's world-whole conceptuality.[125] The presence of Christ within the church is not that of an ideal, moral exemplar, as Kant would have it, but rather as a person—as the justifying image of God. Furthermore, the telos of humanity is not something that the state can accomplish, nor is it a moral ideal to which Christ beckons. Rather, it is simply the person of Christ who encounters humanity in and

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[123] *DBWE* 1:59–60, SC-A. "SC-A" denotes text that Bonhoeffer excised from his dissertation in preparation for publication, while "<<>>" indicates footnotes to that text.
[124] *DBWE* 1:146.
[125] Cf. Robert Vosloo, "Body and Health in the Light of the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer," *Religion & Theology* 13, no. 1 (2006): 27.

through the church, reconstituting them in his body through word and sacrament. As such, Schwöbel is surely correct when he writes: "The place where this dialectic between the imperfectability of humanity by its own efforts and the promise of perfection in communion with the triune God is constantly exercised and enacted is the church as the community of faith."[126]

This christological and ecclesial locus for theological anthropology draws on the logic of justification in a manner that actively resists anthropological formulations which either locate human meaning within the individual, or reduce it to a rationally and morally defined universal. In making the former its epistemic starting point for anthropology and the latter its ontological basis, idealism held forth an understanding of humanity that was ripe for manipulation because it made humanity its own master. As we saw above, this manipulation was exemplified in the Nazi's twisted and racialized moral teleology. They were moving humanity toward its cosmopolitan end and the Jews stood in the way of this progress as the heteronomous other in their midst. While Kant and Hegel secularized Christianity in a way that lent to its complicity in Nazism, theologians like Hirsch offered a Christian apologetic for such complicity by locating encounter with God in the human conscience. In both cases, Christianity was made to affirm humanity's direct access to and mastery of God's plans for the world. Ultimately, then, idealism, even when ostensibly Christian, leaves no space for God's free and gracious justification of humanity in Christ and this has profound implications for its anthropology.

For Bonhoeffer, the heteronomous nature of God's justifying work in creation, preservation, and reconciliation—revealed to humanity in the person of Christ—forms a different context for theological anthropology. Understood in light of justification, human being is essentially related to and grounded in that which is outside of it and is marked by the ontological disruptions of sin and reconciliation. As such, the human being is one whose historical-dialectical existence is held together by the justifying person and work of Jesus Christ, who establishes and represents humanity *coram Deo*. And this is a reality that can only be known through faith in Christ and in the church. Thus, we have seen that insofar as justification shapes Bonhoeffer's theological anthropology it provides important evaluative criteria for what it means to be human. Furthermore, the social implications of this justification-based criteria are on full display in the correlation between Bonhoeffer's dispute

[126] Schwöbel, "Human Being as Relational Being," 169.

with the philosophical anthropologies of Kant and Hegel and his resistance to the racializing impulses of National Socialism.

V. Conclusion: *Schöpfungsordnungen* vs. *Erhaltungsordnungen*

In conclusion, we shall engage in something of an excursus by looking at Bonhoeffer's opposition to the *Deutsche Christen* use of the orders of creation. When, at his student's behest, Bonhoeffer went to publish his lectures on Genesis 1–3, he found he could not use the title of the lectures themselves, *Schöpfung und Sünde* (Creation and Sin). This was because Emanuel Hirsch had published a volume under that name two years prior, in 1931. So, Bonhoeffer changed the proposed title to *Schöpfung und Fall* (*Creation and Fall*). However, apart from the title the two books shared little in common theologically. Eberhard Bethge notes that "the remainder of Hirsch's title, '…in the natural reality of the human individual,' was very different."[127] Indeed, at the heart of their divergence was a disagreement about the relationship between Christology and creation. On the one hand, "Hirsch's work used the Lutheran doctrine of the orders of creation to establish a realm of revelation and the presence of God in creation apart from the Word of God in Jesus Christ. Hirsch used the doctrine of the orders of creation as a theological apologetic for Nazi notions of *das Volk* (people and nation) and *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil)."[128] On the other hand, Bonhoeffer very intentionally begins his lectures on Genesis 1–3 by establishing the inaccessibility of the beginning and the end to those who exist "in the middle."

For Bonhoeffer, the "orders of creation [*Schöpfungsordnungen*]" find their actual point of reference in the realities of "fate" that spring from the fall, rather than creation itself.[129] Numerous theological problems arise when orders of creation assume a place of theological priority, including the ratification of any conflict that originates from obedience to an "order" and the marginalization of redemption and eschatology.[130] As an alternative to the orders of creation, Bonhoeffer formulates the "orders of preservation

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[127] Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, ed. Victoria Barnett, Rev. Ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 216.

[128] Larry L. Rasmussen, "Editor's Introduction to the English Edition," in *Berlin: 1932-1933*, ed. Larry L. Rasmussen, Isabel Best, and David Higgins (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 37; cf. Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 19. For a historical take on the intersection of Christianity, race, and, implicitly, the orders of creation, see Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 29–33.

[129] *DBWE* 11:352; *DBW* 11:323. Bonhoeffer's suggestion that according to the orders of creation "strife between nations is justified" calls to mind Kant's theory of unsociable sociability described above.

[130] *DBWE* 11:353.

[*Erhaltungsordnungen*]."[131] These orders do not possess ontological validity per se, but are authoritative only insofar as they are derived christologically from the gospel and are directed in hope toward the new creation.[132]

> All orders of our fallen world are God's orders of preservation that uphold and preserve us for Christ. They are not orders of creation but orders of preservation. They have no value in themselves; instead they find their end and meaning only through Christ. God's new action with humankind is to uphold and preserve humankind in its fallen world, in its fallen orders, for death—for the resurrection, for the new creation, for Christ.[133]

Thus, Bonhoeffer is careful to emphasize that an appeal to creation only has normative strength insofar as the gospel is heard in that appeal.[134]

At this point a discrepancy arises within Bonhoeffer's thought. In his 1931 formulation of the orders of preservation he seems to insist on the unfixed nature of the orders: "We must loudly protest against an order in which the gospel can no longer be heard, even if it were to be among the oldest orders in human history."[135] However, in 1933, Bonhoeffer writes in the Bethel Confession: "To preserve human beings from their unbridled selfishness and keep them from destroying themselves, God imposes *firm* orders [*feste Ordnungen*] upon human life."[136] This latter formulation prompts an important question regarding whether Bonhoeffer has indeed offered up a genuine alternative to the orders of creation, as they are laid out by the likes of Hirsch and Althaus, or whether he has simply reified the problem under a different nomenclature and with a christological gloss. In other words, does Bonhoeffer still accord too much weight to the revelatory significance of creation?

We saw in the previous chapter that for Bonhoeffer, as for Luther, creation plays an important role in the historical dialectic which structures human being, even when it is christologically mediated. However, this does not offer grounds on which to offer an infallible declaration of God's intent for humanity and the world. Indeed, for Bonhoeffer, the firmness of the orders of preservation is based in the person of Jesus Christ alone and a strict distinction must be made between this and what the human intellect perceives as a firm

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[131] *DBWE* 11:364; *DBW* 11:337.
[132] *DBWE* 11:268; cf. 11:353.
[133] *DBWE* 3:140.
[134] *DBWE* 11:268.
[135] *DBWE* 11:268. Michael DeJonge notes an earlier phase in Bonhoeffer's thought on this topic where he actually employs the terminology of 'orders of creation' in his lecture 'Basic Questions of a Christian Ethic' while in Barcelona (*Bonhoeffer's Reception of Luther* [New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017], 167).
[136] *DBWE* 12:387; *DBW* 12:375. Emphasis added.

order. Later, in the same section of the Bethel Confession, Bonhoeffer writes: "We reject the false doctrine that holds that we ourselves are able to restore the orders of creation, which have been destroyed by sin, to their original purity. Only in Christ can the world be restored; not until the new creation will it again stand in visible purity before its Creator."[137] In the face of sin, creation is that which God graciously preserves and its orders must be interpreted accordingly. As such, when reason or conscience attempt to go behind the back of Christ and grasp creation in its integrity it will only grasp human constructs. Thus, it would seem that Bonhoeffer has avoided the missteps of Hirsch and Althaus.

Yet by locating the firmness of the orders of preservation in Christ, how malleable does Bonhoeffer make them? In other words, is the problem actually that Bonhoeffer has over-corrected and marginalized the import of creation in a problematic way? Indeed, it seems as if this might be the case when he recasts the orders of preservation as "divine mandates [*göttliche Mandate*]" in *Ethics*.[138] Matthew Kirkpatrick provides a helpful summary of the mandates:

> Not only can mandates lose their authority through misuse, but by their very nature as mandates and not orders (so remaining always conditional on God's momentary command, as opposed to fixed structures with value in and of themselves), discernment is required to establish how they are being commanded in each moment. One must ask in each situation what the mandates look like and how they should be upheld here and now.[139]

It would seem that, on Kirkpatrick's portrayal, Bonhoeffer ultimately overcomes the orders of creation by consolidating authority in a conception of God's momentary command, thereby relativizing the link between Christ and creation.

If Kirkpatrick is right, then Bonhoeffer has gone too far and thrown the baby out with the bathwater. In fact, his discernment of the mandates sounds eerily similar to establishing the orders of creation via reason or conscience, albeit with a touch more epistemic humility. At risk of oversimplification, his logic seems to run something like this: because of sin the orders of creation are epistemically inaccessible to us, therefore the orders of creation, for all intents and purposes, do not exist. However, if God's justifiying act of

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[137] *DBWE* 12:391–92.

[138] See *DBWE* 6:388–89; *DBW* 6:392–93.

[139] Matthew D. Kirkpatrick, "Situations, Contexts, and Responsibility: Bonhoeffer's Ethics in the Thought of Joseph Fletcher, Paul Lehmann, and H. Richard Niebuhr," in *Engaging Bonhoeffer: The Impact and Influence of Bonhoeffer's Life and Thought*, ed. Matthew D. Kirkpatrick (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2016), 98–99. This is, of course, not the only way to interpret Bonhoeffer's articulation of the mandates, but it does represent at least one prominent line of interpretation.

redemption is indeed a recapitulation of God's justifying act of *creatio ex nihilo*, then some sort of continuity must exist between the two. Indeed, it is one and the same Jesus Christ through whom the world is both created and reconciled. Granted, sin has obscured and rendered the contours of these orders inaccessible. As such, orders of preservation are necessary as an accommodation to the fallen nature of humanity. These orders of preservation are not identical with, but often intersect and have the same trajectory as the orders of creation. Insofar as the orders of preservation are provisional and accommodating they are indeed malleable. Yet, their malleability is subject to and limited by Scripture and the church's proclamation.

It is quite possible that this is not so far off from what Bonhoeffer intends, especially if Philip Ziegler is correct regarding Bonhoeffer's evaluation of the ongoing significance of the Ten Commandments for Christian life. Ziegler suggests that, for Bonhoeffer, "the Ten Commandments themselves – precisely as the gracious revelation of God and inseparable from his saving presence – are and become the positive concrete command of Christ which is given, heard, discerned and obeyed within the bounded sphere they demarcate in their solemn, negative form."[140] By analogy, we might see the orders of creation as maintaining a negative role, demarcating a space in which the orders of preservation might be discerned. As such, on the one hand, preservation maintains its intrinsic connection to creation and its trajectory toward new creation. On the other hand, the orders of creation are also maintained, but in such a way that prevents them from being invested with normative descriptive or prescriptive power.

The problem with the mandates, then, is not so much their malleability as it is their implicit rejection of a real and substantive continuity between creation and new creation, and of the possibility that the orders of new creation are similar in important ways to the orders of creation in the beginning. Bonhoeffer's concern is to guard against sinful certainty with respect to and the theological manipulation of the orders of creation. These concerns are more than justified. However, the reality of sin is such that mandates which point toward new creation orders are just as vulnerable to manipulation and arrogant certainty, "christological" though they may be. While there is no formulation which will prove theologically impervious on these fronts, the way forward is to take our cue from Bonhoeffer's early theology by according priority to the ontological and epistemic

[140] Philip G. Ziegler, "Graciously Commanded: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Karl Barth on the Decalogue," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 71, no. 2 (2018): 133.

consequences of justification—namely, that the dialectical reality of creation, sin, and reconciliation precludes the negation or abstraction of any single aspect with respect to natural life. In doing so, we can locate God's orders of preservation between creation and new creation, discerning them in the context of the church and interpreting them according to the real, christological continuity between the beginning and the end.

Chapter 4

Pauline Insights:

Affirming and Critiquing Bonhoeffer's Justification-Based Anthropology

I. Introduction

In the first two chapters our goal was to sketch Dietrich Bonhoeffer's use of justification by faith as an anthropological category. To accomplish this, we set his early theology against the backdrop of Martin Luther's theological anthropology, particularly as it is articulated in Luther's *Disputation Concerning Man*. The third chapter pivoted slightly to consider how Bonhoeffer's justification-based anthropology informed his resistance to national socialism. As such, we began to see how the realm of anthropology might serve as fertile ground for connecting the soteriological substance of the doctrine of justification with its social and ethical implications. At this point, then, one might expect a move that reduces to something like: just as Bonhoeffer's anthropology—shaped as it was by justification—informed his resistance to the racializing impulses of national socialism, so too must the church now learn from him in its resistance to insidious social forces, such as white supremacy. However, this would be to miss two crucial points.

First, it mistakenly equates truthfulness with usefulness.[1] In other words, it assumes that because a justification-based anthropology was *useful* for Bonhoeffer in his context, it is also a *truthful* rendering of the doctrine of justification as it applies to theological anthropology.[2] Of course, it is an underlying assumption of this thesis that shaping our evaluation of human being according to justification is useful in the ethical sphere simply because it is theologically true. However, up to this point we have not done sufficient work to prove this is actually the case. Indeed, significant developments in Pauline scholarship since Bonhoeffer's death in 1945 have posed major challenges to Luther's interpretation of Paul. This, in turn, calls Bonhoeffer's understanding and use of justification into question as a theologian who was fundamentally shaped by Luther. Thus, insofar as Scripture serves as

[1] This sort of equivocation plays an important role in and helps to explain the surplus of divergent and conflicting receptions of Bonhoeffer. For a thorough analysis of these various portraits see, Stephen R. Haynes, *The Battle for Bonhoeffer: Debating Discipleship in the Age of Trump* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018); *The Bonhoeffer Phenomenon: Portraits of a Protestant Saint* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004).

[2] Bonhoeffer's essay, "The Church and the Jewish Question," which we shall address in more detail below, is an example of why such an assumption is dangerous. While indeed useful and important in combatting the anti-semitism of national socialism, some of Bonhoeffer's rhetoric continues to perpetuate stereotypes of Judaism as Christianity's villainous other. As such, there is a disjunct between its usefulness and its truthfulness, and the success of the former should not blind us to insufficiencies with regard to the latter.

the primary measure of theology's truthfulness, we must first evaluate Bonhoeffer's fidelity to Paul before we move forward in showing the usefulness of his thought for the church today. This is the task that will occupy us in the current chapter.

The goal is to provide, in part, a critical evaluation of the justification-based anthropology we have identified in Bonhoeffer. We shall do so primarily in light of recent Pauline scholarship, but also in relation to recent concerns raised by some feminist theologians regarding Lutheran articulations of justification. This evaluation will seek to accomplish two things in relation Bonhoeffer's account: 1) affirmation of his central arguments, and 2) supplemental critique. The goal, then, is to explore how Bonhoeffer's use of justification in his anthropology comports with recent Pauline scholarship, while also identifying aspects of Paul's theology of justification that Bonhoeffer either misinterprets or leaves underdeveloped.

In order to accomplish this goal, the chapter will proceed in four parts. First, we shall briefly outline the mid-twentieth century sea change in Pauline studies since this provides a rationale for the concerns of the current chapter. Indeed, this sea change aside, biblical fidelity is a basic desiderata for any ecclesially-useful, theological account. Given Bonhoeffer's dependence on Luther, the second section will examine arguments for the merits of the biblical exegesis on which Luther's doctrine of justification is based. The third section will then demonstrate the manner in which Bonhoeffer's account comports with numerous key insights in recent Pauline scholarship. Fourth and finally, we shall assess the ways in which the New Perspective on Paul (hereafter, NPP), apocalyptic interpretations of Pauline theology (hereafter, AIP), and concerns raised by some feminist theologians might enhance and/or critique Bonhoeffer's justification-based anthropology.

II. Framing the Problem

Even to speak of a "problem" that needs to be "remedied" in relation to Bonhoeffer's justification-based anthropology is a bit misleading. Indeed, we shall see that on each front where Bonhoeffer fails to fully draw on or realize aspects of Paul's theology of justification, there are already seeds in his early theology pointing toward a corrective. However, the major problem which we shall address in this chapter is only Bonhoeffer's as an accident of history. We, of course, do not know how Bonhoeffer's thought might have been altered if he lived after the 1977 publication of E.P. Sanders' *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* or if he had a chance to dialogue with Ernst Käsemann. However, one might safely assume that his take on the

Lutheran account of justification by faith would have been inflected somewhat differently if he had. Yet, it remains the case that Bonhoeffer was shaped by Barth and the Luther Renaissance and not the NPP or the AIP. As such, it is necessary here at the start to provide a brief account of the shifts in Pauline studies that have, in part, given rise to our critical evaluation of Bonhoeffer's justification-based anthropology.

Neither the NPP nor the AIP emerged *ex nihilo* with the work of Sanders and Käsemann in the twentieth century.[3] However, these two figures are generally recognized as playing decisive roles in shaping their trajectories.[4] In both cases, the shift involved reinterpretations of or moves away from Reformation readings of Paul, which had dominated theology for more than 400 years. For Sanders and the NPP, this shift was effected on primarily historical grounds.[5] Through renewed attention to the contexts and documents of Second Temple Judaism, Sanders, in his landmark *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, refuted the traditional connection between Judaism and works righteousness.[6] For Sanders and many NPP scholars to follow, this marked a decisive break with Reformation readings of Paul. Indeed, Sanders describes the Second Temple Jewish understanding of the relationship between God and his people in terms of 'covenantal nomism.' Under this nomenclature, Sanders insists that, at the time of Paul, Jewish devotion to the law was always nested within a larger, more basic covenantal narrative. The effects of Sanders' work on Pauline scholarship are manifold. However, we shall return below to the NPP's articulation of the theological implications of Sanders' insights, and what this means for Bonhoeffer's understanding of how justification shapes what it means to be human.

Given Käsemann's status as a New Testament exegete, the AIP's origins are also tied to historical insights. However, they are certainly shaped just as fundamentally by theological concerns. As an example, Philip Ziegler notes the formative influence that Karl Barth had

[3] Indeed, figures such as F.C. Baur, William Wrede, and Albert Schweitzer served as forerunners of the NPP and the AIP in certain ways. For a good overview see N. T. Wright, *Paul and His Recent Interpreters: Some Contemporary Debates* (London: SPCK, 2015), 12–16, 34–63. In addition, the degree to which either the NPP or AIP can rightly be called a unified movement is questionable (with regard to the NPP, see Wright, 64–65). Indeed, our references to the NPP and AIP in this chapter serve more as a basic way to plot the changes in Pauline studies since Bonhoeffer, rather than strict designators of unified schools of thought. For example, John Barclay does not comfortably fall into either camp, but we shall substantively interact with his work insofar as it emerges in tension with and in relation to both. Thus, it is important to acknowledge the polyvalence of both the NPP and the AIP, although we shall maintain the unifying nomenclature for ease of reference.

[4] See Wright, *Paul and His Recent Interpreters*, 64–65; David W. Congdon, "Apocalypse as Perpetual Advent: The Apocalyptic Sermons of Rudolf Bultmann," *Theology Today* 75, no. 1 (2018): 51–52.

[5] C.f. Wright, *Paul and His Recent Interpreters*, 70.

[6] See E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 515–18.

on Käsemann's reading of Paul. He suggests that, "[l]ike Barth's analysis, Käsemann's reading of Paul is funded by an acknowledgment that the apostle, his vocation, his communities, and his witness to the gospel, all 'exist from the very first within the eschatological parameter'; Käsemann identifies that parameter as Christ's salutary reign unto God."[7] Thus, the interface between theology and the AIP has more readily yielded fruit in the realm of systematics than has the NPP.[8] We might say, then, that, on the one hand, the NPP focuses on how Paul's historical context informed his theology. The AIP, on the other hand, focuses on the manner in which Paul's theology shaped his perception of his historical context.

Käsemann's key interpretative move is to read Paul's theology as oriented to the proclamation of Christ's sovereign lordship. "The apocalyptic question 'To whom does the sovereignty of the world belong?' stands behind the Resurrection theology of the apostle, as behind his parenesis which centres around a call to obedience in the body."[9] Ordered to this controlling question, Käsemann imbues the AIP with a concern for the cosmic scope and liberative nature of redemption, in which Christ's death and resurrection defeat the oppressive powers of this world, thereby establishing God's sovereign rule in Christ. Certainly, many aspects of Käsemann's Pauline interpretation are patently Lutheran, and, indeed, the AIP does not criticize Reformation readings of Paul as forthrightly as the NPP.[10] However, for our current purposes, it is sufficient to suggest that the AIP introduces ways of thinking about Pauline theology and justification that would have, at best, been on the fringes of Bonhoeffer's Lutheran purview.[11] As with the NPP, we shall consider below how some of the AIP's key insights might inform our exploration of the social implications of justification in Bonhoeffer's theology.

Although we have offered some brief comments concerning the differences between the NPP and the AIP, we have not undertaken a full-scale comparison of the two movements. Neither shall we do so in what follows. This would take us well beyond the

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[7] Philip G. Ziegler, *Militant Grace: The Apocalyptic Turn and the Future of Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 21.

[8] For a constructive account of how apocalyptic insights from the New Testament should shape Christian theology, see Ziegler's six theses in *Militant Grace*, 26–31.

[9] Ernst Käsemann, "On the Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic," in *New Testament Questions of Today* (London: SCM Press, 1969), 136–37.

[10] For instance, see Käsemann's classically Lutheran emphasis on a theology of the cross in "On Paul's Anthropology," in *Perspectives on Paul* (London: SCM Press, 1971), 1–31.

[11] We cannot wholly separate Käsemann from Bonhoeffer insofar as they were both deeply influenced by Barth, and, to a lesser extent by Adolf Schlatter. Regarding the influence these figures had on Käsemann, see John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 141.

scope of the current project. While some degree of comparison and contrast is inevitable, the primary goal is not to set the NPP and the AIP in critical dialogue with one another. Rather, when we come back to the NPP and the AIP, we shall do so in order to assess Bonhoeffer's justification-based understanding of what it means to be human in light of their key insights. For now, it has been sufficient to outline the shifts in New Testament scholarship that might cause us to call into question the Pauline provenance of Bonhoeffer's Lutheran reading of justification.

III. Pauline Insights in Support of Luther

Given the significance of these 20th century shifts in Pauline studies, what grounds do we have for continuing to consider the manner in which the logic of justification shapes Bonhoeffer's anthropology and ethics? At this point, one could punt to the tradition of the church and leave it at that (which is no small thing). However, Bonhoeffer self-consciously understood himself in a line of theological heritage whose key figures were Luther and Paul (and sometimes Kierkegaard, Barth, and Augustine).[12] Because of this, his ambition was not simply to maintain fidelity with Luther, but, perhaps even more fundamentally, to remain faithful to Paul. In other words, he was implicitly committed to the Reformation principle of *semper reformanda*.[13] As such, to answer the question we have just posed, the next two sections will make the case, first, that Luther—as the primary mediating figure in Bonhoeffer's reception of Paul—is a credible Pauline interpreter, and, second, that justification shapes Bonhoeffer's anthropology in a plausibly Pauline manner.

Our goal in this section is not a thorough defense of Luther as a Pauline exegete, but rather to show, based on recent New Testament scholarship, that his interpretation of justification is hardly as problematic as a number of NPP exegetes have suggested. To this end, Michael Bird offers an even-handed assessment of the situation. On the one hand, he rebukes theologians within Reformation traditions for battening down the hatches when they sense that their confessions are threatened.[14] On the other hand, he asserts: "Those who are critical of the traditional Lutheran interpretation of justification need to pay closer attention

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[12] See e.g. *DBWE* 10:460; 11:229; 12:304.

[13] See Wolf Krötke, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther," in *Bonhoeffer's Intellectual Formation: Theology and Philosophy in His Thought*, ed. Peter Frick (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 56; cf. Eberhard Jüngel, "The World as Possibility and Actuality. The Ontology of the Doctrine of Justification," in *Theological Essays*, trans. John Webster (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 104.

[14] Cf. T.F. Torrance, "Justification: Its Radical Nature and Place in Reformed Doctrine and Life," in *Theology in Reconstruction* (London: SCM Press, 1965), 165.

to Luther's context and the finer points of his exegesis."[15] The past two decades have seen a number of scholars— Bird among them—do exactly this. As a result, we can point to two key ways in which Luther's exegesis of Paul has been vindicated.[16]

First, in "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," Krister Stendahl identifies Luther as the climax of tendencies which began with Augustine's *Confessions.*[17] Here, Stendahl is speaking of the western tendency to read Paul "as a hero of the introspective conscience."[18] He then asserts that Paul demonstrates an extraordinarily "robust conscience" in relation to the law, thus rendering Reformation readings of justification as the balm for Paul's tormented soul problematic. According to Stendahl, Luther reads his own tortured conscience back into Paul, imposing on him the quest for a gracious God, while obscuring his real intent: casting a theological vision for the unity of Jews and Gentiles in the body of Christ.[19] As such, Stendahl suggests that the root of Reformation mis-readings of justification is an anachronistic approach to the text; an importing of the troubled, western conscience back into Paul's Second Temple Jewish context. That Luther's interpretation has held so much sway over the last 500 years both affirms western addiction to introspection and signals a failure to pay proper attention to history. As such, Stendahl writes: "Paul's doctrine of justification by faith has its theological context in his reflection on the relation between Jews and Gentiles, and not within the problem of how *man* is to be saved or how man's deeds are to be accounted, or how the free will of individuals is to be asserted or checked."[20]

Stephen Westerholm has called Stendahl's essay one of "the best known, most influential single articles written in the twentieth century."[21] Because of this, it has played an

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[15] Michael F. Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God: Studies on Paul, Justification and the New Perspective* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), 67–68.

[16] These two ways correspond to and are drawn from two of the three broad areas of disagreement between the NPP and the Reformers which Stephen Chester identifies. See his *Reading Paul with the Reformers: Reconciling Old and New Perspectives* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 323–25. Although we do not touch on the third area—Chester's defense of Luther on the doctrine of justification more broadly—it is worth noting that here he provides an apologetic for Luther on three fronts. Namely, he defends Luther's objective genitive rendering of πίστις Χριστου over against Richard Hays' championing of the subjective genitive (377–85), Luther's participative understanding of justification over against the individualism which Douglas Campbell ascribes to him (385–91), and Luther's concern for the soteriological aspect of justification over against N.T. Wright's covenantal interpretation (391–400).

[17] Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," in *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles: And Other Essays* (London: SCM Press, 1976), 84.

[18] Stendahl, 78.

[19] Stendahl, 86.

[20] Krister Stendahl, "Paul Among Jews and Gentiles," in *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles: And Other Essays* (London: SCM Press, 1976), 26.

[21] Stephen Westerholm, *Justification Reconsidered: Rethinking a Pauline Theme* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 1.

important role in fueling pejorative attitudes toward Luther's reading of Paul. After all, if Luther mis-identifies the central impulse of Paul's theology, then he is a figure in reception history who must be overcome, rather than retrieved. Stendahl provided the "germinal roots" for the NPP insofar as the relationship between Jews and Gentiles began to displace soteriological concerns as the heart of justification.[22] Yet, there has been, in recent years, a strong reaction against his characterization of Luther's theology. Indeed, Stephen Chester has recently gone so far as to assert that "Stendahl's work on the introspective conscience represents a misleading dead end for contemporary scholarship."[23] Of course, Chester is not here objecting to Stendahl's characterization of the West as inordinately controlled by the introspective conscience.[24] Neither is he suggesting that Paul was indeed tortured and controlled by his introspective conscience, searching for a God-given grace-tonic. Rather, he is simply asserting that Stendahl got Luther wrong.[25]

Put in simplest terms, Luther too, like Stendahl, affirms the robustness of Paul's conscience.[26] More specifically, however, for Luther, pre-conversion Paul had a robust conscience with regard to active righteousness, but lacked the passive righteousness which justifies.[27] Furthermore, in order for Paul to have been racked with guilt over his sin, he would have needed to have knowledge of said sin. As we noted in the first chapter, Luther believed that knowledge of sin is a product of faith which is created by and in the passive righteousness given by God in Christ. As such, Paul's conscience could not have been tortured by sin of which he was unaware. In Luther's mind, then, Paul did not see his own problem as one of a guilty, introspective conscience, but rather as the need to overcome his own robust conscience and realize its inadequacy before God. Reflecting on Luther's view of the conscience, Heiko Oberman writes:

> The Christian walks a "straight and narrow way." This is not a reference to the "straight gate" and the "narrow way" of those monks and puritans who forgo the joys of life on the "broad way" so as to maintain clear consciences.

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[22] Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God*, 25.

[23] Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers*, 346; cf. Douglas Campbell's opposite conclusion that "Stendahl's famous critique is insufficiently radical!" in *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 176.

[24] For a recent work of philosophical theology that interprets modern theology as heavily under the influence of a sort of introspection and gives special attention to the role of justification, see Kevin Hector, *The Theological Project of Modernism: Faith and the Conditions of Mineness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[25] Cf. Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 403.

[26] For an excellent comparison of Luther and Stendahl on this topic, see Stephen J. Chester, "Paul and the Introspective Conscience of Martin Luther: The Impact of Luther's *Anfechtungen* on His Interpretation of Paul," *Biblical Interpretation* 14, no. 5 (2006): 508–36.

[27] Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers*, 125.

> No, it is a difficult, a painful path because it leads to the nearly mystical experience of being torn out of one's conscience, the conscience that seeks peace in its own holiness. Centuries of Western formation of conscience must be overcome if saying yes to God means saying no to one's own conscience.[28]

Thus, Stendahl is surely mistaken when he asserts that Luther projects his own troubled conscience onto Paul. As such, Stendal's work does not disprove Luther's starting point for understanding Paul's theology in the ways he thinks it does. At stake for Luther, rather, was the standard to which the conscience was held. This leads to the second way in which Luther has been rehabilitated by recent New Testament scholarship.

Unlike the problem of Paul's introspective conscience, the second area does not see Luther wholly vindicated. Yet, it still corrects the picture in such a way that allows for positive retrieval of his thought. When it comes to interpreting Paul's reference to "works of the law" in Gal 2:16, there can be no doubt that Luther failed to address its boundary-defining function which the NPP has so importantly emphasized.[29] However, Chester rightly poses the following question: "*If it is unconvincing to understand obedience to the whole law almost exclusively in terms of self-achieved works-righteousness, is it any more convincing to understand it almost exclusively in terms of the boundary-marking function of the works performed?"*[30] On both sides of this dichotomy—between soteriology and communal praxis—the emphasis is placed on "works" in the phrase "works of the law." For Luther, these works are construed in terms of subjective, ethical achievements. Whereas, for the NPP, these works are primarily focused on ceremonial aspects of the law which erect barriers between Jews and Gentiles.[31] John Barclay, however, offers a way forward that resolves this dichotomy while also allowing space for the concerns represented by both sides.[32] First, he takes the accent off of "works" by noting: "There is no material difference in this letter between 'works of the Law' and 'the Law.'"[33] The problem, then, is not the subjective works, but the objective status of the Law as a system of worth. "What Paul objects to is the enclosure of the Christ-event within the value-system of the Torah, because for those whose lives are reconstituted in Christ, the supreme definition of worth is not the Torah but the truth of the good news."[34] This reading of "works of the law"

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[28] Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil* (New York: Image Books - Doubleday, 1992), 320.
[29] Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers*, 347. See also Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 420.
[30] Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers*, 349; cf. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 374.
[31] See James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 354–59.
[32] Cf. Jonathan Linebaugh, "The Grammar of the Gospel: Justification as a Theological Criterion in the Reformation and in Paul's Letter to the Galatians," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 71, no. 3 (2018): 297–98.
[33] Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 374.
[34] Barclay, 444; cf. Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers*, 358.

undercuts Lutheran readings, which take such works to describe a false soteriology. However, Paul's rejection of Torah as a system of worth does carry within it the implication that ethical achievements are insufficient to obtain the worth required for justification. As such, Luther's interpretation of "works of the law" should be rejected, but its underlying concern is not thereby rendered irrelevant. Indeed, Barclay's alternative remains consonant with other important aspects of Luther's doctrine of justification, especially the idea that God's justifying recognition of humanity creates worth *ex nihilo*, rather than affirming pre-existent systems.

Thus, we have seen, via key recent works in NT studies, that to reject Luther's reading of Paul out of hand is itself to be beholden to a different strain of tradition with a much shorter history. This is not to call for a wholesale retrieval or revivification of Luther's Pauline exegesis. However, it is to suggest that Luther's blind spots did not totally undermine his interpretation of Paul on justification in the way the way that Stendahl, Sanders, and others have previously suggested. We have, then, made a minimal case for Luther's ongoing relevance as a Pauline interpreter. Therefore, the manner in which Bonhoeffer brings justification to bear on anthropology cannot be dismissed because of his dependence on Luther. Indeed, his thought can now be examined in its own right in relation to recent works on Pauline theology.

IV. Pauline Insights in Support of Bonhoeffer

At this point it is useful to recall the key aspects of Bonhoeffer's justification-based anthropology. After a survey of his early, academic theology we have seen that the human being is, fundamentally, one who exists extrinsically and relationally *coram Deo*. This relational ontology is structured by a three-fold simultaneity—what Bonhoeffer calls a historical dialectic—in which humanity is at once created, sinful, and reconciled in Christ alone. Although this points to a fundamentally fragmented existence, Christ binds humanity to himself in the incarnation in such a way that unity is made possible through participative encounter with and in Christ and the church by faith. As such, the person who *is* justified does not cease to be marked by the historical dialectic, but she knows her standing *coram Deo* to be extrinsically sourced and unified in the mediatorial person of Christ.

With this in mind, we shall now turn to consider how recent Pauline literature might support Bonhoeffer's thinking on this front. To this end, Brigitte Kahl has suggested that Bonhoeffer's stance on justification "is much more influenced by his Paulinism than his

Lutheranism."[35] Now, it is doubtful whether Bonhoeffer's reading of Paul can be helpfully separated out from his reading of Luther in the clear-cut way that Kahl suggests. Indeed, time and again throughout Bonhoeffer's works Paul and Luther are held together as consonant thinkers. However, Kahl does point to the relevance of the line of questioning we are pursuing here—namely, that reading Bonhoeffer in service of the *ecclesia semper reformanda* requires tying him back to Paul just as much as, if not more than, we tie him back to Luther.[36] Our goal, then, is to render plausible, in relation to Paul's theology, the manner in which Bonhoeffer's early anthropology is shaped by justification. In order to do so, we shall again draw on recent Pauline scholarship, looking particularly at the way it supports Bonhoeffer's emphasis on relationality, Christology, and extrinsicality. We shall examine the historical-dialectical nature of human existence in the next section since, at the same time as if finds support in Pauline theology, it is also grounded there in a way that is importantly different from Bonhoeffer.

a. Relationality

Susan Grove Eastman has recently suggested that Paul "displays a functional understanding of human beings as relationally constituted agents who are both embodied and embedded in their world."[37] She fleshes this out textually by comparing Gal 2:19–20 and Rom 7:15–18, 20. "Taken together, [the two texts] suggest a pattern of talking about persons in which the self is never on its own but always socially and cosmically constructed in relationship to external realities that operate internally as well."[38] Core to Eastman's reading of Paul's anthropology, then, is the idea that, for Paul, the social-relational sphere precedes individuated personhood and serves as the context in which it arises.[39] Indeed, Paul's account of the person is "participatory all the way down."[40] Bonhoeffer's theological anthropology, then, corresponds quite closely to Eastman's interpretation of Paul methodologically and structurally. Methodologically, like Paul, Bonhoeffer is unconcerned to put forth a precisely

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[35] Brigitte Kahl, "Justification, Ethics, and the 'Other': Paul, Luther, and Bonhoeffer in Trialogue," in *Luther, Bonhoeffer, and Public Ethics: Re-Forming the Church of the Future*, ed. Michael P. DeJonge and Clifford J. Green (Lanham: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2018), 63.
[36] Kahl, 69–70.
[37] Susan Grove Eastman, *Paul and the Person: Reframing Paul's Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 2.
[38] Eastman, 8.
[39] For a prominent NPP voice who supports a relational ontology, see Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 53, 344.
[40] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 9.

formulated theological anthropology.[41] Instead, he speaks of humanity functionally—at times almost phenomenologically—by interpreting what it means to be human within the soteriological contours of the biblical-theological narrative and in relation to concrete, lived, human existence.

Structurally, for Bonhoeffer, humanity is constituted relationally in a twofold manner. To borrow Eastman's language, the person is defined by both cosmic and social relational frameworks. This is not to say that Bonhoeffer would have signed on for Käsemann's assertion that "anthropology is cosmology *in concreto*", as Eastman does.[42] However, insofar as Bonhoeffer believes that human being is formed by the tri-partite narrative of creation, fall, and reconciliation, the *coram Deo* relationship which grounds this narrative is certainly cosmic in scope. In other words, the historical dialectic, which Bonhoeffer outlines in *Sanctorum Communio*, reflects the cosmic context of anthropology.[43] Meanwhile, Bonhoeffer virtually echoes Eastman verbatim when it comes to the constitutive import of human sociality, writing: "[T]he person comes into being only when embedded in sociality."[44] Thus, Käsemann's description of the relational import of justification applies to Bonhoeffer as well: "The justification of the sinner is the only path on which God's creature remains before and under God and at the same time part of mankind, so that while he is in this world of ours he is also beneath the open heavens."[45] Indeed, justification is a central criteriological concept for anthropology. It provides the framework within which the constitutive implications of humanity's standing *coram Deo* and *coram hominibus* can be held and thought together.[46] This is a point we shall return to in chapter six.

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[41] Although Clifford Green claims that *Act and Being* is, fundamentally, a work of theological anthropology, the fact remains that it is neither systematically so, nor was it Bonhoeffer's intent to produce such a work. Rather, its prominent anthropological concerns should be seen as a basic expression of Bonhoeffer's fundamentally Lutheran understanding of the task of theology. See Clifford J. Green, *Bonhoeffer: A Theology of Sociality*, Rev. Ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 68–70.

[42] Käsemann, "On Paul's Anthropology," 27; Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 91. See also Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. G.W. Bromiley (London: SCM Press, 1980), 33, 150. For a helpful discussion of Käsemann's theological anthropology see, Ziegler, *Militant Grace*, 56–67.

[43] *DBWE* 1:62.

[44] *DBWE* 1:78.

[45] Ernst Käsemann, "Justification and Salvation History," in *Perspectives on Paul* (London: SCM Press, 1971), 74; cf. Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte, "A New Perspective on Justification. Recent Developments in the Study of Paul," *Zeitschrift Für Dialektische Theologie* Supplement Series 6 (2014): 148–49.

[46] A key difference between Bonhoeffer and Eastman that deserves more exploration is the latter's assertion that relationality is prior to individuality. Bonhoeffer, on the other hand, refuses to ease the tension between the individual and corporate. However, for the purposes of this paper it is sufficient to note their fundamental agreement that individual and relational realities are interrelated and, therefore, must be held together. See *DBWE* 1:80; Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 13.

b. Christology

Relationality, however, is not a generic theological concept. Rather, Eastman asserts that "Paul constitutes all humanity … as Adam's heirs and as those for whom Christ died; there is no innate or individual criterion by which some might be included and others excluded from this capacious embrace."[47] Humanity, theologically understood, is defined in relation to Adam and Christ.[48] This is exactly the typology that Bonhoeffer puts forth in the second half of *Act and Being*. For Bonhoeffer, these are the two basic relational realities that define, shape, and enfold all of humanity. To be in—which is, at the same time, in relation to—Adam "means to be in untruth, in culpable perversion of the will, that is, of human essence. It means to be turned inward into one's self, *cor curvum in se*. Human beings have torn themselves loose from community with God and, therefore, also from that with other human beings, and now they stand alone, that is, in untruth."[49] In contrast, to be in Christ is to be turned outward and set in relation to God through Christ's external, mediatorial person.[50] Barclay affirms Bonhoeffer's intuitions from a New Testament exegetical perspective when he writes:

> Crucial to Paul's theology is that this new life is not in the first place an anthropological phenomenon: it is experienced by human beings only inasmuch as they share in, and draw from, a life whose source lies outside of themselves, the life of the risen Christ. Their identity is recentered, since their life is now wholly dependent on the life of Another, the One who is risen from the dead.[51]

However, it is not as if being in Adam and being in Christ are equally weighted. Insofar as Christ participates in God's act of creation and created reality is constituted

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[47] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 13–14; cf. Ziegler, *Militant Grace*, 58.

[48] See how Leander Keck (*Romans* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005], 145) speaks of participation in the condition of Adam or the condition of Christ, in relation to Rom 5:12–21. Cf. Susan Grove Eastman, "Apocalypse and Incarnation: The Participatory Logic of Paul's Gospel," in *Apocalyptic and the Future of Theology: With and Beyond J. Louis Martyn*, ed. Joshua B. Davis and Douglas Harink (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 174.

[49] *DBWE* 2:137.

[50] *DBWE* 2:150–51.

[51] John M. G. Barclay, "Under Grace: The Christ-Gift and the Construction of a Christian *Habitus*," in *Apocalyptic Paul: Cosmos and Anthropos in Romans 5–8*, ed. Beverly Roberts Gaventa (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013), 65. Barclay does not here intend "anthropological" as an adjective in the way we have been using it. Rather, by "anthropological" he means that which has its impulse or impetus in the human sphere. This goes back to and reflects its usage in relation to the πίστις Χριστου debate in Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1–4:11*, 2nd ed (Grand Rapids; Dearborn, MI: Eerdmans; Dove Booksellers, 2002), 277.

through him, he stands on both sides of the Fall.[52] This christological bracketing of human existence is thus the defining mark of humanity. Thus, being in Adam, as the relational expression of sinfulness, is a break in the anthropologically basic relationship with God in Christ, rather than a separate and equal alternative. Reconciliation in Christ, then, is the recapitulation and affirmation of both created reality and God's justifying posture toward humanity. To this end, Eastman writes: "[F]or Paul, regardless of personal beliefs or 'self-understandings,' the person always and already exists in the presence of another; personhood is constituted in the self-donation of Christ for all humanity. It is grounded in gift, regardless of criteria."[53] In this way, the justificatory relationship which grounds humanity is a product of and exists only in the gracious gift of Christ's self. Put another way, it is in the gift of Christ that humanity comes to know the measure of itself, namely its justification. "The Pauline doctrine of justification is entirely and solely Christology, a Christology, indeed, won from Jesus' cross and hence an offensive Christology. Its point is the *ecce homo* presented so that we, confronted with the Nazarene, learn how little our illusions about ourselves and the world can stand up to its reality."[54] What this means is that, for Paul, Christ is not simply an exemplar to be imitated, but rather the one who creates, confronts, and reconstitutes humanity in himself.[55] Or, conversely, in the words of Bonhoeffer: "Justification is pure self-revelation, pure way of God to man."[56] Thus, Paul's anthropology is fundamentally shaped by the justificatory relation and posture of Christ toward humanity.

c. Extrinsicality

As Chester sees it, one of the key contributions of Luther—and the Reformers in general—to Pauline exegesis is their emphasis on the extrinsic nature of justified human existence. "Only outside of the self and in Christ can the believer receive new life."[57] Likewise, according to Barclay: "Believers are to consider themselves 'dead to sin and alive to God,' in both respects like Christ ([Rom]6:10) and in Christ (6:11). They present themselves "as those

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[52] On Paul's extension of God's covenant with Israel back to creation, see Ernst Käsemann, "Justification and Freedom," in *On Being a Disciple of the Crucified Nazarene: Unpublished Lectures and Sermons*, ed. Rudolf Landau and Wolfgang Kraus, trans. Roy A. Harrisville (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 56.
[53] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 14.
[54] Käsemann, "Justification and Salvation History," 73. This reflects Bonhoeffer's concern in his 1933 Christology lectures to prioritize Christ's person rather than—although never to the expense of—his works. See *DBWE* 12:308–310.
[55] Cf. *DBWE* 12:301–3.
[56] *DBWE* 10:461.
[57] Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers*, 191; cf. *LW* 26:170, 387.

alive from the dead" (6:13) because they draw upon a reality extrinsic to themselves, true of them because it is true first of all of Christ."[58] Bonhoeffer offers a similar reading in the notes from his lectures on theological anthropology at the University of Berlin: "If he wants to know himself, the person of the Reformation looks beyond himself."[59] Later in the lectures Bonhoeffer draws on this historical observation in order to offer his own systematic theological assessment of human ontology: "One's own being, which encompasses the creatureliness and ontological structure, is a being *from* God…. Because he has his being from God, the human being understands himself not through himself but through God."[60]

Chester's assessment relates primarily to the redeemed state of humanity since his intent is to evaluate the soteriological implications of alien righteousness and participation in Christ. Bonhoeffer, while in harmony with Chester's soteriological insights, goes farther. He takes the the extrinsic existence of humanity to be a universal anthropological principle. This is because Bonhoeffer assumes that the christological dynamics of soteriology also point to basic and important anthropological realities. Eastman, without referring to Bonhoeffer, affirms his theological intuition on this front while discussing Paul's multivalent use of *sōma*. She notes that it can be used to name a "suprahuman power," a physical body, or a corporate body. This "suggests that embodied human existence is always embedded in, and qualified by, supracorporeal forces, whether those be merely human social realities or cosmic powers."[61] In other words, insofar as relationality precedes individuality, human identity is grounded and shaped by extrinsic forces. Eastman dialogues with a variety of philosophical and psychological perspectives in order to support this claim. However, her primary criteria for making such an assertion is theological. While innumerable external, and often conflicting, forces determine one's relational matrix, Paul ultimately consolidates them in a way consistent with the alternatives of being in Adam or being in Christ discussed above.[62] In other words, human existence is extrinsically grounded and determined in terms of lordship—either Christ is Lord or sin reigns through Adam. Anthropology, then, is fundamentally shaped by "who is really and actually our lord."[63]

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[58] Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 501.
[59] *DBWE* 12:217.
[60] *DBWE* 12:219.
[61] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 91.
[62] Cf. Ziegler, *Militant Grace*, 58.
[63] Käsemann, "Justification and Freedom," 58.

V. Pauline Insights and Three Supplementary Critiques

a. The Historical Dialectic

To this point, we have seen that insofar as Bonhoeffer's justification-based anthropology is christologically focused, relationally grounded, and extrinsically sourced it is compatible with some prominent, recent readings of Paul. Now, we shall turn to the threefold, historical-dialectic of creation, sin, and redemption that narrates and structures the being of humanity *coram Deo*. Here, however, we shall take a different tack because even as some recent and influential Pauline scholarship serves to affirm this dimension of Bonhoeffer's anthropology, it also critiques and sharpens him by tying justification to Paul's concern for the body and embodiment. As such, this subsection will serve as a transition between the former and current section by beginning to consider the ways in which Bonhoeffer underdeveloped justification's implications for what it means to be human.

That Bonhoeffer's account can be sharpened in this regard is not to suggest that his early theology neglects or disparages concerns pertaining to the body and embodiment. To the contrary, Bonhoeffer includes a fairly detailed theological defense of the body in *Creation and Fall*.[64] In his theological exegesis of Genesis 2:7, he highlights the connection between the body and the earth from which it is taken, going so far as to paraphrase Sirach 40:1 in order to suggest that the earth is the body's mother.[65] Equally as important is the fact that humanity is formed from the earth before the ground is cursed. The body, then, is not simply good, it is also a necessary pre-requisite for the system of relationships which define human being. "For in their bodily nature human beings are related to the earth and to other bodies; they are there for others and are dependent on others. In their bodily existence human beings find their brothers and sisters and find the earth."[66] Furthermore, it is in bodily existence that humans are free in and for relationship with God.[67] Here, Bonhoeffer makes a distinction between other creatures and humanity, noting that while everything is created by God's word, only humanity is imbued with and created by his spirit. The spirit is not only that which animates and inhabits human being, but it "is what constitutes its essential being."[68] Through the bearing of God's spirit, the human body glorifies God. This creational reality is, then,

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[64] That there is continuity in Bonhoeffer's defense of the body's significance throughout his theology can be seen in his earlier thought in *Sanctorum Communio* (*DBWE* 1:285–87) and his essay, "The Essence of Christianity" (10:355–56), as well as in his later work in *Ethics* (6:185–96).
[65] *DBWE* 3:76.
[66] *DBWE* 3:79.
[67] *DBWE* 3:78.
[68] *DBWE* 3:79.

what grounds human worth and God's reconciling work in Christ.[69] It is "why where the original body in its created being has been destroyed, God enters it anew in Jesus Christ…. Because Adam is created as body, Adam is also redeemed as body [and God comes to Adam as body], in Christ and in the sacrament."[70]

Thus, Bonhoeffer's concern for the body demonstrates his awareness that embodiment is essential for relationality. The relational matrix that it sets human beings in is not merely interpersonal, but is also cosmic in scope, thereby setting humanity in relationship to both God and the earth. Furthermore, Bonhoeffer identifies the body, in its pre-fall state, as inhabited by an extrinsic power, namely the spirit of God. There is, then, a high degree of consonance between Bonhoeffer's theological account of bodily life and that ascribed to Paul by recent New Testament scholarship. As we move forward this consonance will become clear even as we consider how such scholarship helpfully supplements Bonhoeffer's thought by grounding the historical dialectic in a more theologically substantive way—namely, by identifying the body as its axis.

James Dunn, in his seminal work, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, offers a definition of Paul's theology which sounds a lot like Luther's definition of theology.

> Paul's theology is relational. That is to say, he was not concerned with God in himself or humankind in itself…. As the opening of his exposition of the gospel in Rom. 1.16ff. clearly shows, his concern was rather with humankind in relation to God, with men and women in their relationships with each other, and subsequently with Christ as God's response to the human plight.[71]

He goes on to suggest that this relational and soteriological context is essential to understanding Paul's anthropology. According to Dunn, the fact that humans are embedded in these relational matrices presupposes the existence of a particular body, or, in Paul's terms, the *sōma*. *Sōma*, however, denotes more than a physical body, and can be conceptually construed in reference to embodiment. By understanding Paul's use of *sōma* in terms of embodiment, it becomes clear that "*sōma* is a relational concept."[72] The body, then, is the means by which the human being is shaped by and, in turn, shapes the world. However, *sōma* also clearly has corporate connotations for Paul; the most obvious evidence being his description of the church as the body of Christ.[73] *Sōma* and its implied social relations can be

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[69] Cf. Brian Brock, "On Becoming Creatures: Being Called to Presence in a Distracted World," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 18, no. 4 (2016): 450.
[70] *DBWE* 3:79.
[71] Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 53.
[72] Dunn, 56.
[73] Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 6:15; 12:12, 27; Eph 4:12; 5:23; Col 1:24.

inflected in three different ways when Paul talks about it. First, he speaks of the body as the means by which "the person participates in creation and functions as part of creation."[74] This is not to say that Paul posits some sort of ideal, knowable, pre-adamic body. Indeed, his references to *sōma* frequently involve acknowledgment of the body's frailty and corruptibility. Yet, even as the body is corrupted by sin and death, it remains the case that embodiment is an anthropological reality that God intended in the beginning. This is ultimately affirmed in the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:35–49). Dunn suggests that "God's act in raising from the dead, the climax of his salvation, is of a piece with his act in creating: 'he who gives life to the dead' is 'he who calls things that have no existence into existence' (Rom. 4.17)."[75] For Dunn, this points to an "integration of creation and salvation (Col. 1.15-20; v. 20 — 'all things' reconciled to God)."[76] We have already mentioned the second and third way in which *sōma* is inflected for Paul—namely, in relation to its corruption and weakness on account of sin (e.g. 1 Cor 15:42–44) and in relation to the spiritual, incorruptible body promised in the resurrection (e.g. 1 Cor 15:50). Thus, it would seem that, for Paul, the *sōma* is something of an anthropological constant. Embodiment as a good, creational reality is not negated by sin but rather is attested to and affirmed in Paul's emphasis on the resurrection from the dead.[77]

So, Dunn affirms *sōma* as an anthropological constant in creation, sin, and redemption, for Paul, even though it is inflected differently in relation to each. He also notes its importance for grounding the embedded and relational nature of humanity. However, while he is careful to stress the particularity of the body and the specific environment in which it is set, he only obliquely touches on the way that embodiment embeds humanity within a cosmic history.[78] As such, he fails to stress the fact that, insofar as *sōma* is both an individual and a corporate reality, humans are set in relation to both their particular environment and the wider cosmic history of God's dealings with humanity and the world. In other words, because individual bodies participate in and are shaped by corporate bodies they not only have their own discrete histories, but also share in the histories of the corporate bodies of which they are a part.

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[74] Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 61.
[75] Dunn, 40; cf. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 461. See also 2 Maccabees 7:28 for one of the oldest refences to *creatio ex nihilo*. My thanks to Alan Torrance for drawing my attention to this passage.
[76] Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 40.
[77] See Barclay, "Under Grace," 68.
[78] Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 56. Dunn certainly touches on the importance of this cosmic history elsewhere in relation to Paul's theology. However, he neglects it as a central, shaping feature of Paul's anthropology.

N.T. Wright, although ambivalent about relational understandings of soteriology and anthropology, is helpful in drawing out this cosmic, contextualizing scope.[79] Like Dunn, Wright suggests that *sōma* "*denotes* the entire human being and *connotes* the public, visible and tangible physical presence in, and in relation to, the world."[80] He also stresses that the body is corrupted unto death, not because of inherent deficiencies, but on account of its subjection to sin.[81] However, he moves beyond Dunn in his treatment of Paul's anthropology when he suggests that "the normal 'sin/salvation' scheme usually fails to spot the connection with the larger cosmic plot."[82] To make humanity the focus in this way obscures God's wider, cosmic purpose "that through *humankind* (Adam and Eve), God would reflect his image and glory into the *world*."[83] Rather, than focusing on the sin and salvation of individuals in their specific environments and histories, Wright wants to speak of a cosmic history in which God in Christ rescues humanity for the purpose of his glory.[84] As such, individual salvation is a consequence of what happens on a cosmic and corporate level. Put another way, Christ's justification of the individual cannot be separated from his justification of humanity and the cosmos.

Here, then, we are very close to Käsemann's assertion, noted earlier, that anthropology is a projection of cosmology. Anthropology is shaped by the cosmic history of God's creation, preservation, and redemption of the world in Christ.[85] To an even greater degree than Dunn and Wright, Käsemann seizes upon *sōma*—which he discusses using the language of corporeality—as a basic pre-supposition of Paul's anthropology and soteriology.[86] Indeed, he asserts: "The coherence of Pauline soteriology is destroyed once we modify in the slightest degree the fact that for Paul all God's ways with his creation begin

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[79] N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 490–94, 928.
[80] Wright, 491.
[81] Wright, however, does not think of subjection to sin in terms of lordship, as does the AIP. Rather, he takes sin to be "a human propensity and action" rather than an external force or power. See Wright, 491–92.
[82] Wright, 494.
[83] Wright, 487.
[84] Here, Wright is intent to focus on the story of Israel as the locus of the rescue mission, rather than the person of Christ. We must and should affirm his desire to emphasize the import of Israel's story. However, it seems that he inverts the order of priority here. In other words, rather than being an instantiation of Israel's story, Israel is an instantiation of Christ's story, which begins with creation (cf. Col 1:15–20), is affirmed in the face of sin by the initial promise (Gen 3:15), climaxes in the incarnation (Col 1:20), and is consummated in the eschaton (1 Cor 15:20–28).
[85] See Käsemann, "On Paul's Anthropology," 12.
[86] As an enduring theme in his theology, see his doctoral thesis, published in 1933 (*Leib und Leib Christi: Eine Untersuchung zur paulinischen Begrifflichkeit* [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1933]), and his 1985 lecture, "Corporeality in Paul," in *On Being a Disciple of the Crucified Nazarene: Unpublished Lectures and Sermons*, ed. Rudolf Landau and Wolfgang Kraus, trans. Roy A. Harrisville (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 38–51.

and end in corporeality."[87] Soteriology is tied to anthropology via embodiment because Paul "always assigns to the body the reality of creatureliness, the reality of the fall, of redemption, of the resurrection from the dead, with all of which the appropriate functions are associated."[88] Corporeality, then, tethers humanity to their particular environment, but it *also* subjects them to the cosmic history and soteriological realities which narrate God's relationship with humanity and the world. We might say, then, that how a person relates to her particular environment is dependent on corporeality, and the nature of corporeality is determined by who a person's lord is. Käsemann sums this up in the following way: "[T]here is no such thing as man without his particular and respective world. But world means more than the mere sphere of living in, let us say, co-humanity. The world is always a sphere of sovereignty whether under the insignia of creation, the insignia of sin, or the insignia of the redemption which can be experienced today as that which is still to come."[89] Although Käsemann does not use this terminology, we might think here, again, primarily in terms of two collective persons—namely, being-in-Adam or being-in-Christ. However, the collective person does not consolidate the body under any one insignia—either creation, sin, or redemption.

How then does Paul suggest we understand the manner in which the body is at one and the same time created, sinful, and reconciled? Barclay, by providing an alternative rendering of Luther's *simul* in relation to Rom 7:7–25, is helpful here. Like Werner Kümmel and many others following him, Barclay asserts that the *simul iustus et peccator* cannot be exegeticaly sourced from this passage because Paul is speaking of fleshly, pre-Christian life.[90] However, there is clearly a dynamic of simultaneity at play in Paul's "I, but not-I" language. As such, Barclay suggests an alternative: "The believer is here described as both mortal and eternally alive, *simul mortuus et vivens*."[91] Insofar as the body is mortal it exists unto death, but insofar as it is alive, it is alive unto Christ and the new creation. As such, the body can indeed be simultaneously sinful and reconciled. But where, then, is the created goodness of the body in this formula? Although it is not explicit, it is strongly implied in the fact that the body which is subject to sin and death is also the body which is reconciled. The very fact that,

[87] Käsemann, "On Paul's Anthropology," 18.
[88] Käsemann, 19; cf. Käsemann, "Justification and Freedom," 57.
[89] Käsemann, "On Paul's Anthropology," 28.
[90] Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 501–2. For Luther's strident defense of Paul's Christian life as the provenance of this passage, see *LW* 25:338–43. This is not to suggest that there is no exegetical basis for the *simul*, but simply to argue against Rom 7:7–25 as that ground.
[91] Barclay, 502.

despite the dishonor and corruption caused by sin, the body will be resurrected is a recapitulation and re-affirmation of its created goodness.

This gives rise to a troubling question: has the body become the anthropological source of continuity and unity, insofar as it simultaneously sets the human being in relation to creation, sin, and reconciliation? Surely this would be problematic, since Bonhoeffer insists that the unity of the historical dialectic is sourced extrinsically in Christ alone, and the continuity of human being is grounded in Christ's body, the church.[92] However, this is to suppose that there is a distinction between the body and spirit. Insofar as Paul, when using *sōma* to refer to human beings, intends the whole person, both body and spirit are fragmented when sin enters the world. In the body of sin the created goodness of the body and its corruption are at odds. Similarly, in the believer, the frailty of the body persists even as the resurrection is promised as God's definitive word concerning humanity.[93] As such, the whole person, including the body, is subject to the historical dialectic which structures one's relationship to God. Thus, we can conclude, along with Käsemann: "It is only God who gives continuity, the God who, as creator, does not abandon his creatures, not even after the fall and far less under the token of promise and grace. In the whole of history, continuity only results from the divine faithfulness; and hence it manifests itself in miracle."[94]

How, then, does all of this comport with and sharpen Bonhoeffer's understanding of the historical dialectic within the framework of his justification-based anthropology? It would appear that Bonhoeffer is simply following Paul in stressing the created goodness of the body, its central role in grounding human relationality at an interpersonal, corporate, and cosmic level, and its subjection to external powers. However, Bonhoeffer never grounds his "real, historical dialectic" of creation, sin, and reconciliation in that which is most obviously real and historical about humanity—namely, the body. When embodiment is taken into account, the relationship between soteriology and anthropology comes into sharper focus because the body is the anthropological reality onto which Paul maps his soteriology. Human beings are not only created, they are created, embodied, and embedded. Humans are not only sinful, their bodies are frail, corrupted, marked by dishonor, and destined for death.

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[92] *DBWE* 10:405; 2:114. So too, Käsemann, "On Paul's Anthropology," 27. See our discussion of this in chapter two.

[93] For Bonhoeffer's thoughts on the spiritual nature of the resurrected body, see *DBWE* 1:286.

[94] Käsemann, "On Paul's Anthropology," 9. For more on the issue of continuity and discontinuity in Paul's life and the life of the Christian, see Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 102, 155–60; *Recovering Paul's Mother Tongue: Language and Theology in Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 33–43, 184–89; John M. G. Barclay, "Paul's Story: Theology as Testimony," in *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Bruce W. Longenecker (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 142–44.

Believers are not only reconciled with God, they participate in Christ's resurrected body and are sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the redemption of their own bodies. In other words, the justificatory relationship between God and humanity which the historical dialectic narrates presupposes the anthropological centrality of the body. Insofar as justification has everything to do with human standing *coram Deo*, it has everything to do with the body, and as such, has necessarily social implications, as we shall see in the next two chapters.

b. Justification as Reconciliation

By taking up the NPP's central insight into the nature of justification for Paul, we must also address what has long been acknowledged as a problematic aspect of Bonhoeffer's defense of the Jews. That is, the fact that even as a defense, it was couched in anti-semitic theological conceptualities that stem directly from Luther's doctrine of justification. This being the case, it is clear that Bonhoeffer assumed, along with Luther, that Paul was seeking to correct a faulty soteriology with his doctrine of justification. Thus, we must attend to how Bonhoeffer's understanding of justification's import for human existence should be developed in light of the NPP's insights on this front. To that end, we shall first articulate what those insights are before briefly outlining the central argument of "The Church and the Jewish Question." After doing so, the nature and appropriateness of the NPP's corrective for Bonhoeffer will become clear.

Although we are focused here on one specific positive contribution of the NPP, it is necessary to keep in mind that important critiques have been leveled against it on various fronts.[95] We have already touched on some of these in our above defense of Luther. To paint with a broad brush, the NPP seems to have, at times, given Paul less credit than he deserves as a theologian.[96] They have identified the immediate, historical concern behind Paul's articulation of justification as the need to reconcile and unite Jews and Gentiles within the one body of Christ. This is an important contribution, and indeed, the focus of our section here. However, by suggesting that this is the central point of justification for Paul they too quickly sideline Paul's theological acumen and underestimate the way in which justification structures the grammar of Paul's gospel. The reason Paul brings justification to bear on the issue of ecclesial division is because he believes that the truth of God's revelation in Jesus

[95] See Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God*, 89–104.

[96] See Stendahl's sharp separation of justification from its wider soteriological framework for a classic example of this ("Paul Among Jews and Gentiles," 26). In this separation, Stendahl confuses the occasion for the unfolding and articulation of justification with the doctrine itself.

Christ addresses this pressing issue. In other words, justification tells us something fundamental about the Gospel, and insofar as the Gospel is eschatological good news it dictates the structure and nature of the church. As such, Michael Bird is right when he suggests that "[t]he NPP correctly identifies the problem of Jewish-Gentile relationships as the matrix for the development of Paul's doctrine of justification by faith…. Paul's gospel and its theological expression in justification were impregnated in his Damascus road experience but were unpacked in the various disputes that he encountered in the course of his apostleship."[97] The historical situation of the church, then, served as the context in which Paul unfolded and articulated the Gospel he had been commissioned to preach in his transformative encounter with the risen Christ. Thus, the unity of Jews and Gentiles in the body of Christ is what justification means, but it is not *all* that it means. This is because it is the rendering concrete of a theological truth that, for Paul, has cosmic implications.[98]

Yet, the fact that Paul's articulation of justification is hammered out in the concrete context of the early church does indeed have important implications for how the doctrine is interpreted. On this point especially, Wright is quite correct to claim the spirit of the Reformation: "I believe that Luther, Calvin, and many of the others would tell us to read Scripture afresh, with all the tools available to us—which is, after all, what they did—and to treat their own doctrinal conclusions as important but not as important as Scripture itself."[99] Here, NPP voices are crucial for highlighting not only the Jewish provenance of Paul's thought, but also the fact that justification, for Paul, has nothing to do with an antithesis between Jews and Gentiles, and everything to do with their reconciliation.

Through careful readings of the texts and context of Second Temple Judaism the NPP has drawn attention to the fact that grace played a prominent role in Jewish understandings of their relation to God. Along with his pioneering role in this endeavor, Sanders coined the phrase "covenantal nomism," which "is the view that one's place in God's plan is established on the basis of the covenant and that the covenant requires as the proper response of man his obedience to its commandments, while providing means of atonement

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[97] Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God*, 107–8.

[98] For a recent study that is sensitive to the ecological import of the cosmic implications of the doctrine of justification, see Crystal L. Hall, "From Cosmos to New Creation: An Ecological Rereading of Justification by Faith in Galatians 6:14-15" (PhD Dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, 2017).

[99] N. T. Wright, "New Perspectives on Paul," in *Justification in Perspective: Historical Developments and Contemporary Challenges*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids/Edinburgh: Baker Academic/Rutherford House, 2006), 244.

for transgression."[100] Thus, by setting law adherence within the wider context of God's gracious covenant with Israel, Sanders provides a vision for Judaism's relationship to the law that hardly comports with its caricature as a religion of works.

What this means is that Paul's polemical use of justification is not directed against Judaism as a religion of works. Rather, it is directed against distortions of Judaism that stress works of the law—especially those that function as boundary markers—as a means of entering into the people of God. Justification's polemical edge is against any qualification that undercuts total dependence on divine grace as the means by which the relationship between God and humanity is maintained.[101] Insofar as the basic insight "that Israel's standing before God was due entirely to the initiative of divine grace" is fundamental to Second Temple Judaism, Paul's doctrine of justification cannot be read as a rebuttal of Judaism as such.[102] Indeed, Paul's exposition of justification seems to be directed toward Judaism in a proclamatory and exhortative manner—calling those who insist on the boundary drawing nature of works of the law back to a dependence on the primacy of God's covenantal grace.

What then is Paul's polemic against?[103] The answer is implied when Wright asserts that "the point of justification on the basis of Messiah-faith rather than on works of the law is now clear: this justification, precisely by 'justifying the ungodly', brings into a single Messiah-family a great company from every nation."[104] In other words, Paul's polemic is against anyone who seeks to relativize the decisive nature of Christ's faithfulness by imposing a system of conditional worth that deals in evaluative criteria apart from Christ for identifying who is able to enter the covenant family of God. Thus, the NPP helps to reframe Paul's doctrine of justification away from a juxtaposition of Jewish legalism and Christian grace, focusing instead on the opposition between worldly systems of conditional worth and the all sufficient, worth-creating righteousness of Christ.

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[100] Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 75. Many have questioned the comprehensive scope that Sanders attributes to covenantal nomism as a descriptor of Second Temple Judaism (see e.g. Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God*, 93–94). However, insofar as it highlights the presence of grace under the rubric of the covenant it is useful for demystifying characterizations of Judaism as legalistic.

[101] Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 379.

[102] Dunn, 345.

[103] One might also ask "who?" the polemic is against, as well. See e.g. J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 117–26; Campbell, *The Deliverance of God*, 519–29; Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 339–40. However, this historical question falls beyond our present scope.

[104] Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 960.

What, then, of Bonhoeffer? Popular depictions of his relationship to the Jews are overwhelmingly positive, despite the fact that Yad Vashem continues to deny him the status of a "righteous gentile."[105] As part of the evidence for withholding this status from Bonhoeffer, Yad Vashem has pointed directly to his rhetoric in "The Church and the Jewish Question."[106] The problem is not malicious anti-semitism on Bonhoeffer's part, but rather the fact that his theological convictions disposed him toward negative caricatures of the Jews. These caricatures emerged even as he penned his most explicit defense of the Jews and thus create a degree of perplexing dissonance within the defense. Some might choose to ignore the subtle strain of anti-Judaism in "The Church and the Jewish Question," preferring to valorize his defense of the Jews.[107] However, with the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that negative caricatures of Judaism, arising from theological rhetoric, have played no small role in persecution of the Jews historically. While not maliciously anti-semitic in and of themselves, they are easily coopted into the service of anti-semitic ideology. If, then, the root of Bonhoeffer's negative caricatures of the Jews is theological, it must be excavated in any critical retrieval of his theology.

As we have noted, Bonhoeffer inherited much of his theological framework—particularly his understanding of justification by faith—from Luther. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that, even in his defense of the Jews, negative caricatures of Judaism play a role.[108] In order to focus on the tension between his defense of the Jews and his caricature of Judaism, we shall bypass the first half of "The Church in the Jewish Question" and its focus on the complex interplay between church and state.[109] Bonhoeffer's sympathetic yet

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[105] Haynes, *The Battle for Bonhoeffer*, 16–17. While Bonhoeffer did participate in Operation-7—a plan to smuggle 14 German Jews over the border to Switzerland—Yad Vashem's (the governing body over the Righteous Among the Nations program) stance is that there is no substantial connection between his arrest and his stance on the Jewish question. For more on Operation-7, see Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, ed. Victoria Barnett, Rev. Ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 747–49.

[106] Haynes, *The Battle for Bonhoeffer*, 79.

[107] As is, perplexingly, the case with Kahl's essay in which she skips over "The Church and the Jewish Question" entirely in order to focus on "The Church and the Aryan Paragraph." Kahl, "Justification, Ethics, and the 'Other,'" 72–77. It must also be noted, that Bonhoeffer's defense of the Jews in this essay it primarily focused on baptized Jews, rather than the Jewish people as a whole.

[108] It is common among Luther historians to believe that his diatribes against the Jews were theologically informed and rooted. At least some, locate this theological root more specifically in his doctrine of justification. See Christopher J. Probst, *Demonizing the Jews: Luther and the Protestant Church in Nazi Germany* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 51–53.

[109] It is here that we encounter Bonhoeffer's three levels of escalating action on the part of the church toward an increasingly delinquent state. The third level, which Bonhoeffer did not think the church in Germany had yet arrived at, contains Bonhoeffer's famous suggestion that the church's responsibility "is not just to bind up the wounds of the victims beneath the wheel but to seize the wheel itself" (*DBWE* 12:365–66).

problematic assessment of the Jewish situation, then, comes in two forms.[110] The first finds Bonhoeffer drawing on Paul's eschatological hope for Israel in Romans 11. However, in doing so, he suggests that until the Jews are converted to Christianity they will continue to suffer. "The church of Christ has never lost sight of the thought that the "chosen people," which hung the Redeemer of the world on the cross, must endure the curse of its action in long-drawn-out suffering."[111] He softens the force of this formulation by suggesting that the church, insofar as it is unfaithful to Christ, shares in this curse. Yet, the fact remains that, for Bonhoeffer, the Jews are the paradigm of an "outcast people." Although he does not cite the passage here, Bonhoeffer likely has Galatians 3:10 in the back of his mind: " For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law.'" For Bonhoeffer, the Jews are those who rely on works of the law rather on Christ, who redeems from the curse by becoming a curse (Gal 3:13).

The second aspect of Bonhoeffer's problematic assessment of the Jewish question maps the distinction between works and faith, law and grace onto the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. He writes: "It is God's law that constitutes the 'people' Israel; thus one can *become* a Jew by accepting the law."[112] Again, he softens the subtextual polemic by distinguishing between the Jewish race and the Jewish religion. This allows him to divorce embodiment from theology in his analysis of the problem. In other words, it allows him to identify the problem within the church *not* as the infiltration of Jewish people, but rather as the subversive presence of Jewish religious ideals—namely, commitment to the idea that belonging to the people of God is "*determined* by … observance of the divine law."[113] Thus, he identifies two types of Christians: Jewish Christians and gentile Christians. The former wield the law in order to enforce boundaries, while the latter take faith in the grace of Christ as the only pre-requisite for church membership. In a clever rhetorical move, then, Bonhoeffer identifies the *Deutsche Christen* with Jewish Christians and baptized, German Jews with gentile Christians because the *Deutsche Christen* had set up a law which excluded baptized Jews on the basis of race. "To exclude persons who are racially Jewish from our ethnically German church would mean to make it into a church of the Jewish Christian type. Such

[110] See also Bonhoeffer's earlier criticisms of Judaism for its belief in a nationalist God in his essay "The Tragedy of the Prophetic and Its Lasting Meaning" (*DBWE* 10:335, 341).
[111] *DBWE* 12:367.
[112] *DBWE* 12:368.
[113] *DBWE* 12:368.

exclusion is therefore not possible in the church."[114] In the end, Bonhoeffer seeks to exonerate and defend baptized Jews in a way that continues to vilify Judaism as a religion. His noble aspirations aside, Bonhoeffer presents a very limited defense that does little for the majority of Jews who would find the separation of their race from their religion unthinkable.

Michael DeJonge has recently argued that Bonhoeffer's defense of the Jews and his resistance to the Nazis were not primarily motivated by Nazi mistreatment of the Jews, but by his devotion to the Lutheran notion of the two kingdoms and the doctrine of justification.[115] If this latter point is true, then we can complexify the presence of justification in "The Church and the Jewish Question" further by suggesting that even as it is marked by a problematic inheritance from Luther, it also points and begins to push toward a proper articulation of the doctrine. In other words, Bonhoeffer clearly maintains all the marks of a Lutheran who construes justification as a grace-based polemic against a faulty soteriology of works, of which Judaism is paradigmatic. At the same time, however, Bonhoeffer also advocates for understanding justification in a way that resonates with the heart of NPP concerns—namely, as the overcoming of ethnic boundaries through the unifying and faithful righteousness of Christ. Therefore, we can conclude that the NPP's insights regarding Paul's Second Temple context and covenantal framing of Judaism is essential for identifying problematic aspects of Bonhoeffer's understanding of justification. But we can also conclude—without minimizing Bonhoeffer's missteps with regard to Judaism—that he anticipated the NPP and overcame a deficiency of his Lutheran heritage in identifying the practical and ecclesial implications of the doctrine.[116] In chapters five and six we shall see how, in Bonhoeffer's later theology, the reconciliatory nature of justification is a central feature of discipleship and the church's mission in the world. However, before drawing this chapter to a close, we shall shift gears a bit and attend to feminist concerns regarding the centrality of passivity to Luther's and, consequently, Bonhoeffer's understanding of justification.

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[114] *DBWE* 12:369.
[115] Michael P. DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer on Resistance: The Word Against the Wheel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 100–108.
[116] See *DBWE* 1:204.

c. The Problem of Passivity

While the majority of this chapter has focused on reading Bonhoeffer in relation to contemporary Pauline studies, here we shall focus on feminist concerns regarding a perennial problem with the justification-based anthropology we have identified in and developed out of Bonhoeffer's thought—namely, the problem of passivity. However, this transition is not entirely out of place since, in order to evaluate and respond to critiques of the role of passivity in justification, we shall again make recourse to the New Testament scholarship that we have considered throughout. Feminist concerns with the role of passivity in justification are directly related to Bonhoeffer's emphasis on extrinsicality. This emphasis, in turn, is related to the pervasive reality of sin and the central importance of Christ's person and work for preserving and unifying humanity in the face of sin. The assumption, for Bonhoeffer, is that sin is a turning in on and an idolization of the self. So, whereas sin seeks to consolidate the self under its own power, God in Christ pulls the self out of itself, thereby affirming the extrinsicality of its being and placing it back in proper relation to Godself. Thus, insofar as sin is an active elevation of oneself over against God, passivity is a necessary correlate of Christ's justifying work. The human logos must surrender itself to the killing and resurrecting work of the counter Logos.[117]

Feminist theologians have, however, pushed back on this construal of sin. Anna Mercedes writes: "The doctrine of sin in traditional theology has been short-sighted, conveying a uniform human experience of sin based on the norms of patriarchal masculinity, and thus overlooking the ways in which many women and men sin through perpetual *diffusion* of self, rather than self-aggrandization."[118] The problem posed is: if self-diffusion is a prominent expression of the sin which justification remedies, then a self that is diffuse in its extrinsicality does not seem like good news. Marit Trelstad helpfully poses the question in another way: "But while the humility emphasized in a Lutheran theology of the cross may be a tonic for blind nationalism or proud individualism … how do the values of humility and passive suffering speak to the most vulnerable in our society?"[119]

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[117] *DBWE* 12:302.

[118] Anna Mercedes, "Who Are You? Christ and the Imperative of Subjectivity," in *Transformative Lutheran Theologies: Feminist, Womanist, and Mujerista Perspectives*, ed. Mary J. Streufert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 91. Susan Nelson Dunfee calls self-diffusion the "sin of hiding" and explicates its import for feminist theology in "The Sin of Hiding: A Feminist Critique of Reinhold Niebuhr's Account of the Sin of Pride," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 65, no. 3 (1982): 316–27.

[119] Marit Trelstad, "The Way of Salvation in Luther's Theology: A Feminist Evaluation," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 45, no. 3 (2006): 237; cf. Lisa E. Dahill, "Jesus for *You*: A Feminist Reading of Bonhoeffer's Christology," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 34, no. 4 (2007): 254.

At stake here are are two different, but related issues: one being the nature of sin, and the other the nature of sin's remedy. We shall address each in turn. What Mercedes is getting at is indeed a valid critique of Bonhoeffer's *cor curvum in se*-centered hamartiology.[120] Not only does it struggle to take into account instances where idolatry results in external investment and diffusion of the self, it also does not account for the fact that the pervasiveness of sin manifests itself both in culpability and in victimization.[121] Here, the AIP's understanding of sin as a power is especially helpful. According to the AIP, sin is a cosmic, anti-God power that works in and through the relationships which connect individuals to external realities, such as other individuals, groups of people, or institutions. "Bodily existence in this realm of 'flesh' is not only vulnerable to the power of sin; it is sin's handle on the person in such a way that the person is constituted inextricably in relationship to sin."[122] Sin as a power within the world is lord over the body of sin. As such, sin is both something external to human being—reigning over it—and also internal—constituting the person. Thinking of sin in this way allows us to take into account all three aspects of sin just mentioned. For those who exist in a relational matrix which lends to pride and elevation of the self, sin constitutes their being in a way that makes the *cor curvum in se* an apt description. However, for those who exist in a relational matrix that lends to self-abnegation, deprecation, and evacuation, sin constitutes their being in a way that makes self-diffusion a more appropriate description. Finally, sin as a cosmic power also helps us to understand how sin constitutes human beings through oppression and victimization.[123] As such, people are formed by sin both as perpetrators and as victims. We must have a way of understanding sin that allows us to speak in both ways, while also requiring that we distinguish between the two.[124] Sin as a cosmic power provides that.

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[120] For a recent articulation and affirmation of this as the basic form of Bonhoeffer's hamartiology, see Tom Greggs, "Bearing Sin in the Church: The Ecclesial Hamartiology of Bonhoeffer," in *Christ, Church, and World: New Studies in Bonhoeffer's Theology and Ethics*, ed. Michael G. Mawson and Philip G. Ziegler (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 84–85. Mercedes deals with Bonhoeffer in the second part of her essay, using his 1933 Christology Lectures as a positive antidote to Luther's emphasis on pride ("Who Are You?," 92). However, she also acknowledges that Bonhoeffer had, for the most part, the same core understanding of sin as Luther.

[121] See Lisa E. Dahill, *Reading from the Underside of Selfhood: Bonhoeffer and Spiritual Formation* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 46–53. Dahill suggests that Bonhoeffer's theological understanding of sin and redemption was restricted by the frame of his own autobiography.

[122] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 90.

[123] See the way in which Eastman speaks of sin's "power to tyrannize humanity" in "Apocalypse and Incarnation: The Participatory Logic of Paul's Gospel," 175.

[124] Cf. Philip G. Ziegler, "'Bound Over to Satan's Tyranny': Sin and Satan in Contemporary Reformed Hamartiology," *Theology Today* 75, no. 1 (2018): 98–99.

When it comes to the nature of sin's remedy, Bonhoeffer follows Luther in connecting passivity to re-creation.[125] In other words, passivity simply denotes that the reconstitution of the believer is solely a divine work. He also speaks of redeemed humanity's relation to Christ as one of passive righteousness.[126] Passive righteousness is never the possession of the believer, but an alien reality that becomes true of the believer only extrinsically in relation to Christ. As such, passivity is an ongoing reality in the life of the believer. However, passivity ceases to be a problem in the way described above when we supplement Bonhoeffer's thinking on this point with a stronger understanding of participation in Christ than has previously been employed. When the accent is placed on participation it becomes clear that it is Christ's death and resurrection that are instrumental, not imitative passive suffering. In addition, union with the resurrected Christ means that while the basis of the newly constituted life is passive, its primary mark is one of activity. "God's grace does not exclude, deny, or displace believing agents; they are not reduced to passivity or pure receptivity. Rather, it generates and grounds an active, willed conformity to the Christ life, in which believers become, like Christ, truly human—that is, obedient agents ([Rom] 5:19)."[127] Furthermore, participation in and union with Christ allows for a multivalent understanding of reconciliation that corresponds to the multivalent understanding of sin outlined above. Being in Christ remedies the *cor curvum in se* because it sets the believer in relation to God rather than the self. However, being united with Christ also means that the self is reconstituted and related to itself in the proper way, and as a result is no longer diffuse. "It is the other-relation to God through "gift" and "call" that functions to constitute each person with a unique vocation, in differentiation from others."[128] Finally, in Christ, believers participate in one who has not only suffered under the power of sin on the cross, but also the one who is the first fruits of the resurrection, thereby guaranteeing resurrection bodies for those in Christ that will be free sin's debilitating imprint.[129] Thus, by identifying participation in Christ as central to the logic of justification, the passive ground of Christian

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[125] *DBWE* 2:116.
[126] *DBWE* 3:65.
[127] Barclay, "Under Grace," 76. See also John Barclay, "Grace and the Countercultural Reckoning of Worth: Community Constructions in Galatians 5–6," in *Galatians and Christian Theology: Justification, the Gospel, and Ethics in Paul's Letter*, ed. Mark W. Elliott et al. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 306–17.
[128] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 100; cf. Käsemann, "On Paul's Anthropology," 31; *DBWE* 12:281.
[129] Cf. J. Andrew Cowan, "The Legal Significance of Christ's Risen Life: Union with Christ and Justification in Galatians 2.17-20," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 40, no. 4 (2018): 464–65. Cowan's emphasis on participation in Christ's resurrection life is helpful here, even if we might aver from his focus on its legal aspect.

existence and its active nature are woven tightly together. We shall see in the next chapter the central role that participation comes to play in Bonhoeffer's theology of discipleship.

VI. Conclusion

Over the course of this chapter we have undertaken a defense of the plausibility of Bonhoeffer's justification-based anthropology on Pauline grounds. From those same grounds, we offered two critiques of Bonhoeffer, while also giving ear to a third critique arising from contemporary theological concerns. Negatively construed, these critiques were leveled at his failure to associate justification with the body, his implicit anti-semitism, and his underdeveloped understanding of participation in Christ. Positively construed, these critiques point to aspects of Paul's theology of justification which, though underdeveloped in Bonhoeffer's early theology, should play a role in an articulation of the doctrine's social implications—namely, the import of embodiment, the reconciliatory implications of justification, and participation in Christ. Rather than departing from Bonhoeffer at this point, in the next chapter we shall see that his rapidly changing historical context and his growing commitment to Scripture as theologically central caused him to turn to justification with fresh eyes. Instead of considering human being at the theoretical level of ontology, he turned to justification as a means to articulate the necessarily social orientation of Christian existence in terms of discipleship. In doing so, he drew on themes of embodiment, reconciliation, and participation; the very themes we have just suggested are under-developed in his early academic theology.

Chapter 5
Justification as Witness:
Embodied Participation in Christ's Ministry of Reconciliation

I. Introduction

In the first three chapters we identified some key ways in which the doctrine of justification shaped Bonhoeffer's understanding of what it means to be human in his early, academic theology. This culminated when we made explicit the social import of this way of evaluating human being by arguing that justification shaped his anthropology in a manner that prepared him to resist the racializing impulses of National Socialism. Then, in the previous chapter, we sought to evaluate the extent to which these ways of bringing justification to bear on anthropology are coherent with recent developments and deliverances in the realm of Pauline theology and exegesis. There we saw that, while Bonhoeffer was certainly well within the Pauline provenance on a number of fronts, he also left several key themes under- or ill-developed—namely, participation, embodiment, and reconciliation. In this chapter, we shall turn our sights to a later period in Bonhoeffer's life and theology—namely, the development of his theology of discipleship at Finkenwalde. Particularly, we shall see that, when seeking to mobilize the Confessing Church in its following after Christ, Bonhoeffer again turns to the doctrine of justification by faith. However, at this point he seizes on those previously neglected themes of participation, embodiment, and, to a lesser extent, reconciliation, making them central to his account of discipleship. This is not to say that Bonhoeffer fixes his problematic emphasis on passivity or his caricature of Jewish legalism described in the previous chapter. Indeed, we shall note these ongoing problems over the course of the chapter. Even so, it will become clear that when it came to articulating the social orientation entailed by justification, Bonhoeffer saw fertile ground in these themes.

The goal of this chapter, then, is to show that, insofar as both his early anthropology and his theology of discipleship are held together by and interpreted in light of the doctrine of justification, the latter moves us in the direction of realizing a holistic picture of the doctrine's social implications. Toward this goal, the chapter will unfold in four parts. First, we shall provide some historical and biographical context from the writings surrounding Bonhoeffer's work on *Discipleship* (*Nachfolge*). We shall see that it is not Bonhoeffer's focus on justification *as a doctrine* which yields his emphasis on participation, embodiment, and reconciliation in discipleship, but rather his focus on Scripture as witness to the living Christ.

The next two sections will look at the way participation and embodiment, respectively, inform his theology of discipleship. In a way that is consistent with Bonhoeffer's early theology, we shall see that Christology and ecclesiology are of central importance to his unfolding of these themes within the framework of discipleship. Finally, we shall conclude by considering reconciliation and the social aim of discipleship. Here, it will become evident that Bonhoeffer falls short of rendering the church's relation to the world in a way that yields a concrete vision for the relationship between discipleship and reconciliation in the social sphere. This, in turn, will point us forward to the final chapter, in which we shall turn to Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* as a necessary supplement to *Discipleship*. The resultant picture of the social implications of the doctrine of justification by faith will then be brought to bear on the challenge of white supremacy. In doing so, we shall see how justification can serve the church by way of critique, while also contributing to a constructive way forward.

II. Contextualizing *Discipleship* in the Finkenwalde Period

Within Bonhoeffer's wider body of work, *Discipleship* is generally thought of alongside *Life Together*, both because of their shared roots in the Finkenwalde period and because they are his two most popular books. *Discipleship* can also be linked backward to Bonhoeffer's earlier theology.[1] Indeed, an implicit argument of this study is that Bonhoeffer's early theology and his theology of discipleship are linked, at least in part, by a common concern for how justification shapes what it means to be human and live *coram Deo*. Furthermore, *Disicpleship* is often and justifiably linked to *Ethics*.[2] The themes of the former's final chapter, "The Image of Christ," are especially resonant with the latter's chapter manuscript entitled "Ethics as Formation."[3] In the next chapter, we shall attend to the importance of *Ethics* for rounding out the social implications of justification in Bonhoeffer's thought. Finally, Bonhoeffer's

[1] Joseph McGarry, "Bridging the Gap: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Early Theology and Its Influence on Discipleship," *Bonhoeffer Legacy: Australasian Journal of Bonhoeffer Studies* 2, no. 1 (2014): 13–31.

[2] On this connection, see e.g. Martin Kuske and Ilse Tödt, "Editor's Afterword to the German Edition," in *Discipleship*, ed. Geffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey, trans. Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 305–7; Jennifer M. McBride, *The Church for the World: A Theology of Public Witness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 87–118; Philip G. Ziegler, "'Completely Within God's Doing': Soteriology as Meta-Ethics in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer," in *Christ, Church, and World: New Studies in Bonhoeffer's Theology and Ethics*, ed. Michael Mawson and Philip G. Ziegler (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 11; Kirsten Busch Nielsen, "Community Turned Inside Out: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Concept of the Church and of Humanity Reconsidered," in *Being Human, Becoming Human: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Social Thought*, ed. Jens Zimmermann and Brian Gregor (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 207; Ernst Feil, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, trans. Martin Rumscheidt (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 82–86.

[3] Geffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey, "Editor's Introduction to the English Edition," in *Discipleship*, ed. Geffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey, trans. Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 20–21.

retrospective evaluation of *Discipleship* in *Letters and Papers from Prison* looms large over its scholarly reception. There, in a letter to Eberhard Bethge, penned the day after the failed assassination attempt on Hitler in which Bonhoeffer was involved, he writes: "I thought I myself could learn to have faith by trying to live something like a saintly life. I suppose I wrote *Discipleship* at the end of this path. Today I clearly see the dangers of that book, though I still stand by it."[4] Stephen Plant is surely correct when he warns: "Too much can be read into this passing comment (and indeed has been)."[5]

However, Plant is also surely correct when he suggests that Bonhoeffer had begun "to see considerable danger in speaking as if there was either a metaphorical or physical space that is 'Church' in relation to an entirely separate space that is 'world'."[6] If the church-community is "a sealed train passing through enemy territory," then there is no space for concrete action in and for the world as the body of Christ.[7] What Bonhoeffer came to see later was that his "turn toward the ultimate, for the sake of the penultimate" could not be the final word on discipleship, but had to involve a second step: a decisive turn back toward and into the penultimate for the sake of the ultimate.[8] The fact that a second step was needed post-Finkenwalde was hardly something that caught Bonhoeffer off-guard. When describing the purpose of the House of Brethren—a communal house for confessing-church pastors who had been educated at Bonhoeffer's preacher's seminary in Finkenwalde—in a 1935 letter to the Council of the Evangelical Church of the Old Prussian Union, Bonhoeffer writes: "The goal is not monastic isolation but rather the most intensive concentration for ministry to the world."[9] The first step, then, is formation for ministry, while the second step is the enactment of that ministry in and for the world. *Discipleship* clearly bears the marks of "intensive concentration for ministry" but is somewhat lite when it comes to concretely identifying how formation for discipleship connects to and serves Christ's mission in the world. Although Bethge, like Bonhoeffer, stands by *Discipleship*, he even-handedly admits that as the book gained popular traction its "dynamic ghetto began to resemble a ghetto that was cut off and had grown sterile. With familiarity, the costly otherness of grace once again grew 'cheap.'"[10]

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[4] *DBWE* 8:486.
[5] Stephen Plant, *Bonhoeffer* (London: Continuum, 2004), 105.
[6] Plant, 104–5.
[7] *DBWE* 4:260.
[8] Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, ed. Victoria Barnett, Rev. Ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 459.
[9] *DBWE* 14:96.
[10] Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 460.

Thus, we might say, with regard to our specific concern for the Pauline themes of participation, embodiment, and reconciliation, that *Discipleship* takes up the first two with gusto, employing them in order to describe the formation of disciples within the church. A concrete picture for what reconciliation with Christ in the church means for bearing witness to Christ in the world, however, never fully emerges. Plant illustrates the disconnect well when describing Bonhoeffer's powerful rhetoric in *Discipleship*: "This siren-like quality is the book's strength and its weakness. In the flow of the book's language and approach one feels there can be no other way of understanding Christian faith; but re-enter a context in which faith is foreign and it can be hard to make the book connect."[11] In the next chapter, we shall see how Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* helps to make this connection, rendering reconciliation concrete and enabling us to see the full scope of the social implications of justification in Bonhoeffer's thought.

Christiane Tietz points to the shaping influence of Bonhoeffer's context on the content of *Discipleship* when she writes that it "views the Christians of that era at a fork in the road."[12] Even the title, suggests Ferdinand Schlingensiepen, promises that within its pages Bonhoeffer offers a pointed alternative to the Nazi way of life. According to Schlingensiepen, it is likely that Bonhoeffer, in choosing *Nachfolge* as the title for his book, was consciously reworking the refrain of a Nazi war song: "'Führer, command, we'll follow you [*wir folgen dir*]'." As such, "he was not only using a New Testament concept, but also contrasting it expressly to a term widely used by the Nazis."[13] This context helps to explain the sharpness of Bonhoeffer's rhetoric. However, it also offers an implicit warning along the lines of the above suggestion—namely, that retrieval of Bonhoeffer's theology of discipleship must guard against uncritical acceptance of some of the dichotomies he presents therein.

What, then, of how *Discipleship* is contextualized within Bonhoeffer's biography? The intervening years between the informal end of his academic career in 1933 and the beginning of his post as the director of a preacher's seminary for the Confessing Church at Finkenwalde were a formative time for him.[14] Specifically, they saw the development and maturation of a fresh commitment to Scripture, the beginning of which we cannot pinpoint exactly, but likely

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[11] Plant, *Bonhoeffer*, 98.

[12] Christiane Tietz, *Theologian of Resistance: The Life and Thought of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, trans. Victoria Barnett (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 63.

[13] Ferdinand Schlingensiepen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 1906–1945: Martyr, Thinker, Man of Resistance*, trans. Isabel Best (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 206.

[14] For the formal end of Bonhoeffer's lectureship at the University of Berlin, see the August–September 1936 letters concerning his termination in *DBWE* 14:231, 246–47, 251. Regarding the key role that Bonhoeffer's work at Finkenwalde played in shaping the manuscript of *Discipleship*, see, Bethge *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 451.

occurred sometime between 1931 and 1932.[15] In a 1936 letter to his friend, Elizabeth Zinn, Bonhoeffer describes this change:

> For the first time, I came to the Bible. That, too, is an awful thing to say. I had often preached, I had seen a great deal of the church, had spoken and written about it—and yet I was not yet a Christian but rather in an utterly wild and uncontrolled fashion my own master. I do know that at the time I turned the cause of Jesus Christ into an advantage for myself, for my crazy vanity. I pray to God that will never happen again. Nor had I ever prayed, or had done so only very rarely. Despite this isolation, I was quite happy with myself. The Bible, especially the Sermon on the Mount, freed me from all this. Since then everything changed. I have felt this plainly and so have other people around me. That 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 it must go. Then came the crisis of 1933. This strengthened me in it.[16]

The pivotal role that the Sermon on the Mount played for Bonhoeffer is self-evident given that he devotes the first half of *Discipleship* to its exposition. According to Bethge, "[t]he book clearly owes its conclusive style and momentum to his preoccupation with the Sermon on the Mount that had begun long before 1935. Bonhoeffer's reconsideration and reexamination of its implications with respect to the Pauline writings was a new step."[17] The fact that justification and Pauline themes continued to ground and orient his theology in this period is evident in another 1936 letter, this time to Karl Barth. In the letter, he speaks of his desire to hammer out his thoughts in relation to Scripture before consulting Barth. At the same time, he confesses that much of his thinking between his sojourn in London and 1936 involved an "ongoing, silent dispute" with Barth in relation to "questions concerning the interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount and the Pauline doctrine of justification and sanctification."[18] A large part of Bonhoeffer's wrestling with the doctrines of justification and sanctification was due to the ecclesial malaise he saw among German Christians, who were ostensibly devoted to the primacy of the former.[19] Thus, although the Sermon on the Mount is materially and exegetically essential to Bonhoeffer's theology of discipleship, Geffrey Kelly and John Godsey, in their editorial introduction to the critical, English edition

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[15] Bethge (*Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 206) refrains from identifying a precise occasion. For a later date, during his time lecturing at the University of Berlin, see Clifford J. Green, *Bonhoeffer: A Theology of Sociality*, Rev. Ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 140. For an earlier date, during his time at the Union Theological Seminary, specifically in conjunction with his time spent in Harlem, see Reggie L. Williams, *Bonhoeffer's Black Jesus: Harlem Renaissance Theology and an Ethic of Resistance* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014), 109–10.
[16] *DBWE* 14:134.
[17] Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 451.
[18] DBWE 14:252–53.
[19] Kelly and Godsey, "Editor's Introduction to the English Edition," 3.

of *Discipleship*, are able to state quite plainly: "It is clear that here, as throughout his theology, Bonhoeffer's framework is Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone."[20]

It is important to underscore, however, that Bonhoeffer's approach to the doctrine of justification during the Finkenwalde period is governed in a way that is distinct from his earlier theology. In a manner congruent with the pivotal change noted in the letter to Zinn above, Bonhoeffer looks to the Bible in order to forge the connection between justification and discipleship. Yet, his turn to Scripture is hardly evidence of a form of biblicism.[21] Rather, it is a turn to Scripture *as* witness to the risen and living Christ. This emphasis is most fully fleshed out in his "Lecture on Contemporizing New Testament Texts," given at a meeting for the hierarchy of the Confessing Church in August 1935. Here, Bonhoeffer asserts that contemporizing is not something the Christian does to the New Testament, but rather something God does to the Christian by the Holy Spirit through Scripture. Indeed, he goes so far as to suggest that the present is not a "temporal feeling," nor is it the claims of the temporal moment. Rather, it is "solely the Holy Spirit."[22] As such, "the *concretissimum of the Christian message* and textual exposition is not a human act of contemporizing but rather always God, the Holy Spirit."[23] Insofar as the substance of the New Testament is the word that Christ speaks through the Spirit, attentiveness and obedience to this word is the means by which scripture draws the Christian into the present.[24] For Bonhoeffer, this is nothing less than the eschatological orientation of the gospel; it is a word from outside—from the future—which constitutes the present.[25]

The eschatological determination of the present by Christ's word does not, however, endorse a method of interpreting Scripture that amounts to searching for the eternal kernel within the temporal husk. This is exactly the sort of method that sets the self in a position of authority over the text of scripture. According to this method, Bonhoeffer writes, the "*norm of contemporizing resides within us; the Bible is the material to which this norm is applied.*"[26] Yet, such a method does not match the substance of Scripture as the word of Christ. Indeed, the only norm appropriate to this substance is "the word of God itself, and our own

[20] Kelly and Godsey, 7. The extent to which Bonhoeffer's interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount is shaped by concerns for justification is a promising line of inquiry that we, unfortunately, do not have the time to enter into here.
[21] *DBWE* 14:425.
[22] *DBWE* 14:417.
[23] *DBWE* 14:417.
[24] *DBWE* 14:417.
[25] *DBWE* 14:418.
[26] *DBWE* 14:421.

circumstances, reason, conscience, and ethnonational [völkisch] experience are the material to which this norm is to be applied."[27] As such, substance and norm are one and the same. The word of Christ, spoken by the Spirit both constitutes the substance of Scripture and norms those who hear the word. By identifying the two, Bonhoeffer effectively makes the case that all of Scripture is relevant for theology and the formation of those to whom it is proclaimed. Thus, theology's goal is not to identify what in Scripture is relevant for the church, but rather to make "*the whole of Holy Scripture audible as a witness to the word of God*."[28]

In this way, Bonhoeffer denies the distinction between historical texts (e.g. the gospels) and doctrinal texts (e.g. the Pauline epistles). For theology, both are of the same substance and value.[29] Both bear witness to Christ and have decisive significance for the human being. "*The common character of the New Testament witness* is that it is Christ who performs this miracle, speaks the parable, issues the commandment, and that through such a miracle, parable, commandment, or teaching Christ is always aiming at one and the same thing, *namely, to bind human beings to himself* as the absolutely unique, historic one."[30] Thus, doctrine can no longer be thought in isolation from Scripture. Instead, it must witness to Christ, recognizing that doctrine is that which Christ speaks first through Scripture.[31] In other words, doctrine that witnesses to Christ is a form of repetition which is only made effective by the Spirit. Furthermore, such witness is not merely cognitive or verbal. Rather, it aims at binding the one who hears to the person of Christ, who became incarnate in history, died, and is risen. As such, Bonhoeffer controversially asserts that "[o]ne does not correctly interpret a Pauline doctrinal text if one transmits it as a piece of genuine theology[,] as *pura doctrina*."[32] In other words, what makes a doctrine—such as justification—genuinely theological is not the fact that it is the doctrine on which the church stands or falls.[33] Instead, justification's theological import and significance rests solely in the fact that it bears witness to the "crucified,

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[27] *DBWE* 14:421.

[28] *DBWE* 14:421. This is not to suggest, however, that God's hiddenness in revelation ceases to be hidden. On this as a key aspect of Bonhoeffer's approach to Scripture, see Michael Mawson, "The Weakness of the Word and the Reality of God: Luther and Bonhoeffer on the Cross of Discipleship," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 31, no. 4 (2018): 458–59.

[29] Here, we see his methodological basis for drawing together the Sermon on the Mount and the doctrine of justification in his theology of discipleship.

[30] *DBWE* 14:424.

[31] Cf. Nadine Hamilton, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Necessity of Kenosis for Scriptural Hermeneutics," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 71, no. 4 (2018): 452–53.

[32] *DBWE* 14:425; cf. *DBWE* 4:55. This is, perhaps, already a modification of his assertion in a 1934 letter his friend, Erwin Sutz, where he favorably advocates for the importance of pure doctrine. See *DBWE* 13:217.

[33] This phrasing is often misattributed to Luther. On its most likely origin in later Lutheranism, see Alister E. McGrath, Iustitia Dei: *A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 193n3.

resurrected Lord who calls to discipleship."[34] Bonhoeffer sums up this line of thinking in a notational fragment tacked onto the end of a sentence: "theology as witness!"[35]

This is not to say that Bonhoeffer no longer sees the value of doctrine. Indeed, in the student notes from his "Lecture Section on Ministry" in 1935, he identifies doctrine as the key consideration at play in determining whether a pastor has become unfit for ministry.[36] When it comes to dismissal from ministry "[*d*]*octrine* [is] to receive priority. Incorrect doctrine attacks the substance of the church, excludes from the church."[37] Rather, doctrine, as witness to the living Christ, must now be interpreted and expounded as Christ's forming word which, when spoken by the Holy Spirit, shapes those in faith in particular ways. Thus, the student notes on Bonhoeffer's 1935–1936 "Lecture on Catechesis" attribute the following formulation to him: "Christianity is doctrine related to a certain form of existence (speech *and life!*)."[38] Such formation of existence is only possible when doctrine is understood as Christ's word which comes from the outside. In this way, Bonhoeffer is counter-intuitively grounding the efficacy of doctrine in a doctrine—namely, the doctrine of justification by faith. Just before the above formulation the notes read: "What makes Christian education and instruction possible is the fact of *iustitia aliena*, which is given in baptism and justification."[39] In other words, the alien righteousness received in justification and baptism is what makes doctrine genuinely formative and educational. The righteousness of Christ, which is the believer's in faith, is both the basis for encountering doctrine as a witness to Christ and what makes this encounter necessarily formative. Indeed, its effects are both epistemic and ontological. Any formulation of doctrine that only pertains to speech, on the one hand, or to the ethics of existence, on the other hand, fails to recognize the intimate connection between cognition and formation for action in Scripture's witness to Christ.

What, then, did this mean for Bonhoeffer's thinking, in relation to justification, as he was formulating his theology of discipleship? It meant that his understanding of justification was beholden to Scripture in new ways, and this in order to articulate it as a doctrine that

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[34] *DBWE* 14:427.
[35] *DBWE* 14:425.
[36] When citing from student notes on Bonhoeffer's lectures from the Finkenwalde period, it is assumed, by virtue of its inclusion in the critical edition of his works, that, although the direct wording is not Bonhoeffer's, the idea or concept expressed can accurately be attributed to him.
[37] *DBWE* 14:333.
[38] *DBWE* 14:540. Crucially, this form of existence is not a generic pursuit of the good, but a bearing witness to the truth of the gospel through proclamation and enactment. Cf. Philip G. Ziegler, "'Not to Abolish, but to Fulfil': The Person of the Preacher and the Claim of the Sermon on the Mount," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 22, no. 3 (2009): 281.
[39] *DBWE* 14:539.

bears witness to Christ and thereby contributes to a particular form of concrete, human existence. This fresh attention to justification in Scripture, especially insofar as it is oriented to the concrete existence of the believer, is borne out in the two lecture courses he gave during the third and fourth sessions at Finkenwalde—"New Life in Paul" and "Concrete Ethics in Paul", respectively. In the student notes for these lectures, Bonhoeffer makes several important moves that set the stage for our discussion of how justification unfolds in *Discipleship*. First, Bonhoeffer frames his understanding of justification in a way that, initially, seems to have little to do with its formative significance for the Christian life. He poses the question "What is the gift of faith?" To which he offers this answer: "In faith we receive justification = assurance of God's righteousness."[40] This is hardly a revolutionary formulation, but Bonhoeffer unfolds it in an unexpected way. God's righteousness is, in the first place, not an object given to humanity. Rather, it is God's justification of himself on the cross.[41] Justification is first and foremost about God's justification of himself and only in God's self-justification does humanity find a basis from which it might be justified.[42]

For Bonhoeffer, this way of defining justification has consequences in both the practical and the theological sphere. Bonhoeffer saw the degradation of justification, not only by the *Deutsche Christen* but also by moderates in the Confessing Church, as a product of turning grace into the principle of justification, rather than its consequence. "In effect, one has God's righteousness by merely possessing the principle. But one does not have to actualize the principle. Simply holding it and defending it against the counterprinciple of good works was sufficient."[43] The result is cheap grace, which justifies sin, but not the sinner.[44] However, by making God's self-justification in Christ's death the locus of humanity's justification he removes grace from the realm of principle and ties it to participation in Christ's death and resurrected life. In other words, grace is the consequence of Christ's death and resurrection, which humanity comes to participate in by faith. Here, we see that Bonhoeffer's move to accentuate the forensic nature of justification actually creates the space in which participation becomes a central aspect of justification. "In faith in the Christ *outside me*, I have Christ *in me*."[45] As such, participation is not, for Bonhoeffer, a sort

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[40] *DBWE* 14:608.
[41] On how Bonhoeffer departs from Luther without contradicting him by highlighting God's subjective righteousness alongside of God's objective righteousness, see Michael P. DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Reception of Luther* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 234–36.
[42] *DBWE* 14:609. See also *DBWE* 4:254.
[43] Kelly and Godsey, "Editor's Introduction to the English Edition," 11.
[44] Cf. *DBWE* 4:44.
[45] *DBWE* 14:606.

of theosis, but rather faith-based union with Christ wrought by the Holy Spirit. Thus, justification by faith is the reestablishment of the believer in relation to God's righteousness through union with Christ, in which his death and resurrection life become the believer's own. In this manner, justification witnesses to Christ, the crucified and risen Lord, who binds humanity to himself and calls them to discipleship.

That Bonhoeffer is here drawing on justification in a way that makes participation in Christ central is also evident from the way he begins the aforementioned lecture series. "New Life in Paul" begins with the question: "How do I come to participate in this being in Christ?"[46] Likewise, "Concrete Ethics in Paul" begins with a lecture section "on Acts 2:43–47 and on the Actions of Christians ἐν Χριστῷ."[47] In both cases justification and being in Christ are woven tightly together, with the latter drawing sanctification into the mix. For Bonhoeffer, justification and sanctification are not two separate phases in a linear development. Rather, they are two sides of the same coin.[48] "Placement into the space of the church-community is justification; abiding in this space is sanctification."[49] Bonhoeffer fleshes out this relationship in *Discipleship*, forming an analogy between creation and justification on the one hand, and preservation and sanctification on the other.[50] Justification is the ground of being in Christ, while sanctification is the preservation of that union unto redemption. Ultimately, however, both justification and sanctification have the same substance—namely, community with Christ.[51] In what follows, our focus will remain on justification since a full treatment of Bonhoeffer on sanctification is outside of the scope of this project.[52] Furthermore, Bethge insists that by introducing sanctification Bonhoeffer was not seeking to develop it as a parallel doctrine to justification. Rather, "[h]e believes that justification by faith remains the incontestable presupposition and needs no supplement."[53]

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46 *DBWE* 14:605.
47 *DBWE* 14:718.
48 For a recent argument in the realm of Pauline theology against seeing a cut-and-dry distinction between sanctification and justification, see Stephen J. Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers: Reconciling Old and New Perspectives* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 374–75; cf. John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 517–18.
49 *DBWE* 14:724.
50 *DBWE* 4:260.
51 *DBWE* 4:259.
52 For a recent discussion of this topic, see M.J. Knight, "Christ Existing in Ordinary: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Sanctification," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16, no. 4 (2014): 414–35.
53 Eberhard Bethge, "The Challenge of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Life and Theology," in *World Come of Age: A Symposium on Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. Ronald Gregor Smith (London: Collins, 1967), 57.

According to Bethge, then, sanctification is merely the means by which the costliness of the gift of grace in justification is preserved.[54]

Our focus in the preceding discussion has been to highlight why and the way in which Bonhoeffer begins to draw on the doctrine of justification in a different manner during this period. Specifically, we saw that the need to offer a fresh articulation of justification arose against the backdrop of the doctrine's degradation at the hands of the *Deutsche Christen*. This need, then, coincided with Bonhoeffer's decisive turn to Scripture's witness to Christ as the locus for his theology. Thus, we can say that the priority Bonhoeffer attributes to the Holy Spirit's witness to Christ through Scripture provides him with a basis from which to articulate God's justification of the sinner and costly grace over against the justification of sin and cheap grace. As a result, Bonhoeffer begins to explicitly think of justification as a witness to the living Christ who calls humanity to a particular form of life—namely, a life of discipleship. Core to this fresh articulation of justification's import for the Christian life is participation in Christ. This, of course, dovetails nicely with one of the three Pauline emphases associated with justification, which we suggested, in the previous chapter, were underdeveloped in Bonhoeffer's early theology. In the sections that follow, we shall look more closely at the role of union with Christ in discipleship and how, for Bonhoeffer, it unfolds to highlight embodiment and, to a lesser extent, reconciliation.

III. Participation as Discipleship's Content

a. Costly Grace in Christ the Mediator

As we turn to consider the way Bonhoeffer locates participation in Christ at the center of his theology of discipleship it is worthwhile to note the range of language he uses to describe this reality. In this regard, he speaks of "being bound to" (*Bindung*),[55] "participation in" (*Teilhabe*),[56] "communion with" (*Gemeinschaft*),[57] and "union with" (*Vereinigung*).[58] In addition, Bonhoeffer also speaks of being "in Christ" in ways that do not employ this technical language. Although, within the context of Bonhoeffer's wider corpus, each of the above terms could be shaded differently—particularly *Gemeinschaft*—they refer, broadly, to the

[54] Bethge, 57.
[55] See e.g. *DBWE* 4:59, 89; *DBW* 4:47, 82,
[56] See e.g. *DBWE* 4:120, 285; *DBW* 4:121, 301.
[57] See e.g. *DBWE* 4:89, 127; *DBW* 4:83, 129.
[58] See e.g. *DBWE* 4:266; *DBW* 4:283.

Pauline notion of being "in Christ." As such, "being bound to," "participation," "communion," and "union" will be used interchangeably in the following discussion.

Bonhoeffer begins the second chapter of *Discipleship* with Mark 2:14—the call of Levi—before asking after the content of discipleship. The short answer is: "Follow me, walk behind me! That is all."[59] Indeed, there is no specific content associated with following Christ, insofar as it is not paired with a prescribed program or a systematic framework. Rather, Jesus' call to Levi in Mark 2:14 is a call away from his previous existence and into a new way of being in the world. Bethge notes in relation to this passage that "when Christ steps up to Levi, his entire real existence is affected."[60] As such, the content of discipleship is not a new road to travel down among others from which one might choose. Instead, it is a new mode of existence and the whole content of this new existence is "nothing other than being bound to Jesus Christ alone."[61] It is important to emphasize, however, that being bound to Christ is not and cannot be a static reality. Union with Christ is union with a living person who beckons forward to movement and mission in service of the Kingdom of God. As such, discipleship—being bound to Christ—is an inherently active mode of existence.

Understanding discipleship as union with Christ, then, provides a lens through which to read Bonhoeffer's discourse on cheap and costly grace in the first chapter. There he writes that costly grace "is costly, because it calls to discipleship; it is grace, because it calls us to follow *Jesus Christ*."[62] What Bonhoeffer means by this is that grace is costly because it lays holistic claim to the life of the disciple, and it is grace because it invites the disciple to take on Christ's yoke, which is easy and light. Insofar as costly grace entails real discipleship, it also entails a binding to Christ. This implies that costly grace's opposite—cheap grace—is cheap precisely because it does not call one into a new mode of existence marked by participation in Christ. Alongside of and in parallel to the opposed pairing of costly grace and cheap grace, Bonhoeffer also places the justification of the sinner and the justification of sin as oppositional realities. The resultant picture is one in which the justification of the sinner and costly grace are inseparably tied to discipleship and participation in Christ.[63] Cheap grace allows the church to claim that because it "is in possession of a doctrine of justification,

[59] *DBWE* 4:58.
[60] *DBWE* 4:58n3.
[61] *DBWE* 4:58–59.
[62] *DBWE* 4:45.
[63] Cf. Michael P. DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer on Resistance: The Word Against the Wheel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 117.

then it is surely a justified church."[64] According to costly grace, however, justification as a doctrine means nothing if it fails to witness to Christ's justifying work in which he binds believers to himself in faith and by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, union with Christ serves as Bonhoeffer's starting point for unfolding costly grace and the justification of the sinner in the sphere of discipleship. In other words, if costly grace and justification of the sinner reconstitute concrete existence, the mechanism by which they do so is union with Christ. And since union with Christ is a dynamic reality, as noted above, it takes on the character of following after, of discipleship. This is not to say, however, that union with Christ and discipleship are human possibilities. Indeed, they remain governed by the logic of justification by faith. "Discipleship is not a human offer. The call alone creates the situation."[65] We might say, then, that Christ's call is carried by the Holy Spirit, creates faith, justifies, binds, and enlists in Christ's mission.

How, then, does being bound to Christ unfold to reveal the character of discipleship? Here, we can distinguish between the immediate relationship established in participation, on the one hand, and mediated relationships on the other hand. The basis for this distinction is Bonhoeffer's radical interpretation of Christ's mediatorial status, the foundation for which was laid in his 1933 Christology lectures.[66] For Bonhoeffer, Christ not only mediates between God and humanity, but also between believers and the world. Given the widespread implications of this construal it is worth quoting his formulation in detail:

> It is true, there is something which comes between persons called by Christ and the given circumstances of their natural lives. But it is not someone unhappily contemptuous of life; it is not some law of piety. Instead, it is life and the gospel itself; it is Christ himself. In becoming human, he put himself between me and the given circumstances of the world. I cannot go back. He is in the middle. He has deprived those whom he has called of every immediate connection to those given realities. He wants to be the medium; everything should happen only through Him. He stands not only between me and God, he also stands between me and the world, between me and other people and things. *He is the mediator*, not only between God and human persons, but also between person and person, and between person and reality. Because the whole world was created by him and for him (John 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Heb. 1:2), he is the sole mediator in the world.[67]

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[64] *DBWE* 4:53.
[65] *DBWE* 4:63.
[66] See *DBWE* 12:324–27. It is also picked up again in *Life Together* (*DBWE* 5:43–44).
[67] *DBWE* 4:93. Clifford Green takes issue with this construal because of its potentially authoritarian depiction of Jesus. However, his objection is partly based on a mistranslation. Just prior to the above quote (*DBWE* 4:93; *DBW* 4:88) Bonhoeffer asks what sort of *ärgerliche Macht* comes between human persons and the natural orders of their lives. Green translates *ärgerliche Macht* as "angry power." However, the critical, English edition of *Discipleship* rightly renders it as "annoying power." The latter translation lacks the authoritarian implications of

Christ's mediation is essentially related to and an outworking of the logic of participation within the context of discipleship. Indeed, thinking back to the conceptualities Bonhoeffer employed in his Christology lectures, being bound to Christ means that Christ both stands in immediate relationship to the single individual as her center and mediates between her and all else as her boundary.[68] Thus, the two types of relationships established in participation are easily identified: the individual's immediate relationship to Christ and all other relationships, which are necessarily mediated.[69] We shall now turn and look at the character of the disciple's immediate relation to Christ.

b. The Baptismal Nature of Communion with Christ

As we have seen above, being bound to Christ is a necessary and central aspect of justification properly construed. This means that, for Bonhoeffer, following after Christ in discipleship is imbued with a justificatory or baptismal logic.[70] Put another way, we might say that the death and resurrection of the individual, sacramentally enacted in baptism, is a once and for all event with ongoing implications for life in Christ. So, for Bonhoeffer, the import of baptism into Christ for human beings can be described in two related ways: either with regard to their personal, salvific status or with regard to their relationships throughout life.[71] On the one hand, a person's salvific status corresponds to the once and for all nature of baptism, which is grounded in the once and for all nature of Christ's death and resurrection. On the other hand, a person's relationships throughout life are shaped by ongoing participation in the crucified and resurrected Christ. Thus, insofar as baptism binds individuals to Christ, his life, death, and resurrection become determinative of their entire existence. "Participation brings about justification, the cessation of sin, transferal into a new kingdom."[72]

Green's, and fits better with the context—namely, the hypothetical human resistance to Christ's mediation that Bonhoeffer is voicing. For Green's discussion of the authoritarian Christ of *Discipleship,* see Green, *Bonhoeffer*, 173–79.

[68] *DBWE* 12:324–25. There too Bonhoeffer speaks of Christ as mediator. However, it must be pointed out that whereas he speaks of Christ as the center and boundary of history, here he speaks, without using this exact language, of Christ as center and boundary of individual existence.

[69] The concept of mediation unfolded here provides a retroactive safeguard against loose interpretations of Bonhoeffer's suggestion in *Santorum Communio* that Christians "ought to become a Christ to the other." *DBWE* 1:183.

[70] Bonhoeffer is typically Lutheran in his close association of baptism and justification. On Luther's own evolving identification between the two, see Jonathan Trigg, "Luther on Baptism and Penance," in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, ed. Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel, and L'ubomír Batka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 311.

[71] *DBWE* 4:235.

[72] *DBWE* 14:475.

While, in *Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer is decidedly more interested in outlining justification *away from* sin and into a life of following after Christ, this does not come at the expense of the soteriological reality of being pronounced righteous, since both are dependent on being in Christ.[73] This is due to his expanded definition of Christ's righteousness: "[B]ecause that righteousness [which is required by the law] is not only a good deed to be performed, but complete, true, and personal communion with God, Jesus not only *has* righteousness, he *is* righteousness personified."[74] The righteousness of Christ is not some representational package of good works which is given to the human person to cancel out their sin. Rather, Christ simply *is* righteousness and in order for human beings to be righteous they must be bound to him by the Spirit. "He is the disciples' righteousness. In calling his disciples, Jesus granted them participation in himself; he gave them community with him; he let them participate in his own righteousness; he granted them his own righteousness."[75] This, of course, further proves the point from earlier that participation in Christ is centrally important to Bonhoeffer's unfolding of justification in the realm of discipleship. Returning to the baptismal framework identified above, death to one's old existence and resurrection in Christ, as a once and for all event, is salvific because being in Christ simply is being righteous. "Being baptized into the death of Christ is what brings forgiveness of sins and justification and a complete separation from sin."[76]

What then of the ongoing significance of baptism for life in Christ? While the individual's death and resurrection in Christ is a once and for all event, the new existence which the believer lives is one of participation in the crucified and resurrected Christ. Thus, the logic of baptism, worked out in death and resurrection, shapes participation in Christ in an ongoing manner. And, insofar as it shapes participation in Christ, it also shapes one's relationship to all other aspects of reality. This is because of Bonhoeffer's comprehensive interpretation of Christ's mediation, noted above. Bonhoeffer writes: "I am deprived of my immediate relationship to the given realities of the world, since Christ the mediator and Lord has stepped in between me and the world. Those who are baptized no longer belong to the world, no longer serve the world, and are no longer subject to it. They belong to Christ alone,

[73] On justification away from sin, see *DBWE* 4:209; *DBWE* 14:610–11.
[74] *DBWE* 4:119.
[75] *DBWE* 4:119–20.
[76] *DBWE* 4:209.

and relate to the world only through Christ."[77] Governed by the logic of baptism, relating to the world through Christ means relating to the world through his life, death, and resurrection.

Bonhoeffer, however, overwhelmingly prefers to focus on participation in Christ's death. "Discipleship as allegiance to the person of Jesus Christ places the follower under the law of Christ, that is, under the cross."[78] Here, we come to one of the central themes of *Discipleship*—namely, participation in the cross of Christ. Indeed, Bethge writes that "the chapter 'Discipleship and the Cross' was a cornerstone of the work from the beginning."[79] However, it is also one of the more fraught aspects of the work, for here again the passivity of suffering has problematic implications. While Bonhoeffer by no means neglects the resurrection altogether, his conception of discipleship is so governed by suffering and the cross that he seems to underemphasize participation in the triumph of the resurrection, and neglects the ascension altogether.[80] On her way to advocating for a deeper emphasis on the resurrection in Christian theology, Marit Trelstad criticizes Bonhoeffer's fixation on the cross, asserting that "[c]hoosing the way of the cross may be an important act of discipleship for those who have the option to choose, but when there is no other option than suffering this message can further oppression."[81] Indeed, one might wonder if Bonhoeffer is instrumentalizing suffering when he writes: "Suffering is distance from God. That is why someone who is in communion with God cannot suffer…. Indeed, suffering remains distance from God, but in community with the suffering of Jesus Christ, suffering is overcome by suffering. Communion with God is granted precisely by suffering."[82] It is difficult to escape the sense that Bonhoeffer has slipped into a sort of Christian idealism here that abstracts suffering from the real-world context in which it occurs.

There is certainly an extent to which Bonhoeffer's emphasis on death and suffering risks instrumentalization and fails to fully hold out the promise of the resurrection and ascension to those already suffering. However, the resurrection still plays an important, if understated, role in his understanding of discipleship under the cross.[83] This is due to the

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[77] *DBWE* 4:208.
[78] *DBWE* 4:85.
[79] Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 450.
[80] For a similar criticism of *Discipleship* on exactly this front, see John Webster, "Discipleship and Obedience," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 24, no. 1 (2006): 8.
[81] Marit Trelstad, "The Way of Salvation in Luther's Theology: A Feminist Evaluation," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 45, no. 3 (2006): 238.
[82] *DBWE* 4:90.
[83] Contra Hamish Walker, who suggests the resurrection has merely a "structural significance" in *Discipleship*. See "The Incarnation and Crucifixion in Bonhoeffer's *Cost of Discipleship*," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 21, no. 4 (1968): 407.

fact that, for Bonhoeffer, carrying one's cross in discipleship can never be divorced from the fact that this carrying only takes place in union with the risen Christ. Even though "[d]iscipleship is being bound to the suffering Christ,"[84] Bonhoeffer also notes that "God's love for the people brings the cross and discipleship, but these, in turn, mean life and resurrection."[85] Carrying one's cross and discipleship do not "mean" life and resurrection in the sense that they are the means by which those realities are attained. Rather, they mean that the believer has life and resurrection in Christ, and this is why she can joyfully take up her cross in discipleship. As such, suffering and taking up one's cross can never be the instrumentalized means by which one is made righteous or takes part in the resurrection. The believer takes up her cross in discipleship simply because she lives out of her unity with the resurrected Christ who has taken up his cross, calls her to do likewise, and goes with her under it. Thus, Bonhoeffer concludes that "[t]he acts of the church's first martyrs give witness that Christ transfigures the moment of greatest suffering for his followers through the indescribable certainty of his nearness and communion."[86]

Teased out another way, for Bonhoeffer, union with Christ in discipleship both leads to and prepares for suffering. "The call to follow Jesus, baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, is death and life."[87] Because the call to follow, like baptism, is justificatory in nature it implies a break with one's former life. It is for this reason that Bonhoeffer calls the death of one's old existence in the call to discipleship "[t]he first Christ-suffering that everyone has to experience."[88] Being bound to Christ means participation in his death. This is why, in Mark 8:34, Jesus makes taking up one's cross a stipulation for discipleship. "The cross is suffering with Christ. Indeed, it is Christ-suffering. Only one who is bound to Christ as this occurs in discipleship stands in seriousness under the cross."[89] However, union with Christ prepares believers for suffering as well, and herein lies the logic of resurrection. Christ prepares his disciples for suffering by urging them to deny themselves and know only him, the one they are bound to by the Spirit. "When we know only him, then we also no longer know the pain of our own cross."[90] Knowing only Christ is the means by which the present suffering of discipleship is transformed by the eschatological reality of the resurrection. In other words,

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[84] *DBWE* 4:89.
[85] *DBWE* 4:197.
[86] *DBWE* 4:89.
[87] *DBWE* 4:88.
[88] *DBWE* 4:87.
[89] *DBWE* 4:87.
[90] *DBWE* 4:86; cf. Bonhoeffer's discussion of *actus directus* in relation to baptism in *DBWE* 2:157–61.

being bound to Christ means living from the resurrection while participating in Christ's suffering in a world no longer ruled, but still marked by sin.

Although Bonhoeffer has little to say about the ascension in *Discipleship*, it is worth briefly noting the light it sheds on the manner in which the disciple's life is sourced from the resurrection even as it shares in Christ's sufferings on earth. To a certain extent Christ's high priestly role at the right hand of the Father is implied in Christ's mediatorial work. However, it is clear from a sermon outline on Acts 1:1–11 during the Finkenwalde period that, at the time, Bonhoeffer thought of the ascension primarily in terms of Christ's enthronement and kingship.[91] Yet, if we fully take into account Christ's priestly intercession on behalf of the disciple it is precisely this high priestly work that enables her to live from the resurrection even as she takes up her cross and follows Christ. J.B. Torrance describes the dynamic at play in Christ's intercession as follows: "This is the 'wonderful exchange'…by which Christ takes what is ours (our broken lives and unworthy prayers), sanctifies them, offers them without spot or wrinkle to the Father, and gives them back to us, that we might 'feed' upon him in thanksgiving."[92] Thus, living out of the resurrection in the suffering and cross-bearing of the present has real power and promise precisely and only because the resurrected Christ has ascended to heaven and intercedes at the right hand of the Father on behalf of humanity.

Bonhoeffer's great virtue is his ability to unfold the implications of Luther's *theologia crucis* for a life of discipleship.[93] In doing so, he emphasizes the cross and suffering, but he also incorporates the logic of the resurrection through his insistence that communion with Christ transforms suffering.[94] However, insofar as the resurrection remains a subtext in his discussion of discipleship and the cross—and his discussion of baptism, for that matter!—he does not always succeed in holding the eschatological tension inherent in being bound to the one who is both crucified *and* risen. We see this, on the one hand, when he slips and sounds as if he is suggesting that suffering is constitutive of communion with Christ, rather than a consequence of it.[95] In doing so, he neglects the fact that the resurrected Christ stands between the disciple and her suffering. On the other hand, we also see him slacken the

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[91] See *DBWE* 14:632–34. It is worth noting, however, that later, in 1940, Bonhoeffer pens a meditation on the ascension that fully takes into account Christ's high priestly role (16:476–81).
[92] James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1996), 15.
[93] On this, see H. Gaylon Barker, *The Cross of Reality: Luther's Theologia Crucis and Bonhoeffer's Christology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 303–28.
[94] Rachel Muers comes to a similar conclusion in *Keeping God's Silence: Towards a Theological Ethics of Communication* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 81–82.
[95] *DBWE* 4:90.

eschatological tension when he goes so far as to say that "someone who is in communion with God cannot suffer." Here, the eschatological reality of the resurrection is over-realized to the point that Bonhoeffer is no longer able to call a thing what it is. Christ mediates between the disciple and her suffering, but this does not mean that suffering ceases to be suffering. Rather, it means that suffering is cradled by a sure and certain hope. At his best, though, Bonhoeffer integrates the logic of the resurrection into his description of discipleship as participation in Christ's suffering. This is expressed perfectly when he writes: "Bearing the cross does not bring misery and despair. Rather, it provides refreshment and peace for our soul; it is our greatest joy. Here we are no longer laden with self-made laws and burdens, but with the yoke of him who knows us and who himself goes with us under the same yoke."[96] Indeed, bearing the cross, while marked by suffering, cannot be abstracted from the baptismal logic which governs participation in Christ. As such, bearing one's cross means being borne by the resurrected one who has already taken up the cross unto death once and for all.

Thus, we have seen that at the core of Bonhoeffer's theology of discipleship is the reality of participation in Christ. This reality marks the believer's relationship to Jesus as their only unmediated relationship. Just as being bound to Christ is based in the once and for all event of death and resurrection sacramentally enacted in baptism, so too is the ongoing character of one's immediate relation to Christ shaped by a baptismal logic. For Bonhoeffer, because discipleship is carried out in the midst of a sinful world which continues to oppose Christ, following after Christ in his suffering and death is its central feature. With varying degrees of success, he attempts to articulate participation in the suffering Christ in a way that takes seriously that the suffering Christ is also the resurrected Christ. Indeed, suffering in discipleship must be understood in a manner that is inflected by the eschatological reality of the resurrection. What we have not yet touched on is how the baptismal logic of participation in Christ informs and orients the disciple toward reconciliation in her mediated relationships. This connection is vitally important to Bonhoeffer's theology of discipleship, even if its articulation remains frustratingly general and abstract. However, we shall first engage with the embodied nature of participation and Bonhoeffer's corresponding concern to highlight the import of the church for discipleship.

[96] *DBWE* 4:91.

IV. The Embodied Nature of Discipleship

As we noted in the previous chapter, Bonhoeffer does give some attention to the theological import of the body in *Creation and Fall*. However, *Discipleship* marks his first engagement with the body as a theologically formative reality of the Christian life. Lisa Dahill suggests that in *Discipleship* "he articulates fully for the first time…that the intimate and ultimate Other encountered in another's body and being—the One encountering and forming us as persons—is Jesus Christ. In *Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer insists on the necessarily bodily nature of our life with Jesus in discipleship."[97] Indeed, Bonhoeffer's increased attention to the body in *Discipleship* makes good sense, given that one of his primary goals is to unfold the doctrine of justification by faith in a manner that emphasizes its orientation toward action and simple obedience. Theologically, though, his rationale is firmly grounded in the incarnation. Because Christ assumes a body and intercedes for humanity bodily before God, being bound to Christ in discipleship is a necessarily embodied reality.[98] Furthermore, participation in Christ's bodily life, death, and resurrection as that which justifies humanity stands in stark contrast to justification as rote doctrine. Bonhoeffer is emphatic on this point: "A truth, a doctrine, or a religion needs no space of its own. Such entities are bodyless. They do not go beyond being heard, learned, and understood. But the incarnate Son of God needs not only ears or even hearts, he needs actually, living human beings who follow him."[99] Justification as *pura doctrina* or participation as a mystical, inner state are insufficient because they fail to account for the fact that in justification Christ lays claim to the whole person, binding believers bodily to himself in the following after of discipleship.

In *Discipleship,* Bonhoeffer primarily speaks of three types of embodiment, so we shall take each in turn. First, he speaks of the body of the disciple: "Even the body of the disciple belongs to Christ and discipleship; our bodies are members of his body."[100] Prospectively, this means that disciples are called to embody their new existence in Christ through an active following after which is marked by the righteousness of him in whom they participate. To demonstrate this, Bonhoeffer juxtaposes humanity's bodily enslavement to sin with their new vocation as disciples: "The fruit of being freed from sin by Christ's death is that those

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[97] Lisa E. Dahill, "Con-Formation with Jesus Christ: Bonhoeffer, Social Location, and Embodiment," in *Being Human, Becoming Human: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Social Thought*, ed. Jens Zimmermann and Brian Gregor (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 180; cf. Green, *Bonhoeffer*, 195; Jonathan D. Sorum, "The Eschatological Boundary in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Nachfolge*" (PhD Thesis, Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary, 1994), 346–55.
[98] *DBWE* 4:127, 217.
[99] *DBWE* 4:226; cf. Dahill, "Con-Formation with Jesus Christ," 181.
[100] *DBWE* 4:127.

who once surrendered their bodies as instruments of unrighteousness are now able to use them in service of righteousness as instruments of their sanctification."[101] Retrospectively, then, embodied discipleship is impossible apart from real bodily acceptance in Christ, which, again, is grounded in the reality that "God's mercy sends the Son in the flesh, so that in his flesh he may shoulder and carry all of humanity."[102]

Bodily life receives a much fuller treatment in *Ethics*, but Bonhoeffer does not wholly neglect to affirm the goodness of the human body as such in *Discipleship*. Indeed, he provides the following comment on the Lord's Prayer: "Give us this day our daily bread. As long as disciples are on earth, they should not be ashamed of asking their heavenly Father for the things they need for their bodily life. God created human beings on earth intends to preserve and protect human bodies. God does not intend that God's own creation become disdained."[103] However, insofar as his primary concern is to give an account of discipleship—the content of which is being bound to Christ—he primarily focuses on the body of the disciple as it relates to and is determined by the body of Christ. This is typified when he asserts that the goal of the disciple "is to be shaped into the entire *form* of the *incarnate*, the *crucified*, and the *risen one*."[104]

The body of Christ, then, is both the second and the third type of body that Bonhoeffer takes to be central to discipleship. In keeping with his early, academic theology, "the body of Christ" can refer either to Christ's physical body, the church-community, or both at the same time. It is important to note, as we did already in chapter two, that Christ's body and the church-community are intimately connected and associated, but are not identical.[105] One way to put it is that, although the church-community does not exist apart from Christ's body, Christ's physical body does not stand in contingent relation to the church-community. So, on the one hand, Bonhoeffer can write quite straightforwardly that "Christ is the church," while, on the other hand, "categorically rul[ing] out any idea of a mystical fusion between church-community and Christ."[106] This tension between unity and distinction is grounded in the fact that Christ does not simply ascend to the right hand of

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[101] *DBWE* 4:253.
[102] *DBWE* 4:214.
[103] *DBWE* 4:156. See Robert Vosloo's excellent treatment of the physical body in Bonhoeffer's theology in "Body and Health in the Light of the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer," *Religion & Theology* 13, no. 1 (2006): 23–37.
[104] *DBWE* 4:285.
[105] Cf. Green, *Bonhoeffer*, 60.
[106] *DBWE* 4:219, 220.

God, he also promises to come again.[107] And, as we noted above, while the disciple awaits the second coming of Christ she participates in his body, knowing in faith that Christ actively cares about and is interceding on behalf of her embodied existence.

The church-community is also the means by which Christ continues to be bodily present to believers. Bonhoeffer points in this direction when he writes that "those who are baptized are still meant to live, even after the Lord's death and resurrection, in the bodily presence of and community with Jesus."[108] The bodily presence of Christ in the church-community is what allows Bonhoeffer to suggest, echoing Kierkegaard, that "[f]or the first disciples the bodily community with Jesus did not mean anything different or anything more than what we have today."[109] Yet, the church-community is not the body of Christ in virtue of its natural structure or on account of the purity of its faith. Rather, it is the body of Christ because the Holy Spirit forms it as a "yes" and "amen" to Christ's promise to be with his disciples always, even to the end of the age (2 Cor 1:20; Mat 28:20).[110] In other words, the Holy Spirit, who unites individuals to Christ in faith, also gathers the church-community, making the ascended Christ present to it in such a way that we can really and truly say that participation in the church-community is participation in the body of Christ.[111]

What materializes, then, is a picture of embodiment in which "[t]o be in Christ means to be in the church-community. But if we are in the church-community, then we are also truly and bodily in Jesus Christ. This insight reveals the full richness of meaning contained in the concept of the body of Christ"[112] Being bound to Christ in an embodied manner is made possible in the incarnation and is necessary because the human body is itself sinful. This can only be remedied by participation in Christ's resurrection body.[113] Even as being bodily bound to the resurrected Christ entails the merciful acceptance of individual sinners by God, it also binds those individuals to a new social reality in Christ existing as church-community. "With all our bodily living existence, we belong to him who took on a human

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[107] *DBWE* 4:220.
[108] *DBWE* 4:213.
[109] *DBWE* 4:213; cf. Søren Kierkegaard's treatment, under his "Johannes Climacus" pseudonym, of "The Situation of the Contemporary Follower" in *Philosophical Fragments*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 55–71. Regarding the significant influence of Kierkegaard on Bonhoeffer across his written corpus, see Matthew D. Kirkpatrick, *Attacks on Christendom in a World Come of Age: Kierkegaard, Bonhoeffer, and the Question of "Religionless Christianity"* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011).
[110] Cf. *DBWE* 8:515.
[111] *DBWE* 4:221.
[112] *DBWE* 4:218.
[113] Cf. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 504–5.

body for our sake. In following him, the disciple is inseparably linked to the body of Jesus."[114] And in this new social reality "the law of vicarious representative action [*Stellvertretung*] is actualized. It is the body given for our benefit, on our behalf. The organizational law of this body is thus that of *service*."[115] Thus, embodied participation in the body of Christ imbues the disciple with a bodily vocation empowered by the resurrection and shaped by the cross. As such, it is disposed toward service and reconciliation, and it is to this we now turn.

V. Reconciliation and the Social Aim of Discipleship

As we move to address the form of social life which participation in Christ entails, the first things to consider are Bonhoeffer's weaknesses on this front. We can broadly identify two ways in which his otherwise helpful theology of discipleship may prove problematic. The first way is related to our earlier discussion of the eschatological tension that Bonhoeffer seeks to hold between the cruciform nature of discipleship in a world still beset by sin and the triumph of the resurrection. In Bonhoeffer's discussion of love for one's enemy, he again risks slackening this tension. For example, although *Discipleship* has become popular among those who seek to emphasize Bonhoeffer's pacifistic tendencies,[116] there is something troubling when he asks, "[h]ow does love become unconquerable?" and answers in the following manner: "By never asking what the enemy is doing to it, and only asking what Jesus has done. Loving one's enemies leads disciples to the way of the cross and into communion with the crucified one."[117] Here, one might wonder if a problematic passivity has replaced a positive inclination toward pacifism. To suggest that discipleship entails unquestioning acceptance of the suffering inflicted by an enemy is hardly palatable to victims of violence and abuse. Indeed, Dahill notes this as a serious problem for Bonhoeffer. While his insistence on selflessness and suffering proved liberating for him as a privileged, white male, it does not hold forth such liberation for those for whom suffering and evacuation of self are daily realities.[118] Potentially giving such abuse a spiritual gloss by associating it with one's love of the enemy and participation in the suffering of Christ only deepens the problem.

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[114] *DBWE* 4:232.
[115] *DBWE* 14:463–64.
[116] On the topic of Bonhoeffer's peace ethic and his affinities with Anabaptist traditions, see DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Reception of Luther*, 142–82.
[117] *DBWE* 4:141.
[118] Dahill also confirms what we have suggested above—namely, that the resurrection provides a necessary corrective to Bonhoeffer's one-sidedness on this front. See "Con-Formation with Jesus Christ," 186–90.

Now, of course, this is not what Bonhoeffer is endorsing, but it is hardly a far-fetched conclusion to draw. Such a conclusion, however, is wholly inconsistent with the logic driving his theology of discipleship. So, then, where does he go wrong? We see here not only a misalignment of the eschatological tension between death and resurrection in the life of the disciple, but also a devaluing of embodiment. Bonhoeffer's assumption seems to be that loving one's enemies will lead to suffering under the cross, but this suffering will be transformed by the resurrection and in this way love becomes unconquerable. In and of itself—as a path Christ may call his disciples down—this is not objectionable. However, insofar as Bonhoeffer asserts this in an unqualified manner, he fails to take fully into account the significance and implications of Christ's resurrection body for bodily liberation from suffering. In other words, he rightly suggests that participation in the risen Christ transforms the suffering incurred by the fact that the disciple also participates in the suffering and crucified Christ. Yet, he fails to acknowledge that not all suffering is cruciform, and non-cruciform instances of suffering the resurrected Christ aims to liberate the disciples from their enemies. This does not mean that Christ at any point liberates his disciples from the law of love for enemies, but it does mean that there are indeed situations in which such "love for" is only possible in a "liberation from." A similar problem comes up in Bonhoeffer's exposition of Philemon. There he asserts: "Because this world is not in need of reform, but ripe to be demolished—that is why slaves are to remain slaves."[119] This is a strange sort of doom-and-gloom otherworldliness that is surely out of step with his thought on the whole. Regardless, a more appropriate rendering of this statement might read as follows: because this world has been liberated unto a new creation, working for the liberation of the oppressed is an enactment of one's justificatory participation in Christ and the coming kingdom.[120]

As we shall see, the second problem is related to the first and pertains to the inconsistent manner in which Bonhoeffer construes the relationship between the church and the world. On the one hand, he places the church in an oppositional relation to the world, saying that Christ's disciples "are to remain in the world in order to engage the world in a frontal assault."[121] On the other hand, he emphasizes the church's participation in the

[119] *DBWE* 4:239. Stephen Plant notes of the wider passage, in which Bonhoeffer also advocates for obeying political authority as a matter of obedience to God's order: "It is perhaps telling that, when making his defence to the examining magistrate after his arrest, Bonhoeffer referred to this passage in *Discipleship* to help bolster the image he was attempting to paint of himself as a loyal citizen!" (*Bonhoeffer*, 104).
[120] Cf. Muers, *Keeping God's Silence*, 90–91.
[121] *DBWE* 4:244.

philanthropy of God.[122]As such, Jennifer McBride is certainly correct when she suggests that this is a genuine inconsistency within *Discipleship*.[123] The problem arises when simple obedience in following after Christ becomes saddled with conditions that are missing in Bonhoeffer's initial discussion of it. There he writes: "Jesus' concrete call and simple obedience have their own irrevocable meaning. Jesus calls us into a concrete situation in which we can believe in him. That is why he calls in such a concrete way and wants to be so understood, because he knows that people will become free for faith only in concrete obedience."[124] Here, Christ's call to concrete obedience is unconditioned. However, due to the intensity of Bonhoeffer's rhetoric, certain conditions come to subtly and implicitly shape discipleship so that it ceases to be a concrete response to Christ's call in a given situation. In this way, obedience to Christ becomes abstracted from concrete reality. The conditions that Bonhoeffer's rhetoric places on discipleship are suffering and opposition to the world. The problem is not suffering and opposition to the world per se, since Jesus surely names these as realities of discipleship.[125] Rather, the rub lies in what they preclude when they become conditions for discipleship—namely, responses to Christ's call which involve the alleviation of or liberation from suffering and worldly endeavors which are consonant with and genuinely in service of the vision of the Kingdom of God preached by Christ.

What these preclusions indicate is that once simple obedience becomes conditioned by suffering and an expectation of opposition, the world easily becomes a negative cypher which the church stands over against. Indeed, the church stands in the midst of the world proclaiming Christ's lordship, but even as it does so it draws a clear line of division between itself and the world.[126] As the church makes its incursions into the world it suffers and faces opposition, while in the safety of its own sphere it remains "[s]ecured from the world by an unbreakable seal" as it "awaits its final deliverance."[127] On this way of thinking, the sacred and the secular are distinct spheres and can remain so because the form of the disciple's obedience in the secular has already been dictated. Thus, the church need not engage with

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[122] *DBWE* 4:285.
[123] McBride, *The Church for the World*, 88–91.
[124] *DBWE* 4:81.
[125] Thus, it is only a problem when Mawson suggests that "suffering is integral to Christian discipleship" if by "integral" he intends suffering as a condition, rather than a consequence. See Michael Mawson, "Suffering Christ's Call: Discipleship and the Cross," *The Bonhoeffer Legacy: Australasian Journal of Bonhoeffer Studies,* Pre-Publication Version (2016): 18.
[126] *DBWE* 4:26.
[127] *DBWE* 4:260.

the world *as* the world which Christ has claimed, but only as that which stands in opposition to the church.

Of course, Bonhoeffer's inconsistent treatment of the relationship between the church and the world does not totally undermine his description of discipleship as participation in the reconciling work of Christ. In what follows, we shall see that, for Bonhoeffer, discipleship involves bearing and forgiving the sins of others, repentance, and real engagement with the world's troubles. Insofar as Bonhoeffer takes the separation between the church and the world to be generally permeable, this is grounded in the apocalyptic nature of the incarnation, Christ's death, and resurrection. "God does not abandon the earth. God created it. God sent God's Son to earth. God built a community on earth. Thus, the beginning is already made in this world's time."[128] The church-community through its very being as the body of Christ bears witness to the kingdom that has come and is coming. However, insofar as the church is made up of disciples, the witness which it bears to the kingdom is essentially active in nature and angled toward the world. Bonhoeffer sums this up when he writes:

> Proclamation becomes an event, and the event gives witness to the proclamation. The kingdom of God, Jesus Christ, forgiveness of sins, justification of the sinner by faith: all this is nothing other than the destruction of demonic power, healing, and raising the dead. As the word of the almighty God, it is deed, event, miracle. The *one* Jesus Christ goes through the country to his twelve messengers and does his work. The royal grace with which the disciples are equipped is the creative and redemptive word of God.[129]

Because discipleship is bodily participation in the living Christ, proclamation is necessarily embodied in deed, event, and miracle. Indeed, the work that disciples are called to is the enactment of Christ's victory over evil in his crucifixion and resurrection. "But what is work, if not this struggle with the powers of Satan, this struggle for the hearts of the people, this renunciation of [the disciple's] own reputation, possessions, and joys of the world, for the sake of serving the poor, the mistreated, and the miserable?"[130] The church, then, must proclaim the gospel of reconciliation as a witness to Christ and his kingdom, while also and always at the same time enacting the good news of that gospel in the world.

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[128] *DBWE* 4:105.
[129] *DBWE* 4:189.
[130] *DBWE* 4:190.

For Bonhoeffer, Christ's mediatorial work in and through the church is not aimed at separation, but genuine unity. Indeed, "it is precisely this same mediator who makes us into individuals, who becomes the basis for entirely *new community*. He stands in the center between the other person and me. He separates, but he also unites. He cuts off every direct path to someone else, but he guides everyone following him to the new and sole true way to the other person via the mediator."[131] Within the framework presented above, the church is a community of those who participate in Christ, and as such know the true way to the other person. That this true way to the other person is not only a reality within the church, but also orients the disciple toward the world is evident when we remember that to participate in Christ is to participate in his mission of reconciliation. "Inasmuch as we participate in Christ, the incarnate one, we also have a part in all of humanity, which is borne by him. Since we know ourselves to be accepted and borne within the humanity of Jesus, our new humanity now also consists in bearing the troubles and the sins of all others."[132] By bearing sins the disciple also bears witness to Christ, who bore the sins of the world in his body. In this way, she invites the world to abandon immediacy and enter into the mediated unity of the body of Christ.[133] Even though the church is separated from the world, it is separated by means of participation in Christ the mediator. As such, the means of its separation is also its commissioning to responsible action on behalf of the world.

Bonhoeffer refers to this as participation in the philanthropy of God: "The 'philanthropy' (Titus 3:4) of God that became evident in the incarnation of Christ is the reason for Christians to love every human being on earth as brother and sister. The form of the incarnate one transforms the church-community into the body of Christ upon which all of humanity's sin and trouble fall, and by which alone these troubles and sins are borne."[134] Participation in Christ, then, both separates disciples from the world and enables them to engage in active service to the world on Christ's behalf. Here, we are pointed back to the ongoing baptismal character of participation.[135] Disciples who live from the resurrection participate in Christ's sufferings and do so on behalf of the world. "As Christ bears our

131 *DBWE* 4:98.
132 *DBWE* 4:285.
133 Cf. *DBWE* 5:40–41.
134 *DBWE* 4:285.
135 On baptism as grafting, see Brian Bantum, *Redeeming Mulatto: A Theology of Race and Christian Hybridity* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010), 154–55.

burdens, so we are to bear the burden of our sisters and brothers. The law of Christ, which must be fulfilled, is to bear the cross."[136]

Furthermore, although Bonhoeffer continues to mistakenly construe Judaism in legalistic terms, justificatory participation in Christ does indeed create the conditions necessary for reconciliation.[137] Throughout *Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer points to the fact that "[t]he way to one's neighbor leads only through Christ," and this means that "[t]here is no genuine gratitude for nation, family, history, and nature without deep repentance that honors Christ above all these gifts." [138] Drawing on Barclay's language from earlier in the chapter, repentance, with regard to the disciple's worldly attachments, simultaneously acknowledges her illicit claims to immediacy and the fact that her worth is externally grounded in Christ.[139] As such, "[d]isciples encounter other people only as those to whom Jesus himself comes."[140] Discipleship drives toward reconciliation in the social sphere because it sees all people in and through Christ as the one who bears humanity in the incarnation. "Jesus' struggle for the other person, his call, his love, his grace, his judgment are all that matters. Thus the disciples do not stand in a position from which the other person is attacked. Instead, in the truthfulness of Jesus' love they approach the other person with an unconditional offer of community."[141] If Christ's judgment according to his grace is the sole determination of worth, then for the disciple to assume superiority over another in any given situation is to forget that the historical dialectical unity of one's life is found only in Christ and never in oneself. In other words, it is to forget that one's basis for boasting is Christ alone.

Thus, we have seen that even as participation in Christ sets believers and the church apart from the world, it also orients the disciple toward the world in the service of Christ's mission of reconciliation. For the disciple, repentance is active turning from worldly immediacies toward Christ as the sole mediator. This repentance allows the disciple to see the other solely in and through Christ, as one for whom Christ became incarnate, died, and was raised from the dead. As a community of repentance, then, the church-community does not cordon itself off from the world but moves toward the world in order to bear witness to Christ through forgiveness and the bearing of sin. As such, the aim of discipleship is to

[136] *DBWE* 4:88.
[137] *DBWE* 4:117.
[138] *DBWE* 4:96.
[139] *DBWE* 4:189.
[140] *DBWE* 4:170.
[141] *DBWE* 4:170.

proclaim and enact the reconciliation between God and humanity by bearing witness to the sole mediator between God and humanity, Jesus Christ.

In all of this, Bonhoeffer's vision for the disciple's participation in Christ's mission of reconciliation is clear. However, the inconsistent relationship he sketches between the church and the world prevents its full expression. Unlike the genuinely theological tension between resurrection and suffering, this inconsistency is not theologically tenable and, as such, cannot be maintained. In the next chapter, we shall see how Bonhoeffer resolves the inconsistency in the direction of the philanthropy of God by rendering concrete the relationship between the church and the world in such a way that they are no longer relegated to separate spheres. However, insofar as *Ethics* corrects an inconsistency in *Discipleship*, we shall argue that it does so as the second step which Bonhoeffer had in mind even as he wrote *Discipleship*. That is, the purpose of *Disicpleship* reflects the purpose of the preacher's seminary at Finkenwalde insofar as the goal of both is the formation of the disciple according to the word of Christ. Bethge describes this as Bonhoeffer's turning "to the ultimate for the sake of the penultimate itself."[142] This is to both agree and disagree with Florian Schmitz, who has offered an insightful rebuttal to the most commonly posited discrepancies between *Discipleship* and *Ethics*. By positing a genuine inconsistency in *Discipleship* that is resolved in *Ethics*, we are less keen to harmonize the two than is Schmitz.[143] However, Schmitz is certainly right when he distinguishes between "basic assumptions" and "updates" in Bonhoeffer's thought.[144] Indeed, *Ethics* resolves the inconsistency of *Discipleship* not by retreating from Bonhoeffer's basic assumptions, but rather by updating those assumptions in a manner that casts new light on *Discipleship*'s tensions. *Ethics,* then, is the working out of the formation of the disciple in and for the world.[145] Thus, the inconsistency evident in *Disicpleship* regarding the relationship between the church and the world is evidence that, while Bonhoeffer anticipated and felt the need for a second step, the concrete nature of discipleship in the world had yet to take shape for him.

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[142] Bethge, "The Challenge of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Life and Theology," 52. Here, Bethge is making reference to a theological framework employed by Bonhoeffer in *Ethics*. See *DBWE* 6:151.

[143] Florian Schmitz, "Reading *Discipleship* and *Ethics* Together: Implications for Ethics in Public Life," in *Interpreting Bonhoeffer: Historical Perspectives, Emerging Issues*, ed. Clifford J. Green and Guy C. Carter (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 148–50.

[144] Schmitz, 151–52.

[145] Cf. Hans Pfeifer, "The Forms of Justification: On the Question of the Structure in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Theology," in *A Bonhoeffer Legacy: Essays in Understanding*, ed. A.J. Klassen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 14.

VI. Conclusion

We have seen that in *Discipleship* Bonhoeffer's primary goal is to unfold justification's intrinsic connection to works. In other words, he is keen to show the doctrine's formative social and ethical import. As such, he draws on justification in a way that certainly overlaps with, but is clearly distinct from his early, academic theology. In order to show how justification disposes Christians to a certain form of social life, Bonhoeffer draws particularly on Pauline themes of participation, embodiment, and, to a lesser extent, reconciliation. Participation, as the content of discipleship, serves to locate Christ at the center of the believer's new existence, while its correlate—mediation—also locates Christ at the boundary of individual existence. This means that even as the disciple's new existence is determined by the baptismal logic of death and resurrection in a soteriological sense, so too is her embodied existence in the world shaped by the fact that the crucified and resurrected Christ mediates it to her. In other words, because the disciple participates in Christ in an embodied manner, when she moves toward the world her movement is dictated by a following after Christ. Based on the eschatological tension that Bonhoeffer is generally successful in holding, this means that the disciple lives from her unity with the resurrected Christ as one who participates in the sufferings of Christ in this world. And this suffering is not meaningless, but is distinctively Christian insofar as its ground is repentance, its form is the bearing and forgiveness of sin, and its aim is reconciliation. What remains to be seen, though, is exactly how justification establishes the disciple and the church in relation to the world as participants in Christ's reconciling work.

Chapter 6

Enacting Reconciliation:

Justification's Ultimacy and the Penultimate Reality of White Supremacy

I. Introduction

Gaylon Barker offers an apt summary of the previous chapter's central point when he writes: "By linking justification and discipleship, Bonhoeffer provided the orientation that refuses to allow God to be separated from the world. Since God and the world are linked together, justification has an ethical component."[1] Indeed, we argued that justification entails embodied participation in Christ, which is, in turn, intrinsic to discipleship and formative for Christian living. What we also saw, however, is that the concrete nature of the ethical component of justification is obscured by the inconsistent manner in which Bonhoeffer articulates the relationship between the church and the world. As such, we must now attend to the way in which justification establishes the church in relation to the world as Christ's reconciling body. In relation to all that has come before in this study, the establishment of the church in the world follows on the definition of the human being *coram Deo* and the formation of the disciple. Put another way, up to this point we have explored justification's implications for Christian self-understanding and other-understanding, as well as its implications for Christian formation. Now, we shall turn to consider the way in which justification establishes the disciple and the church in relation to the world, such that justification's social implications can be brought concretely to bear in daily life.

The chapter will proceed in three parts. First, we shall attend to the nature of the church's relationship to the world. Unsurprisingly, Christology features prominently in this discussion, highlighting the fact that the church's relationship to the world must be understood in light of the reconciliation between God and the world in Christ. In the second section, we shall focus on Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* manuscript, "Ultimate and Penultimate Things," in order to demonstrate how justification establishes the disciple in a world where the things before last must be interpreted in light of the last things. Here, we shall work with Bonhoeffer's text, but we shall do so with an eye to how it might be seen as constructively synthesizing the central concerns of the thesis as a whole. This will enable us to suggest one way in which we can concretely bring the social implications of justification to bear in the

[1] H. Gaylon Barker, *The Cross of Reality: Luther's Theologia Crucis and Bonhoeffer's Christology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 324.

life of the church.[2] To that end, the final section will focus on the constructive import of the social implications of justification by considering how they might function constructively to critique the western church's complicity in white supremacy.

II. Reconciling the Church and the World

If, in *Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer turned to the ultimate for the sake of the penultimate, then in *Ethics* Bonhoeffer is keen to show that the ultimate and penultimate are not rent apart, such that a turn to the ultimate entails an abandonment of or separation from the penultimate. Indeed, a turn to the ultimate is a turn to God's reconciliation of the world in Christ. For Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*'s focus on the way in which justification forms and mobilizes disciples for obedience finds its necessary complement and second step in the proclamation and enactment of reconciliation in the world. However, the question that *Discipleship* leaves undecided due to its inconsistency is: do disciples proclaim reconciliation between God and the world as a possibility or as a reality?[3] We shall return to Bonhoeffer's concept of the ultimate and penultimate below, and, in doing so, offer more precise definitions of both. Here, however, we shall focus on the reconciliation of God and the world in Christ as the basis for determining the relationship between the church and the world.

Kirsten Busch Nielsen points to the centrality of reconciliation in Bonhoeffer's thought when she writes: "Paul's words in 2 Corinthians that God reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18–19) play a central role in Bonhoeffer's writings…. That reconciliation *has* taken place and that this must throw light on every part of theology is a strong conviction in Bonhoeffer's own theology, which has Christology as its center."[4] That Bonhoeffer decisively identifies reconciliation between God and the world in Christ as a reality, rather than a possibility, is frequently commented upon.[5]

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[2] For a recent essay suggesting that "Ultimate and Penultimate Things" teases out the social implications of *Discipleship*'s concentration on grace, see Peter Frick, "Bonhoeffer on the Social-Political Dimension of Grace," in *Understanding Bonhoeffer* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 238–49.

[3] Cf. Clifford J. Green, "Editor's Introduction to the English Edition," in *Ethics*, ed. Clifford J. Green, trans. Reinhard Krauss, Charles C. West, and Douglas W. Stott (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 8–9.

[4] Kirsten Busch Nielsen, "Community Turned Inside Out: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Concept of the Church and of Humanity Reconsidered," in *Being Human, Becoming Human: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Social Thought*, ed. Jens Zimmermann and Brian Gregor (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 91.

[5] See recent discussions of this aspect of Bonhoeffer's thought in Eva Harasta, "Adam in Christ? The Place of Sin in Christ-Reality," in *Christ, Church, and World: New Studies in Bonhoeffer's Theology and Ethics*, ed. Michael G. Mawson and Philip G. Ziegler (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 71–74; Barry Harvey, *Taking Hold of the Real: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Profound Worldliness of Christianity.* (Cambridge, UK: James Clarke & Co, 2016), 40–41; Jennifer M. McBride, *The Church for the World: A Theology of Public Witness* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 101–4; Philip G. Ziegler, *Militant Grace: The Apocalyptic Turn and the Future of Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 175–80.

Indeed, Clifford Green calls it "Bonhoeffer's methodological starting point for *Ethics*."[6] As such, we shall only briefly outline the comprehensive nature of this reconciliation before commenting on Bonhoeffer's resultant rendering of the relationship between the church and the world. The section will then conclude by registering a brief concern with the manner in which the reality of reconciliation in Christ is sometimes articulated.

Bonhoeffer begins the manuscript, "Christ, Reality, and Good. Christ, Church, and World." by emphasizing that God's reality is the ultimate reality which trumps all others.[7] However, even to put it this way is deceiving. Indeed, God's reality is the *only* reality. On account of this, a theological ethic can neither be abstracted from the world's origin, nor its goal—namely, God.[8] Since God's reality is revealed only in and through Jesus Christ, the good can only be known via participation in, what Bonhoeffer calls, "the Christ-reality [*Christuswirklichkeit*]."[9] In other words, participation in the *Christuswirklichkeit* opens one's eyes to God's reality as that which determines the reality of the world. Thus, Bonhoeffer writes: "In Christ we are invited to participate in the reality of God and the reality of the world at the same time, the one not without the other. The reality of God is disclosed only as it places me completely into the reality of the world."[10] What Bonhoeffer means by this is that, in the incarnation, Christ reveals what sort of God is laying claim to the world—namely, a God who is for the world in the person of his son who takes on human flesh.[11] Through the incarnate life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, God and the world have been reconciled. Therefore, in Christ, humanity can once again understand the world according to its origin and goal.[12]

For Bonhoeffer, this precludes the possibility of understanding the church and the world as "two realms bumping against and repelling each other."[13] The reconciliation of God and the world in Christ, then, militates against an understanding the world and church as two separate spheres. "The space of the church is not there in order to fight with the world for a piece of its territory, but precisely to testify to the world that it is still the world, namely, the world that is loved and reconciled by God."[14] However, this is not to say that the church

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[6] Green, "Editor's Introduction to the English Edition," 7.
[7] *DBWE* 6:48.
[8] *DBWE* 6:49.
[9] *DBWE* 6:50, 58.
[10] *DBWE* 6:55.
[11] Cf. *DBWE* 2:90–91.
[12] Cf. *DBWE* 6:53.
[13] *DBWE* 6:57.
[14] *DBWE* 6:53.

and the world have become identical. Indeed, Bonhoeffer recognizes that Scripture often deals in spatial imagery when it speaks of the church.[15] Yet, even if—given the necessary visibility of the church—spatial imagery is inevitable, "one must be aware that this space has already been broken through, abolished, and overcome in every moment by the witness of the church to Jesus Christ."[16] Thus, insofar as Christ became incarnate in and for the world, his body—the church—exists in and for the world, enacting and proclaming reconciliation.

How, then, does this square with the apparent inconsistency, noted in the previous chapter, regarding *Discipleship*'s construal of the church-world relationship? Michael DeJonge's reading of the relationship between *Ethics* and *Discipleship* in light of the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms is helpful here.[17] Rather than positing that the former corrects the latter's shortcomings, DeJonge suggests that the respective ways in which they depict the relationship between the church and the world reflect different emphases within Bonhoeffer's flexible use of the doctrine of the two kingdoms. "The church must attend to the historical situation and adjust the degree to which its proclamation focuses inwardly or outwardly."[18] As such, Bonhoeffer's inward focus in *Discipleship* gives rise to its oppositional framing of the church-world relationship, whereas his outward focus in *Ethics* gives rise to his emphasis on reconciliation in Christ. According to DeJonge, then, "this is a shift in emphasis rather than a fundamental change in the church's task or proclamation, for in any case the church's proclamation is to the whole world of which the church is a part."[19]

However, DeJonge's emphasis on the continuity of Bonhoeffer's thought under the rubric of the two kingdoms risks minimizing the fact that, as we have already noted, *Discipleship* and *Ethics* can also legitimately be read as a two-step development of the social implications of justification. A focus on the church's obedient participation in Christ (*Discipleship*) must always lead to obedient enactment and proclamation of the gospel in the world (*Ethics*). Furthermore, while DeJonge makes a persuasive case for the governing logic of the two kingdoms in Bonhoeffer's thinking, *Discipleship*, when taken on its own, remains apparently inconsistent on the relationship between the church and the world. Yet, this

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[15] *DBWE* 6:62.
[16] *DBWE* 6:64.
[17] DeJonge has rehabilitated Bonhoeffer's perceived relationship to the two kingdoms doctrine in a way that helpfully sheds light on key aspects of his thought. In doing so, he provides a very specific definition of doctrine in relation to Bonhoeffer's use of it. With this in mind, I am not recommending the two kingdoms doctrine as such here, but rather DeJonge's use of it as heuristic tool for disambiguating aspects of Bonhoeffer's thought.
[18] Michael P. DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Reception of Luther* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 119.
[19] DeJonge, 119.

apparent inconsistency points not to a problem which needs to be corrected, but rather to an intrinsic development which pushes toward a necessary second step.[20]

DeJonge's work on the doctrine of the two kingdoms also helps to highlight a concern regarding a prominent recent interpretation of Bonhoeffer's theology—namely, that of Jennifer McBride in *The Church for the World*.[21] In his analysis of the *Ethics* manuscript "Heritage and Decay," DeJonge discerns three misalignments of the two kingdoms which Bonhoeffer critiques:

> The German-Lutheran secularization process misunderstands the two kingdoms in terms of *Eigengesetzlichkeit* [autonomy], the French Catholic tradition turns the heresy of the "essential goodness of human beings" into the idolatry of liberation, and the Anglo-Saxon Calvinist and enthusiast attempt to build the kingdom of God on earth fails to distinguish between the two kingdoms.[22]

Bonhoeffer's focus in *Ethics* is the correction of the first, "pseudo-lutheran" misalignment.[23] However, one might wonder if McBride's reading of Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* tends toward the third misalignment endorsed by the enthusiasts.

Core to her argument is a strongly apocalyptic reading of Bonhoeffer's theology of reconciliation in *Ethics*.[24] The problem is not her apocalyptic proclivities as such, but rather the way in which her stress on the ontological and cosmic unity of reality in Christ leads to an implicit identification of reconciliation's ultimacy with this-worldly penultimacy. This is most evident when, in describing *Discipleship*'s primary shortcoming, she poses a false opposition between "the cosmic impulse of Paul's apocalyptic gospel" and the justification of the sinner. Indeed, she implies that an emphasis on justification and the forgiveness of sin contributes to a "dualistic church/world conception."[25]

Her relentless focus on the unity of the church and the world also leads her to set Bonhoeffer's thinking in *Ethics* over against his "in Adam" and "in Christ" paradigm in *Act and Being*:

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[20] Contra McBride, *The Church for the World*, 96.
[21] McBride's work is of particular interest here because, in a manner similar to the present study, it seeks to show the fruitfulness of Bonhoeffer's theology for the church's public witness in the world.
[22] DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Reception of Luther*, 128.
[23] Cf. *DBWE* 6:56, 224.
[24] Both Barry Harvey (*Taking Hold of the Real*) and Philip Ziegler (*Militant Grace*) pick up on the apocalyptic valences present in *Ethics* as well. However, their respective studies both emphasize the justification of the sinner, forgiveness of sin, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the ongoing, albeit, relative duality of 'being in Adam' and 'being in Christ.' We shall see below that McBride either neglects or rejects each of these aspects, and therefore tends toward an implicit identification of the Kingdom of God and the world.
[25] McBride, *The Church for the World*, 96.

> Bonhoeffer's claim in *Act and Being* that human beings are always either a part of 'a community in "Adam" or in "Christ"' is much too rigid to square with his later understanding that all reality is Christ-reality: All of humanity is accepted, judged, and reconciled to Christ such that the church is simply the body in which Christ-reality is acknowledged, demonstrated, and proclaimed.[26]

The problem with this is that it erases the eschatological tension that Bonhoeffer is seeking to hold, as we shall see below, in his construal of the relationship between the ultimate and penultimate. The ultimate "is" of reconciliation swallows up the penultimate "will be" of redemption. Furthermore, McBride neglects the role of Holy Spirit as the one who gathers individuals into the church and unites them to Christ in the formation of the church-community. As the basis for the union between Christ and the church, the Holy Spirit does much more than merely empower the church for good works and proper awareness of reality in Christ.[27] Indeed, it proleptically and militantly creates faith and draws individuals into the ontological reality of the world reconciled in the body of Christ.[28] Insofar as the unitive and gathering work of the Holy Spirit takes place in the penultimate and is a necessary ingredient in God's reconciliation of the world to himself in Christ, there is still a real sense in which we can and should meaningfully speak of two communities—one "in Adam" and one "in Christ"—even as we avoid speaking of them in terms of an oppositional duality.[29]

Finally, as we transition to consider Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* manuscript, "Ultimate and Penultimate Things," it is worth noting one more way in which McBride's study overlooks the central importance of justification by faith for Bonhoeffer's theological ethic. In her discussion of the aforementioned manuscript, McBride again implies that justification is somehow at odds with the unity of life in the *Christuswirklichkeit*. Even though Bonhoeffer clearly associates justification with the ultimate numerous times throughout the manuscript,[30] McBride insists that this identification is subordinate to his overarching intent—namely, the description of "the ontological unity of this-worldly Christ-reality that at once envelops both

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[26] McBride, 127.
[27] These are the two roles that McBride ascribes to the Spirit in her description of apocalyptic theology (97–101).
[28] See Ziegler, *Militant Grace*, 71–79, on the eschatological work of the Holy Spirit.
[29] Of course, those who are united to Christ by the Spirit are both "in Adam" and "in Christ" according to the logic of the *simul*. On this, see Harasta, "Adam in Christ?" However, Harasta seems to share McBride's impulse, positing that, according to Bonhoeffer's logic of reconciliation in *Ethics*, the category of being "in Christ" envelops being "in Adam" (73–74).
[30] *DBWE* 6:146, 149, 150, 151, 156, 160, 168; cf. DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Reception of Luther*, 138; Feil, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 143; Frick, "Bonhoeffer on the Social-Political Dimension of Grace," 244; Plant, *Bonhoeffer*, 116.

the ultimate and penultimate."[31] The crucial point she misses is that, for Bonhoeffer, justification is both basic to the ultimate unity of reality and that which properly aligns and describes the relationship between the penultimate and ultimate. When justification is marginalized in this equation the ultimate impinges on the penultimate in a way that compromises the latter's integrity. In this way, McBride unconsciously emulates the misalignment of the two kingdoms which Bonhoeffer attributes to the enthusiasts. Therefore, we might say, contra McBride, that justification is the necessary starting point for Christian ethics because only then is the extrinsic ultimacy of Christ granted its full reality in the life of the disciple without compromising her threefold simultaneity as creature, sinner, and reconciled. [32]

III. Ultimate Justification and Penultimate Action

In his overview of Bonhoeffer's life and theology, Stephen Plant gives special attention to the ethical substance of Bonhoeffer's thought. However, he does so with a critical edge, leading him to ask at several points "whether Bonhoeffer's strong convictions about the distinctiveness of Christian theology, knowledge and ethics, does not make it difficult for Christians to engage with reality."[33] Responding to his own rhetorical question, Plant writes: "In his categories of the penultimate and the ultimate, he offers his strongest explanation yet of how Christians are in but not of the world."[34] Likewise, in a manner that is consonant with the trajectory of our study thus far, Peter Frick turns to the manuscript in order to show that it "extends grace from a theological doctrine to the social-political realm without creating an artificial dichotomy between theology and praxis."[35] In light of all this, it is hardly surprising that Bonhoeffer's treatment of "the last things and the things before last" serves as a fitting framework within which to synthesize what we have argued for thus far concerning the social implications of justification by faith in his theology.[36]

Bonhoeffer begins "Ultimate and Penultimate Things" with the following programmatic statement concerning the import of justification for the Christian life:

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[31] McBride, *The Church for the World*, 109.
[32] Cf. DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Reception of Luther*, 138.
[33] Plant, *Bonhoeffer*, 116.
[34] Plant, 116; cf. Rachel Muers, *Keeping God's Silence: Towards a Theological Ethics of Communication* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 89.
[35] Frick, "Bonhoeffer on the Social-Political Dimension of Grace," 238.
[36] "Ultimate and Penultimate Things" is a rendering of the German—"*Die letzen und die vorletzten Dinge*"—which literally means "the last and the things before the last" (*DBW* 6:137).

> The origin and essence of all Christian life are consummated in the one event that the Reformation has called the justification of the sinner by grace alone. It is not what a person is per se, but what a person is in this event, that gives us insight into the Christian life. Here the length and breadth of human life are concentrated in one moment, one point; the whole of life is embraced in this event.[37]

This, of course, must be understood under the broader umbrella of his earlier assertion, in the manuscript, "Guilt, Justification, Renewal," that, given the reality of the incarnation, "all thinking about human beings without Christ is unfruitful abstraction."[38] Recall, then, that justification for Bonhoeffer is not merely something that happens to human beings, but is rather Spirit-effected, embodied participation in the justificatory person and work of Christ. If this is the case, then we can say, broadly, that Christ's justificatory person and work are decisive for what it means to be human *coram Deo*, and, more specifically, that justification is decisive for the life of the Christian who is bound to Christ by the Holy Spirit. As such, human being, Christian and otherwise, is extrinsically grounded in Jesus Christ, the incarnate one who was crucified, is risen, and has ascended to intercede at the right hand of the Father on behalf human beings. Indeed, "[f]aith means to base life on a foundation outside myself, on an eternal and holy foundation, on Christ."[39]

For the sake of clarity we shall, at this point, transition to speak specifically of Christians and the Christian life in a manner that reflects the orientation of Bonhoeffer's manuscript. However, the assumption remains that all human beings must be understood according to Christ's justificatory person and work—namely, as those who exist extrinsically in Christ *coram Deo* and are therefore simultaneously created, sinful, and reconciled to God in Christ alone. With that in mind, Bonhoeffer not only highlights that the Christian life is extrinsically sourced in the justificatory person of Christ, but he also notes that this has profound relational implications: "In this saving light, people recognize God and their neighbors for the first time."[40] Participation in Christ sets the Christian in right relationship to God, and this, in turn, has serious epistemic consequences. The person who is justified by grace is united to the mediatorial person of Christ by the Spirit in faith, and as such, Christ enables her to know God and her neighbor according to the *Christuswirklichkeit*.

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[37] *DBWE* 6:146.
[38] *DBWE* 6:134; cf. 6:160.
[39] *DBWE* 6:147.
[40] *DBWE* 6:146.

Thus, borrowing Bonhoeffer's language, a person can only see her way to the neighbor when she is fully immersed in the penultimate as one who lives from the ultimate. But what does this mean? Here, it is useful to clarify, to the extent that it is possible, exactly what Bonhoeffer means by "ultimate" and "penultimate." As noted above, the ultimate simply is the justification of sinner by grace though faith. However, Bonhoeffer identifies two aspects of this ultimate word: the qualitatively ultimate and the temporally ultimate.[41] Justification is qualitatively ultimate because it is a word which encounters the individual from the outside, causing a complete break with all that came before.[42] It is liberative unto new life in Christ, but it also "is the word of forgiveness, and only in forgiving does it justify."[43] Justification is also temporally ultimate insofar as it occurs in time. "Something penultimate always precedes it."[44] Because "[j]ustification presupposes that the creature became guilty," its qualitatively ultimate aspect does not envelop the penultimate in such a way that guilt ceases to be taken seriously.[45] DeJonge summarizes this dynamic well: "With these two senses of ultimate, Bonhoeffer establishes both the radical alterity and the this-worldliness of justification."[46]

The challenge of living fully in the penultimate as one whose existence is sourced from the ultimate is in navigating between the Scylla of radicalism and the Charybdis of compromise. As Bonhoeffer sees it, compromise hates eternity, decision, simplicity, the immeasurable, and the word, whereas radicalism hates time, patience, wisdom, measure, and the real.[47] However, this strong language is tempered with the acknowledgment that "both contain truths and falsehoods." Indeed, the folly of compromise and radicalism is not an outright rejection of God, but rather an absolutizing of certain aspects of God; radicalism leans on God as judge and redeemer, while compromise looks to God as creator and preserver.[48] In the end, though, the presence of truth does not make the outcome of these extreme approaches any less destructive: "One absolutizes the end, the other absolutizes

[41] See Rachel Muer's observation that these are "the terms in which Bonhoeffer elsewhere discusses the resurrection," in *Keeping God's Silence*, 87.
[42] *DBWE* 6:149.
[43] *DBWE* 6:150.
[44] *DBWE* 6:150.
[45] *DBWE* 6:151.
[46] DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Reception of Luther*, 138.
[47] *DBWE* 6:156.
[48] *DBWE* 6:154.

what exists. Thus creation and redemption, time and eternity, fall into an insoluble conflict; the very unity of God is itself dissolved, and faith in God is shattered."[49]

Charting a route between radicalism and compromise is only possible when one remembers that the temporal ultimacy of justification is both subjective *and* objective. It is subjectively temporal in the sense described above, as it claims human beings in time and at a certain point in time. However, it is also objectively temporal insofar as the objective ground of justification is the person of Jesus Christ who became incarnate in time, lived, died, was raised, and has ascended to the right hand of the Father. "It is faith alone that sets life on a new foundation, and only on this new foundation can I live justified before God. This foundation is the living, dying, and rising of Jesus Christ. Faith means to find, hold to, and cast my anchor on this foundation and so to be held by it."[50] Thus, justification by faith is indeed a qualitatively ultimate reality that effects a break with the penultimate by binding Christians to a new foundation. Yet, because this foundation is the incarnate Christ "Christian life is participation [*Teilnahme*] in Christ's encounter with the world." That is, encounter with and in the penultimate realities of life.[51] In other words, the ultimacy of justification establishes a break *in* time, but not *with* time, because it binds the Christian to the God-man who entered time for the sake of the world's reconciliation.

Getting the relationship between the ultimate and penultimate right, then, is only possible in Christ and depends on holding together his humanity, death, and resurrection.[52] Bonhoeffer's emphasis on these three aspects of the incarnation takes on a heightened significance when we read it in light of the historical dialectic he ascribes to humanity in *Sanctorum Communio*.

> In the becoming human we recognize God's love toward God's creation, in the crucifixion God's judgment on all flesh, and in the resurrection God's purpose for a new world. Nothing could be more perverse that to tear these three apart, because the whole is contained in each of them. Just as it is improper to pit against one another a theology of the incarnation, a theology of the cross, or a theology of the resurrection, by falsely absolutizing one of them, such a procedure is false as well in any consideration of Christian life. A Christian ethic built only on the incarnation would lead easily to the compromise solution; an ethic built only on the crucifixion or only on the

[49] *DBWE* 6:154.
[50] *DBWE* 6:147.
[51] *DBWE* 6:159.
[52] On Bonhoeffer's consistent use of this three-fold formula, see Green, "Editor's Introduction to the English Edition," 7.

> resurrection of Jesus Christ would fall into radicalism and enthusiasm. The conflict is resolved only in their unity [*Einheit*].[53]

Recall that the real historical dialectic—in which human beings live as those who are simultaneously creatures, sinners, and reconciled in Christ alone—only finds its point of unity (*Einheitspunkt*) extrinsically through participation in Christ and the church.[54] Here, not only does Christ serve as the point of unity for the historical dialectic, but he also establishes a new way of being in the world in the three-fold unity of his person.

The three-fold unity of Christ's person, then, serves as the basis from which we can determine the relationship between the ultimate and penultimate. Because Christ takes on humanity, he "lets human reality exist as penultimate neither making it self-sufficient nor destroying it—a penultimate that will be taken seriously and not seriously in its own way, a penultimate that has become the cover of the ultimate."[55] In this way, Christ affirms the creatureliness of humanity, even as he reorients human existence in relation to himself. The crucifixion, then, is where the ultimate becomes real "as judgment on all that is penultimate, but at the same time as grace for the penultimate that bows to the judgment of the ultimate."[56] In other words, the cross is where human beings are judged for their sins. Yet, insofar as, in faith, they believe that they are really judged in the person of Christ, it is also the place where their penultimate existence is graciously reconfigured by the ultimate word of justification. On the cross of Christ the disruption of sin is countered and conquered by the disruption of grace. Finally, even as the resurrection "makes an end of death and calls a new creation into life," it does not abolish the penultimate.[57] Indeed, it serves as the inauguration of a new eschatological existence that inflects the lives of Christians in the present via their participation in the resurrected body of Christ. In this three-fold manner, the form of the Christian life is radically contingent on the person of Christ. Bonhoeffer sums this up in the following way: "Christian life is life with Jesus Christ who became human, was crucified, and is risen, and whose word as a *whole* encounters us in the message of justification of the sinner by grace."[58]

Life with Jesus Christ is, then, life that is fully immersed in the penultimate even as it lives from the ultimate. Here, Bonhoeffer's concern for embodied participation in Christ's

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[53] *DBWE* 6:157; *DBW* 6:149.
[54] Cf. *DBW* 10:358.
[55] *DBWE* 6:158.
[56] *DBWE* 6:158.
[57] *DBWE* 6:158.
[58] *DBWE* 6:159. Emphasis added.

reconciling work is on full display. Insofar as justification is temporally ultimate and, as such, is essentially related to the penultimate, it can be genuinely harmed by the disintegrating effects of evil in the penultimate. In other words, when human beings are harmed or oppressed physically, mentally, or emotionally this can seriously hinder their ability to hear the word of justification.[59] As such, the call to discipleship is also always a call to prepare the way. This, however, must always be held in tension with that fact that justification is also qualitatively ultimate, and as such, is solely dependent on the presence of Christ's Spirit.

While Bonhoeffer spends little time speaking of the body as such, he clearly sees the correlation between human embodiment and what he calls the Christian's task of "preparing the way [*Wegbereitung*]."[60] Indeed, "[b]odiliness and being human belong indivisibly together."[61] As such, Jesus cares about bodiliness because he "is really human and wants us to be human beings."[62] The Christian, who is justified in and through her bodily participation in Christ, now encounters the world with Christ, paving the way to the ultimate by caring for her neighbors in their penultimate, bodily existence. Indeed, there is nothing abstract about the task of *Wegbereitung*:

> It is, instead, a commission of immeasurable responsibility given to all who know about the coming of Jesus Christ. The hungry person needs bread, the homeless person need shelter, the one deprived of right needs justice, the lonely person needs community, the undisciplined one needs order, and the slave needs freedom. It would be blasphemy against God and our neighbor to leave the hungry unfed while saying that God is closest to those in deepest need. We break bread with the hungry and share our home with them for the sake of Christ's love, which belongs to the hungry as much as it does to us. If the hungry do not come to faith, the guilt falls on those who denied them bread. To bring bread to the hungry is preparing the way for the coming of grace.[63]

Thus, Christians must participate in the reconciling work of Christ not only by means of proclamation, but also through concretely caring for others in their embodied existence.

Christian life is, then, lived from and within grace, serving the relentless mission of God's grace in the world. The Christian lives from grace insofar as justification locates her existence extrinsically in Christ. Through his life, death, and resurrection she lives *coram Deo* for others. Even as her very existence is defined by the ultimate, she lives fully in the

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[59] *DBWE* 6:160.
[60] *DWBE* 6:161; *DBW* 6:154. See also Bonhoeffer's extended meditation on the right to bodily life in the *Ethics* manuscript, "Natural Life" (*DBWE* 6:185-196).
[61] *DBWE* 6:186.
[62] *DBWE* 6:158.
[63] *DBWE* 6:163.

penultimate, participating in the church-community where she is formed and sent out for the proclamation and enactment of reconciliation.[64] In this way, the Christian lives within grace. Finally, the Christian life is fundamentally marked by the task of *Wegbereitung*, which engages the church and the individuals that make it up in the proclamation and the enactment of God's reconciliation of the world in Christ. Alongside Christ, the Christian embodies reconciliation in the world. Therefore, the Christian lives from the ultimate, within the penultimate, loving and serving the penultimate for the sake of the ultimate.[65]

Recall Philip Ziegler's assertion, noted in the introduction to this study, that "Bonhoeffer's ethics [are] thoroughly *metaethical* in character."[66] Indeed, the goal throughout this thesis has been to show that, for Bonhoeffer, justification by faith in Christ is the basic theological presupposition that establishes the framework within which Christians live, move, and have their being. As such, we have seen that justification not only plays an important role in Bonhoeffer's ethics, but also in this theological anthropology and his theology of discipleship. Put another way, justification defines human being *coram Deo*, forms the Christian for discipleship by binding her to Christ, and establishes her in the church, for the world, as a witness to and participant in Christ's reconciling work.

In "Ultimate and Penultimate Things," Bonhoeffer draws these three strands together, showing that God's gracious justification of human beings in the person and work of Jesus Christ has profound social implications which govern Christian existence in the world. Yet, Bonhoeffer's theological insistence on the concrete over against the abstract beckon us to consider what real difference this might make for the life of church. As such, we shall, in the final section, provide a necessarily brief but suggestive case study in which the social implications of justification serve to highlight white supremacy as a theological problem. In order to face this problem, the church must confess its guilt and recognize afresh that its being, formation, and action are radically contingent on Christ's justifying grace.

IV. Justification as Critique and Reformation

At the outset of this case study it is helpful to distinguish between white supremacy as a theological problem and white supremacy as a *solely* theological problem. To suggest the

[64] Cf. Richard J. Perry, Jr., "African American Lutheran Ethical Action: The Will to Build," in *The Promise of Lutheran Ethics*, ed. Karen L. Bloomquist and John R. Stumme (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 86–87.
[65] See *DBWE* 6:159.
[66] Philip G. Ziegler, "'Completely Within God's Doing': Soteriology as Meta-Ethics in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer," in *Christ, Church, and World: New Studies in Bonhoeffer's Theology and Ethics*, ed. Michael Mawson and Philip G. Ziegler (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 101.

latter—besides cutting against common sense—implies that white supremacy is an issue that can be solved by *pura doctrina*. It seems patently obvious that this is certainly not the case. As such, it is better to say that white supremacy is a theological problem because, to the extent that it is present in the church, the church has failed theologically. That is, the church has failed to hear the Holy Spirit bear witness to Christ's justifying grace through Scripture in important ways, and its proclamation and public presence in the world have suffered because of it.

While there are certainly other core doctrines which can and should be drawn upon as the church seeks to provide a prophetic response to white supremacy, justification is particularly ripe for such use in light of the social implications teased out in the preceding chapters. Indeed, pursuing the social implications of justification is, according to Richard J. Perry, more consonant with the African-American Christian tradition than it is with the white Christian tradition.[67] Speaking specifically of the Lutheran response to slavery during the Civil War, Perry writes that "white Lutherans were quite satisfied and even energetic as they took on question about 'pure doctrine' and church polity. But they were remarkably passive when it came to working for justice and freedom on behalf of God's enslaved African-American sons and daughters."[68] In stark contrast, however, Perry suggests that, for the African-American, justification by faith entails self-affirmation, freedom, and justice.[69] "Justification leads justified women and men to act on behalf of and with others who are oppressed. This is what makes justification wholistic for African-Americans…. Justification is a process within God's purposeful activity to build a kingdom of justice equity, and wholeness."[70] By emphasizing that justification is a process, Perry, like Bonhoeffer, is affirming that justification and sanctification are bound together and cannot be viewed sequentially or in isolation from one another. Furthermore, rather than emphasizing the

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[67] This claim, in light of our study, perhaps lends heft to Reggie Williams' claim that "Bonhoeffer had formative experiences in New York in a key historical moment that inspired his efforts in Germany to uncouple the false connection between white imperialist identity and Jesus and its tragic imprint for Christianity." *Bonhoeffer's Black Jesus: Harlem Renaissance Theology and an Ethic of Resistance* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014), 3. Likewise, Josiah U. Young III (*No Difference in the Fare: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Problem of Racism* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 121–22) sees a deep consonance between Bonhoeffer's insistence on justification by grace and the theology he encountered at Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem during his year at Union Theological Seminary.

[68] Richard J. Perry, "Justification by Faith and Its Social Implications," in *Theology and the Black Experience: The Lutheran Heritage Interpreted by African and African-American Theologians*, ed. Albert Pero and Ambrose Moyo (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 15.

[69] It is important to note that self-affirmation is not intended here in the sense of self-justification. Rather, it is the appropriate affirmation of self in which a person's worth if firmly located in her gracious reception of the Christ-gift.

[70] Perry, "Justification by Faith and Its Social Implications," 18.

forensic side of justification as pure act, Perry asserts that the being of the one who is justified is drawn into Christ's body, the church, thereby becoming a participant in Christ's reconciling work in the world.[71]

So, there is a sense in which retrieving Bonhoeffer's insights regarding the social implications of justification by faith is simply a retrieval of what many black Christians have believed all along. For black Christians, the belief that justification by faith has real implications for their embodied, social existence is part and parcel with the belief that the God who justifies does so by taking on human flesh, suffering, dying, and being raised from the dead. Christ stands in bodily solidarity with his suffering people, interceding on their behalf before God, and offering them a "horizon of hope" by laying claim to their embodied existence through his resurrected body.[72]

Has it been misguided, then, to ask after the social implications of justification in the theology of a white, German, bourgeois pastor-theologian? There are several reasons to think that this is not the case. First, recent years have seen a burgeoning interest in Bonhoeffer as a theologian against white supremacy.[73] Amidst the growing literature, James Cone has set Dietrich Bonhoeffer alongside Martin Luther King Jr. as one of the few theologians to

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[71] Perry, 32. It is important to acknowledge Jennifer Harvey's recent critique of Christian reconciliation paradigms for addressing systemic racism in *Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014). However, the version of reconciliation she problematizes is based on a vision for "universal shared humanity" that seeks to overcome white supremacy with "interracial togetherness" (18–29). She takes issue with this approach because it fails to name and deconstruct whiteness. We shall see below that by locating justification at the heart of reconciliation whiteness is necessarily critiqued and at least some of Harvey's concerns are mitigated.

[72] M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 5–6; cf. Brian Bantum, *The Death of Race: Building a New Christianity in a Racial World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 90–92.

[73] Some of the earliest work in this regard was carried out by John W. de Gruchy (*Bonhoeffer and South Africa: Theology in Dialogue* [Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1984]) and Josiah U. Young III (*No Difference in the Fare*). More recent work includes: Alan Aubrey Boesak, "Church, Racism, and Resistance: Bonhoeffer and the Critical Dimensions of Theological Integrity," in *Luther, Bonhoeffer, and Public Ethics: Re-Forming the Church of the Future*, ed. Michael P. DeJonge and Clifford J. Green (Lanham: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2018), 137–49; Peter Frick, "Notes On Bonhoeffer's Theological Anthropology: The Case of Racism," in *Understanding Bonhoeffer* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 185–200; Ross E. Halbach, "Preparing the Way: Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Dialogue with Contemporary Theologians of Race" (PhD, University of Aberdeen, 2017); Harvey, *Taking Hold of the Real*, 178–208; Willis Jenkins and Jennifer M. McBride, eds., *Bonhoeffer and King: Their Legacies and Import for Christian Social Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010); J. Deotis Roberts, *Bonhoeffer and King: Speaking Truth to Power* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005); Williams, *Bonhoeffer's Black Jesus*; Josiah U. Young III, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Reinhold Niebuhr: Their Ethics, Views on Karl Barth and African-Americans," in *Bonhoeffer's Intellectual Formation: Theology and Philosophy in His Thought*, ed. Peter Frick (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 283–300; Josiah U. Young III, "'On My Way to Freedom Land': Bonhoeffer and Three Bright Lights of the Civil Rights Movement," in *Luther, Bonhoeffer, and Public Ethics: Re-Forming the Church of the Future*, ed. Michael P. DeJonge and Clifford J. Green (Lanham: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2018), 151–60.

actively oppose and speak out against white supremacy.[74] Likewise, Reggie Williams identifies Bonhoeffer as the "only prominent white theologian of the twentieth century to speak about racism as a Christian problem."[75] Second, the focus of this study has been a retrieval of the social implications of justification by faith in Bonhoeffer's thought. We have not suggested that Bonhoeffer is the only theologian to draw on justification in this way, but rather that his thought is particularly fruitful on this front given the coherence between his life and writing. Third, if Cone and Williams are correct, then Bonhoeffer is an important prophetic voice who critiqued the white, western church from within and as such, creates space for further critique.[76] Thus, his theological witness remains worthy of consideration, pointing to the manner in which God's gracious justification of real human beings makes "the view from below" essential to the task of Christian theology.[77]

If we accept, along with Bonhoeffer, that justification does indeed have social implications, then the distinction drawn above by Perry—between a white Christian understanding of justification and a black Christian understanding of justification—implies a critique of the white church. It is to this critique that we now turn, and in order to frame it we shall draw on Bonhoeffer's 1933 Christology Lectures once more. The opening portion of his Christology lectures sets the stage for what Andreas Pangritz has referred to as Bonhoeffer's Christology of encounter.[78] However, it may be fitting to further specify the nature of this encounter and simply speak of Bonhoeffer's confrontational Christology. Indeed, this seems particularly fitting in light of Bonhoeffer's assertion that "[t]here are only two possibilities when a human being confronts Jesus: the human being must either die or kill Jesus."[79]

Christology, then, cannot be reduced to mere reflection on an object. The possibility of asking the christological question rightly depends on a justifying encounter with Christ in which, according to the baptismal logic of participation in Christ, the human being dies and is resurrected in faith. As such, for Bonhoeffer, knowing Christ and speaking of him well necessarily involves a critique of one's being in which the self's claim to be its own center is

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[74] James Cone, "Theology's great sin: Silence in the face of white supremacy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Black Theology*, eds. Dwight N. Hopkins and Edward P. Antonio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 143.
[75] Williams, *Bonhoeffer's Black Jesus*, 139.
[76] Cf. De Gruchy, *Bonhoeffer and South Africa*, 75.
[77] *DBWE* 8:52.
[78] Andreas Pangritz, "'Who Is Jesus Christ, for Us, Today?,'" in *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. John W. de Gruchy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 136.
[79] *DBWE* 12:307.

denied, the self is dislocated, and relocated extrinsically in Christ. By characterizing this critique as a beckoning to death or a putting to death, Bonhoeffer highlights that the radical nature of humanity's ineptitude in knowing Christ is matched by an equally radical and gracious solution.

However, as Bonhoeffer sees it, sinful humanity is defined by the human logos. What this means is that they enthrone their reason and perception of the world over against Christ. As such, their natural tendency is to evade confrontation with Christ by reducing him to an idea. As an idea—rather than a transcendent, personal other—the human logos approaches Christ as one who is beholden to its prior categories and classifications. In other words, the human logos approaches Christ as an idea which is immanent to its intellect and proves what it already believes to be the case. Broadly speaking, then, reducing Christ to an idea yields two types of responses to him: the human logos can either reject Christ outright or self-negate. We shall only focus here on the latter.

Bonhoeffer writes that "what the [human] logos does under attack from the other Logos represents not philistine self-defense but rather a great insight into its power of self-negation, for self-negation signifies the self-affirmation of the [human] logos."[80] But what is self-negation? In invoking the term Bonhoeffer references Hegel's philosophy. According to Hegel, something is always defined in relation to its other, its negative. However, this other-as-negation is not fixed in its otherness, but can also be negated via sublation of the self and other. For Hegel, sublation is the synthesis of a term and its negative which yields a new, third term. While aspects of the original two terms are destroyed in the synthesis, they are ultimately taken up into and preserved in the new, third term.

With this in mind, what Bonhoeffer means by self-negation seems to be a situation in which confrontation with Christ is avoided by means of a synthesis between Christ and self. Thus, rather than the proper, negating critique of justification leveled by the person of Christ against the sinful human logos, the human logos affirms itself by assimilating Christ's critique only to the extent that the self is preserved. In other words, self-negation allows the human logos to have its cake and eat it too. It evades death and preserves its autonomy, all while accepting just enough of Christ's critique to deceive itself into believing that an actual confrontation has happened. By taking the idea of Christ into oneself, any subjection to Christ is, in reality, a subjection to the self.[81] And by partially performing and pre-empting

[80] *DBWE* 12:302.
[81] *DBWE* 2:108.

the death-dealing act of Christ, self-negation deceives the human logos into believing that it has surrendered itself to Christ, thereby blinding it to the fact that it continues to lay claim idolatrously to its own identity.[82]

After discussing these ways of evading confrontation while asking the christological question, Bonhoeffer returns to the reality of Christology: namely, that Christ is the transcendent, incarnate one who encounters humanity as a person.[83] Christ is the counter Logos to the sinful human logos. Here, Bonhoeffer flips the nomenclature of the gospel of John's first chapter on its head. In the beginning was the Logos, but after the fall he has become, to humanity, the counter Logos; God's "no" to the totalizing impulses of a humanity trapped in the total reality of sin. As such, Bonhoeffer puts the following words into the mouth of the counter Logos: "'I am the truth,' I am the death of the human logos, I am the Alpha and the Omega. Human beings are those who must die and must fall, with their logos into my hands."[84]

The counter Logos cannot be sublated and demands nothing less than the death of the human logos. The middle ground which self-negation supposedly creates is, in the end, an illusion. Christ either is Lord or he is rejected. When viewed in this way it becomes clear that, because the counter Logos is a person, he cannot *actually* be turned into an idea. Merely human persons that resist such reduction can be killed, but the resurrected God-man has conquered death. Here, however, there is a tension in Bonhoeffer's lectures because while he insists that the resurrected Christ cannot be killed by human beings, he also writes:

> Jesus Christ passes through our time, through different stations and occupations in life, always being asked anew, Who are you? and yet always, when some person is aware of having confronted this question, being killed anew…. Wanting to be finished with Christ means that now and then we kill him, crucify him, commit shameful acts against him, kneel before him with the scornful and say, "Greetings, Rabbi![85]

While Bonhoeffer believes that nothing can reverse the good news of the resurrection, he still wants to maintain that self-negation, reduction of the counter Logos to an idea, and evasion of confrontation do, in a real sense, make the human logos in the present just as guilty of killing Christ as the crowds who demanded his death in the first century.

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[82] Cf. Brian Bantum, *Redeeming Mulatto: A Theology of Race and Christian Hybridity* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010), 26–27.
[83] *DBWE* 12:302.
[84] *DBWE* 12:302.
[85] *DBWE* 12:307.

The self-negation of the human logos, then, is nothing more than a denial of the justification-inflected reality that human beings exist extrinsically *coram Deo* and cannot of their own accord escape the fragmented historical dialectic in which they live as creatures and sinners because reconciliation is only found in Christ. Furthermore, self-negation seeks to claim Christ even as it denies Christ's claim. In other words, the self-negating human logos wants Christ without mediation and alongside of the immediacies of self and world. Thus, the self-negating human logos cannot know Christ because it turns in on itself and refuses the baptismal logic of participation in Christ as the counter Logos. Thus, this fundamental denial of justification's import for what it means to be human also corresponds to a denial of justification's formative aspect since it refuses holistic participation in Christ as determinative of the believer's whole being. With this in mind, we shall now consider how Bonhoeffer's assertion that Christology begins with a justificatory confrontation in which Christ cannot be known apart from death forms the basis for drawing out an analogy between Bonhoeffer's Christology and the problem of white supremacy.

The following argument hangs on an analogy between the confrontation of the human logos by the counter Logos and the confrontation between the human logos trapped in whiteness—or, what we might call, the white logos—and the black neighbor.[86] In the analogy, the self-negating white Christian is comparable to the human logos, while the critiquing work of the black neighbor makes her analogous to the counter Logos. The language of analogy is crucial here because it preserves the differences between the two scenarios. For instance, not every human logos is white and the incarnate Christ is not identical with the black neighbor.

However, what makes this analogy so helpful is that it is not *merely* an analogy. It bears within it an element of univocity as well. Although not every human logos is white, every self-negating white logos is a human logos. As such, the person shackled to and blinded by whiteness simply is a sinner who consistently evades confrontation with Christ in order to keep the human logos intact. For the sake of clarity, it is important to stress that this

[86] Whiteness must be distinguished from white skin color or European decent. Regarding the relationship between whiteness and white supremacy: whiteness is intrinsically connected to white supremacy insofar as whiteness is "an idolatrous form of being in the world which participates in white supremacy–whether actively or passively, explicitly or implicitly," and white supremacy is understood as "a specific and historically particular form of racism, which in turn refers to a general set of practices and beliefs embedded in institution and practices that promote a hierarchical ordering of racial groups from best to worst." Johnny Ramírez-Johnson and Love L. Sechrest, "Introduction: Race and Missiology in Global Perspective," in *Can "White" People Be Saved? Triangulating Race, Theology, and Mission*, ed. Love L. Sechrest, Johnny Ramírez-Johnson, and Amos Yong (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2018), 13.

univocity is not present in the analogous relationship between the counter Logos and the black neighbor. Insofar as the black neighbor levels a critique against whiteness which participates in and serves the counter Logos' critique of the human logos, we can say that she is *like* the counter Logos. Yet, the black neighbor, insofar as she is also a human logos, cannot be identified with the counter Logos in a univocal manner. In sum, the analogy has teeth because the white logos simply is a specific type of human logos, and this univocal relation provides a basis from which to assert that the critique of the black neighbor participates in or is an aspect of the death dealing work of the counter Logos. We might say, then, based on this analogy, that the white Christian's inability to hear, see, and perceive the critique which the black neighbor levels against it is indicative of a self-negating resistance to the person of Christ.

How then does this analogy play out? Just as Bonhoeffer supposes that Christ cannot be known properly apart from a confrontation in which the human logos is put to death, so too must whiteness' supremacy die in order for the black neighbor to be known. Here, self-negation emerges as a particularly apt way of conceptualizing how and why so many white Christians are complicit in white supremacy. In self-negation, whiteness is not put to death. Rather, it is sublated with the critique of the black neighbor, and thereby preserved. And not merely preserved, but preserved in the most insidious way because self-negation is self-deception. As such, a blind spot is created which allows the white Christian to believe that their whiteness is conquered even as it continues to whitewash their reality.

In this way self-negation becomes an affirmation and an entrenchment of whiteness. This is, of course, symptomatic of an unwillingness to treat the black neighbor as other than oneself. As an idea, the black neighbor's self-revelation does not serve as the pre-requisite for my thinking about it.[87] Instead, it is only useful insofar as it affirms and proves what one already believes to be the case. Therefore the critique of the black neighbor is neutralized because it is forced to conform to a system of categorization shaped by whiteness rather than disrupting and restructuring that system.[88]

We can stretch the analogy further in relation to the purpose of Christ's critique. For Bonhoeffer the confrontation between the counter Logos and the human logos is one in which the human logos dies so that it might be resurrected with new eyes that can see Christ for who he truly is in his otherness. Likewise, the purpose of the critique which the black

[87] Cf. *DBWE* 12:301.
[88] Cf. Muers, *Keeping God's Silence*, 94.

neighbor levels against white people is to open their eyes to the reality of the black neighbor's otherness. However, just as the critique of the counter Logos diagnoses a problem— it reveals that humans are sinful and turned in on themselves (*cor curvum en se*)—so too does the critique of the black neighbor. It provides a vantage point from which the insufficiency of self-negation can be seen and whiteness' continuing supremacy can be unmasked.

How does the black neighbor provide this vantage point? Here we might think of how Reggie Williams—in *Bonhoeffer's Black Jesus*—picks up W.E.B. Du Bois' concept of the veiled corner as a way of describing Harlem during the Harlem Renaissance. Williams asserts that "[t]he veiled corner is hidden to the white majority. It gives the black observer residing on the border a truer representation of the dominant streams of consciousness on both sides of the color line than that which is offered by the one-history-fits-all, white-centered worldview."[89] It is no wonder then, that, according to Williams, Bonhoeffer's time spent in Harlem's veiled corner had a powerful effect on Bonhoeffer's theology, including his Christology.

By offering a perspective from the veiled corner, the black neighbor's critique holds up a mirror in which the white logos can recognize that it has evaded the counter Logos via self-negation and established an idol, a white christ in his place. The critique of the black neighbor, then, acts in service of and is really part of the critique of the counter Logos. Therefore, clinging to whiteness—refusing genuine encounter with the black neighbor—signals self-negation and evasion of confrontation with Christ.

Through self-negation the human logos deceives itself by creating a secret space for the retention of aspects of its identity, all the while believing that "it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20). However, insofar as Christ lives in the human logos alongside of those retained aspects of its identity, Christ begins to look a lot like the human logos. This is Christ as an idea conformed to the human logos, rather than Christ as a person, as the counter Logos standing over against the human logos. Thus, insofar as white supremacy is present in the church, we can locate it in the secret space created by self-negation and affirmed by a christ-idea, a white christ, conformed to the white logos.[90] Furthermore, this state of affairs is enabled and empowered by a fundamental misunderstanding of what it means to be justified by grace through faith. Here, justification

[89] Williams, *Bonhoeffer's Black Jesus*, 55; cf. Charles W. Mills, *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 99.
[90] Cf. Nico Koopman, "Bonhoeffer and the Future of Public Theology in South Africa. The On-Going Quest for Life Together.," *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif* 55, no. Supplementum 1 (2014): 994–95.

is merely the justification of sin rather than the justification of the sinner because there is no genuine encounter with the person of Christ.

This is a grim picture indeed. However, Bonhoeffer is helpful in reminding us that no matter how clever the white logos is in turning Christ into an idea, the present and resurrected counter Logos stands over against it at every turn. Even self-negation cannot ultimately protect the human logos from this reality. Because the church is the sphere in which Christ's lordship over the world is proclaimed, white supremacy obscured by self-negation will be rooted out there and everywhere. This is the promise of the resurrection. Yet, even so it is incumbent upon the church to prepare the way, to proclaim and enact the justifying grace of God which reconciles Jews and Gentiles within the church by rebuking whiteness as idolatry and fearlessly naming white supremacy as incompatible with God's reconciling work in Christ.[91]

Insofar as the critique which the black neighbor levels against the white logos serves to illuminate whiteness' supremacy, it reveals a space in which Christ's Lordship has been denied. It is thus part and parcel of the critique of the counter Logos. In the form of black flesh, the counter Logos confronts human being with a critique that both makes possible and requires the death of whiteness and the dismantling of white supremacy.[92]

In sum, then, the analogy is clear and compelling at a number of points. First, just as the human logos resists the counter Logos through open opposition or self-negation, so too do white Christians resist the critique of the black neighbor. Second, just as self-negation offers the illusion that one isn't actively opposing Christ, so too does it provide reassurance for the white Christian. They proudly proclaim their opposition to the KKK, segregation, etc., but will only take on board those aspects of the black neighbor's critique which are compatible with their own comfort. Third, just as self-negation treats Christ as a malleable idea, so too does it reduce the black neighbor to an idea that must conform to the reality of whiteness. Fourth, just as the self-negating human logos is complicit in the crucifixion of Christ when it refuses death, it is increasingly apparent, especially in North America, that either whiteness must be put to death or the black neighbor will continue to be killed.

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[91] Cf. Bantum, *Redeeming Mulatto*, 137; Love L. Sechrest, *A Former Jew: Paul and the Dialectics of Race* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 227–31; Bernard Ukwuegbu, "'Neither Jew nor Greek': The Church in Africa and the Quest for Self-Understanding in the Light of the Pauline Vision and Today's Context of Cultural Pluralism," *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 8, no. 4 (2008): 307–8.

[92] Without mitigating the need for the death of whiteness, Brian Bantum goes further, calling for a christological understanding that also entails the death of race. See *The Death of Race*, 127–42.

Finally, the white Christian's inability to hear the black neighbor's critique and act accordingly is indicative of a fundamental misunderstanding of the doctrine of justification by faith, as well as a resistance to, and, if we follow the analogy with Bonhoeffer far enough, even a killing of Christ. Thus, white Christians must surrender their whiteness to the killing work of the counter Logos in order to properly hear, respond to, and love their black neighbor.[93] Used in this way, Bonhoeffer's Christology forms an analogy which emphasizes that racism and white supremacy in the church is indeed a struggle that must involve death in order to stem the tide of violence. As such, there is no self-negating middle ground where white supremacy and Christ can peacefully co-exist.

V. Conclusion

It is hardly revolutionary to claim that white supremacy and Christianity are incompatible. However, the fact that much of the western church remains, to some extent, beholden to whiteness and white supremacy points to a fundamental misalignment within the theology being espoused in these spaces.[94] One such misalignment occurs when justification by faith is reduced to the personal salvation of the individual and grace becomes a badge of pride rather than a gift which grounds human worth extrinsically in Christ.[95] When grace becomes a commodity that the individual can possess then Christ becomes an idea that is imminent to the intellect. Here, sin ceases to be taken seriously and the moral, rational, and teleological hierarchies we identified in chapter three are unleashed in the context of the church.[96]

In radical contrast to grace conceived of as a commodity and the justification of sin stands grace as a gift and the justification of the sinner with all its attendant social implications.[97] Here, Christ's person is the extrinsic ground of all human being and worth.

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[93] Cf. Harvey, *Taking Hold of the Real*, 206.

[94] Another important misalignment not addressed here is the perennial problem of Christian supersessionism. On the connections between this and white supremacy in the church generally, see J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010). On Bonhoeffer and supersessionism, see Harvey, *Taking Hold of the Real*, 178–233; Halbach, "Preparing the Way," 117–47.

[95] Our positive emphasis on justification theology here differs markedly from Douglas Campbell's generally negative reading. However, his recent essay ("Mass Incarceration: Pauline Problems and Pauline Solutions," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 72, no. 3 [2018]: 282–92) concerning the manner in which certain interpretations of Paul have come to shape the American penal system in problematic ways is a notable and important attempt to correct soteriological misalignments in Christian theology.

[96] Cf. Josiah U. Young III, "'Is the White Christ, Too, Distraught by These Dark Sins His Father Wrought?': Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Problem of the White Christ," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 26, no. 3 (1999): 325–28.

[97] Cf. Barry Harvey, "The Wound of History: Reading Bonhoeffer after Christendom," in *Bonhoeffer for a New Day: Theology in a Time of Transition*, ed. John W. DeGruchy (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 289–92.

Indeed, the ongoing presence of sin in the historical dialectic of human existence precludes the possibility of hierarchy and Christ as the mediator of all reality relativizes human particularity even as he affirms it in his recapitulation of *creatio ex nihilo*.[98] Likewise, the baptismal logic of participation means that critique and death can never be separated out from affirmation and resurrection. When these implications of justification are neglected the church is made vulnerable to the valorization of hierarchies and the sanctification of particularities in a way that evades and turns a deaf ear to the critiquing and justifying word of the counter Logos. The *sanctorum communio* ceases to understand itself as simultaneously the *peccatorum communio*, and the possibility that the critique of black Christians—and all persons of color for that matter—might be received as the word of Christ is precluded.[99]

Renewed attention to the social implications of justification by faith must certainly, then, begin with repentance.[100] The church and its individual members must confess that far too often they have lived only from the resurrection, failing to take seriously God's judgment on their sin in the cross and Christ's affirmation of the bodily existence of real human beings in the incarnation. According to Bonhoeffer, though, repentance is not a verbal magic trick that lets the church off the hook. "Continuity with past guilt, which in the life of the church and the believer is broken off by repentance and forgiveness, remains in the historical life of nations."[101] The scars of historical guilt run deep. Because the church does not live in a bubble, isolated from history and the world, repentance requires a full engagement with the hard, humbling, and embodied work of reconciliation even as its members take comfort in the ultimate word of justification.

Thus, by retrieving the social implications of justification in Bonhoeffer's theology we are better able to name the theological misalignment according to which justification commodifies grace and endorses complacent, self-negating self-satisfaction on the part of

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Remarkably, Harvey here draws on the same insights regarding ancient gift-economies as John Barclay in *Paul and the Gift*, which was published eighteen years later in 2015.

[98] This way of understanding Christ's mediating and justifying work provides a way of thinking about humanity in Christ that does not demand an erasure of particularity. For a recent critique of the correlation between Christian claims regarding the possibility of salvation for all people and the authorization of "compulsory mutability," see Denise Kimber Buell, "Early Christian Universalism and Modern Forms of Racism," in *The Origins of Racism in the West*, ed. Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 109–31. See also Mills, *Blackness Visible*, 92.

[99] For a helpful recent critique of theologies that fail to take seriously the ongoing presence of sin in the church, see Michael Mawson, "The Spirit and the Community: Pneumatology and Ecclesiology in Jenson, Hütter and Bonhoeffer," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 15, no. 4 (2013): 453–68; cf. *DBWE* 1:213.

[100] Cf. Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, "*Siempre Lo Mismo*: Theology, Rhetoric, and Broken Praxis," in *Can "White" People Be Saved? Triangulating Race, Theology, and Mission*, ed. Love L. Sechrest, Johnny Ramírez-Johnson, and Amos Yong (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2018), 128–31.

[101] *DBWE* 6:144.

white Christians. Yet, even as an understanding of justification which takes seriously its social import names the misalignment it also provides a corrective: highlighting Christ as the gracious ground of human existence in the historical dialectic, making discipleship intrinsic to justification via the logic of participation, and casting a vision for the church as a community that lives from the ultimate, within the penultimate as those engaged in *Wegebereitung* by proclaiming and enacting the ultimate. In this corrective, the all-encompassing import of Christ's justifying grace for human existence counteracts a thin understanding of justification as self-affirmation and instead decenters the white Christian's sense of self in such a way that Christ replaces the immediacy of whiteness. When this happens the white Christian is freed to hear the critique of her black neighbor and respond in repentance, co-suffering solidarity, and embodied acts of reconciliation.

Conclusion

Bonhoeffer's concern for harmonizing doctrinal and ethical considerations was on display early in his life, when, reflecting on his time and the people at Union Theological Seminary in 1930/31, he simultaneously expresses his respect for their commitment to social action and his deep frustration with their dearth of dogmatic sensibilities.[1] This is especially on display when he writes:

> I learned much from my own experiences in Harlem. The impressions I got of contemporary representatives of the social gospel will remain determinative for me for a long time to come. The sobriety and seriousness of a book such as that of H. Ward, *Which Way Religion?* is irrefutable; and yet the entire protest must repeatedly be raised if that is preached as *real* Christianity while abbreviating all the crucial Christian ideas. In many discussions and lectures I tried to show that Reformation Christianity does indeed include rather than exclude all these things, but that their assessment is different. But people basically didn't want to believe that.[2]

The book Bonhoeffer mentions, given to him by Marion and Paul Lehmann, was written by Harry F. Ward, an avid advocate for the social gospel. Thus, as early as his time in New York, and perhaps partially on account of that time, Bonhoeffer believed that the ethical concerns of the social gospel were contained within the fundamental principles of the Reformation.

In many ways, this thesis has served to show how this basic assumption inflects Bonhoeffer's use of the doctrine of justification in his theology. However, in doing so the goal has not been simply to highlight a key aspect of Bonhoeffer's thought, but rather to think along with Bonhoeffer in an effort to retrieve his insights for the church in the present. As we have identified the social implications of justification by faith in Bonhoeffer's theology, we have attempted to do so in a way that demonstrates the social relevance of these implications as well as their basic scriptural fidelity. In other words, we have argued that the way in which justification shapes what it means to be human in Bonhoeffer's thought is not only true to Scripture, but also has much to contribute to the church's witness.

Focusing on the manner in which justification shapes Bonhoeffer's anthropology and his ethics of discipleship, the thesis unfolded in two overlapping parts. Chapters one through three argued that justification shapes Bonhoeffer's theological anthropology in important and socially relevant ways, while chapters four through six argued that the

[1] *DBWE* 10:307–317.
[2] *DBWE* 10:318–319.

soteriological substance of justification necessarily entails a form of discipleship which enacts and proclaims reconciliation in and for the world. In the first part, the social implications of justification were primarily evaluative, providing a soteriologically-informed, theological basis from which to understand oneself and the other. The second part offered an account of justification's prescriptive social import by unfolding what it means for the Christian to be bound to the justificatory person of Christ. Taken together, we have argued that justification's social implications emerge when the doctrine is articulated in a manner that sheds light on and indicates the character of human being and action *coram Deo*.

In order to provide a framework through which to evaluate the ways in which justification inflects Bonhoeffer's anthropology, chapter one explored the theological anthropology of Martin Luther. Engaging several recent studies, we concluded that Bonhoeffer's theology is shaped by Luther more than any other theologian. Having established this, we turned to Luther's *Disputation Concerning Man*. Here, we paid particular attention to Luther's articulation of the material significance of justification for what it means to be human *coram Deo*, as well as the key epistemological role justification plays in enabling one to know human being theologically. This enabled us to see that justification shapes anthropology in three important ways for Luther—first, by setting the person in a relational framework *coram Deo*, second, by locating human being extrinsically in this relation to God, and third, by interpreting human existence according to the three-fold theological simultaneity of creation, sin, and reconciliation.

With these three key elements of Luther's justification-based anthropology in mind, we turned, in chapter two, to Bonhoeffer's early, academic theology in order to make the case that justification plays a similar role in shaping Bonhoeffer's theological anthropology. We began by arguing, contra Clifford Green, that justification grounds Bonhoeffer's thinking about the human person, rather than sociality as such. Then, we outlined the way in which Bonhoeffer gives priority to God's freedom and grace in establishing humanity in creation, preserving them in sin, and re-establishing them in reconciliation. Here, Bonhoeffer's approach differs from Luther insofar as he offers a robust account of the way in which Christ and the church determine human being, thereby overcoming the impasse between God's forensic act and the effective continuity of human being. However, even with the addition of these specific christological and ecclesial concentrations, we argued that Bonhoeffer demonstrates concerns for relationality, extrinsicality, and the historical-dialectical nature of human being in a manner that runs parallel to Luther.

In chapter three, we took up the insights of the previous chapters and argued that Bonhoeffer's justification-shaped anthropology was key to his resistance to German idealist anthropologies and, by inference, to the racializing ideology of National Socialism. To establish this, we first surveyed the philosophical anthropologies of Kant and Hegel demonstrating that in both cases a moral and rational teleology determined their articulation of what it means to be human. We then argued that the moral, rational, and teleological bent of Kant's and Hegel's anthropologies made them ripe for co-option by National Socialism in service of its racializing ends. Then we showed that insofar as the doctrine of justification shaped Bonhoeffer's anthropology, his understanding of what it means to be human stood in stark contrast to that of Kant and Hegel. As such, he was well equipped to resist a similar co-option by the *Deutsche Christen*. The chapter then concluded with a consideration of Bonhoeffer's account of the orders of preservation, arguing that this formulation is more consistent with his own theology than his later formulation of the divine mandates in *Ethics*.

Chapter four marked our transition from the anthropological focus that characterizes the first part of the thesis to the more explicitly social and ethical concerns of the second part. Here, we drew on recent developments in Pauline theology in order to evaluate the Pauline provenance of Bonhoeffer's justification-shaped anthropology. On the basis of this critical assessment, we simultaneously affirmed key elements in Bonhoeffer's thinking while challenging others. Whereas we affirmed the central insights described in the first three chapters—which Bonhoeffer creatively appropriated from Luther—it became clear that he had yet to draw sufficiently on three elements that are fundamental to a Pauline theology of justification: participation, embodiment, and reconciliation.

In light of these developments, we went on to show, in chapter five, how Bonhoeffer's emphases had changed by the time he came to write *Discipleship*. Indeed, a growing focus on Scripture and the coinciding church struggle led Bonhoeffer to draw on justification in a fresh way. As such, we argued that participation, embodiment, and reconciliation—those Pauline themes which were underdeveloped in his early theology—emerged as central foci for Bonhoeffer during the Finkenwalde period. Taking each theme in turn, we first showed that Bonhoeffer's theology of discipleship is fundamentally dependent on a logic of participation that reflects the justificatory death and resurrection enacted in baptism. At the same time, we noted a weakness in Bonhoeffer's account insofar as the resurrection remains subtextual to his over-riding emphasis on the cross and suffering in discipleship. With this in mind, we sought to revise Bonhoeffer's insights here by

suggesting that being bound to Christ leads to a form of discipleship shaped by embodied participation, not only in his life and death but also in his resurrection. Third and finally, we argued that taking bodily participation in Christ seriously is of crucial importance for an account of discipleship that prioritizes the enactment and proclamation of reconciliation in the world. Even so, we suggested that Bonhoeffer's inconsistent portrayal of the relationship between the church and the world weakens his impulse toward reconciliation in *Discipleship*. Consequently, his theology of discipleship requires further elucidation if this inconsistency is to be remedied and a robust theology of reconciliation is to emerge.

Chapter six explored a further stage in Bonhoeffer's development wherein he seeks, in his *Ethics*, to correct *Discipleship*'s inconsistent portrayal of the relationship between the world and the church by making God's reconciliation of the world in Christ central to his argumentation. This set up our engagement with the *Ethics* manuscript "Ultimate and Penultimate Things," which, we argued, draws together the anthropological and ethical considerations of the thesis, thereby providing, *in nuce*, a unified articulation of the social implications of justification in Bonhoeffer's thought. To support this, we demonstrated that in this manuscript a clear picture emerges in which the historical dialectic of creation, sin, and reconciliation is extrinsically unified *coram Deo* via participation in Christ's three-fold person as the incarnate, crucified, and risen one. Furthermore, the embodied nature of this participation sets Christians within the church as those who live from Christ's justificatory person, even as they enact and proclaim Christ's reconciling work in the world. We then sought to make all of this concrete in the final section of the chapter by presenting a case study in which we argued that the presence of white supremacy in the church can, in part, be traced to a misalignment in its soteriology, which corresponds to its failure to take seriously the social implications of justification by faith.

In all of this, the present thesis has sought to make a decisive contribution on two different levels. First and primarily, it has sought to address four lacunae or areas of weakness in Bonhoeffer scholarship:

i) It offers the first exploration of the social implications of justification in Bonhoeffer's thought.

ii) It has contributed substantively to a relatively small body of literature in English that explores the shaping presence of the doctrine of justification by faith in Bonhoeffer's thought.

iii) It offers the first extended exploration of how the historical dialectic structures Bonhoeffer's theological anthropology.

iv) It draws Bonhoeffer's thinking on justification into extensive dialogue with recent and major works in Pauline theology—something not previously undertaken.

A secondary, yet still central aim of the thesis was to show how an ancient doctrine, such as justification, can be re-visioned in a manner that gives full weight to its bearing on concrete, human existence. In other words, its aim was to make a substantive contribution to conversations surrounding the relationship between doctrine and ethics. To this end, the present study has drawn on Bonhoeffer's insights in order to explore the social implications of justification by faith in a manner that has not previously been attempted in such length. Of particular significance is the light this sheds on the relationship between embodiment and justification along with the attendant implications of this relationship in the social realm.

While a comprehensive treatment of the social implications of justification by faith fell outside of the scope of this thesis, by focusing on the thought of Dietrich Bonhoeffer we have shown that the profound social import of the doctrine can and should be retrieved by the wider guild. As a concrete expression of this, we sought to illustrate justification's social significance by adopting the problem of white supremacy in the church as a case study. This served to expose the extent to which more research needs to be pursued in this regard. Further exploration on how justification interprets bodily existence is especially promising. Along this line, justification's social import should prove fruitful when brought to bear on such social issues as gender, class, disability, and socioeconomic status. These areas also begin to hint at the relevance justification may have for political theology and the challenge of discerning a doctrinal grounding for the church's political witness. Enough has been said, however, to establish the fact that renewed attention to the social implications of justification will play a key role in shaping the church's proclamation of the gospel in ways that dissolve the widespread and deeply problematic dichotomy between soteriology and social enactment.

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