TITLE: "A study in the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer with particular reference to Christian spirituality."

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Dedicated to the people of Ruchill Church
of Scotland who seek to serve Jesus Christ.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I cannot exactly state when I was first introduced to the life and work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. I am certain that it was one of the many phrases associated with his name which attracted me to explore further this modern disciple of Christ. After many years of reading and researching into his works, I am convinced that Bonhoeffer is very relevant to the modern problems associated with a Christian style of living. Many of his insights are still awaiting sympathetic investigation.

It seems an irrelevant exercise to argue that he would have repudiated much of his prison writings and ideas if he had lived. He has left us a most interesting and stimulating last will and testament of theological probings. This thesis is an attempt to sift through his many works and find a style of life for the modern Christian. I can but hope that some of the areas I have discussed will lead more accomplished writers to further expound Bonhoeffer's work.

This thesis bears my name but behind it are a host of others who made it possible. Ronald Gregor Smith of Glasgow University under whom I studied for nearly two years stimulated further reading of Bonhoeffer. Iain Nicol, supervisor and friend, never tired (as far as I could see) to give constructive criticism and advice. Mrs. Molly Sheffield, a member of my Church and a much overworked Clerk to my Deacon's Court at Ruchill, typed the manuscript with great diligence and care. To all I extend my sincere thanks. The faults which lie ahead, are entirely my own.

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SUMMARY

This thesis is a study in the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer with particular reference to Christian spirituality. There is a whole list of terms applicable to this notion. There is the 'spiritual life', 'spiritual outlook', and 'spiritual understanding.' All of them suggest the notion of something esoteric, private, exclusive, separated from the generality of men, associated with a select few. This is an utter falsification of the position of Bonhoeffer. For him spirit is the ultimate reality. Spirituality implies engagement of the world in all its structures. The thesis examines this in the context of the whole theology of Bonhoeffer with particular reference to the Letters and Papers from Prison.

The method employed stresses the element of synthesis found in Bonhoeffer's theology. Throughout the thesis reference is made to the synthesis of faith and worldliness, ultimate and penultimate, resistance and submission, and prayer and righteous action. The synthetic approach of Bonhoeffer to theological concepts is stressed in opposition to the dialectical theology of Karl Barth.

Having examined and discussed the major areas in Bonhoeffer's theology the thesis concludes by drawing all these areas together into a structure of Christian Spirituality. Particular reference is made to the concept of the responsible deputy and the Church in an irreligious world. The fundamental structure of Christian Spirituality is defined in terms of being-there-for and with-others.

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose

Letters and papers from prison have contributed greatly to The Christian Faith. St.Paul's group of captivity epistles to the Philippians, to the Colossians, to the Ephesians, and to Philemon make up a valuable part of the New Testament. The monk Martin Luther, while imprisoned in the Wartburg, wrote pamphlets and translated Erasmus's Greek New Testament into German.[1] Recently, Richard Wurmbrand produced sermons while in solitary confinement in Bucharest.[2]

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote his most stimulating theology while in a prison cell. Although his prison letters[3] are fragmentary they have become a valuable source for modern theology. It is not the intention of this thesis to examine the possible psychological effects of imprisonment on Bonhoeffer. It is sufficient to say that his Letters and Papers from Prison reflect a mind grappling with doubts and questions, yet seeking to find God through his experiences.

This thesis examines Bonhoeffer's Letters and Papers from Prison in relation to his earlier theology. Such ideas as world come of age, the end of religion, religionless Christianity, the secret discipline, and Jesus Christ the Man for Others are examined within the context of his whole theology.

It is recognised that Bonhoeffer's "prison theology" is given prominence by most of his commentators. However, the prison letters do not constitute a systematic work, but rather a series of impromptu thoughts and ideas. Paul van Buren has suggested that these ideas should be considered as "signals of discovery".[4] This "ad hoc" theology,

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1. Young Man Luther. Erik Erikson. pp. 225-27
2. Sermons in Solitary Confinement. R. Wurmbrand.
3. Letters and Papers from Prison. Dietrich Bonhoeffer.
4. Union Quarterly Review. Vol.XXXII. No.1 Fall, 1967. Paul van Buren, Paradoxes in Bonhoeffer.

poses problems because it is a compressed theology. However, we believe that Bonhoeffer's theology contributes to an understanding of the Christian spiritual life in the modern world.

The statement of the thesis is as follows:

> "Christian spirituality is a disciplined style of life. It is founded upon the belief that the Christian receives his life as a trust from God and that he is responsible for his life to God. It is a style of life characterised by the synthesis of prayer and righteous action. The Christian represents God and serves Him by serving his fellow man. He witnesses to Christ's hidden lordship within the everyday world of men and brings his faith in Christ as Lord and Redeemer of the world, to bear upon the structures of life. He is called to engage the world in God's name. Christian spirituality has as its basic belief and motive, the understanding of God in incarnational terms of being-there-for-others."

This statement is constructed on the following premises.

1. Bonhoeffer is not considered in dialectical terms. We adopt the standpoint that Bonhoeffer is a <u>theologian of synthesis</u>. By this we mean that he synthesises the message of Christianity and the reality of the world. This is contrary to the views held by Bonhoeffer's major commentators, one of whom, James Woelfel suggests that Bonhoeffer,

> "practised an 'all-embracing' dialectic, so expressive of his totally theological mind."[5]

The thesis will show that Bonhoeffer consistently seeks a synthesis between such diverse ideas as <u>prayer</u> and <u>action</u>, and <u>faith</u> and <u>worldliness</u>, <u>Church</u> and <u>world</u>, <u>ethics</u> and <u>orthodoxy</u>.

2. The second premise understands Bonhoeffer as a <u>theologian of reality</u>. It can be argued that Bonhoeffer's major works, such as <u>Sanctorum Communio</u>, <u>Christology</u>, <u>Cost of Discipleship</u> and <u>Ethics</u>, are written with little reference to the modern secular world. However, the <u>Letters and Papers from Prison</u>, disclose a new awareness of this world.

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5. James Woelfel, <u>Bonhoeffer's Theology-Classical & Revolutionary</u>. p. 32

The most recent studies of Bonhoeffer by Heinrich Ott[6] and André Dumas[7] refer to him as a theologian of reality. The reality to which Bonhoeffer addressed himself was the reality of God's world which had come of age. This reality does not stand in isolation from God. Bonhoeffer understood the world come of age as standing in the shadow of Calvary and in the light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The world come of age is a redeemed world. The motive force and centre of all Bonhoeffer's thinking is that reality is to be understood in Christological terms.

All these ideas are contained in the statement of the thesis and shall recur as major themes throughout this work.

In order to clarify the claim that Bonhoeffer is a theologian of synthesis we shall begin with a discussion of Karl Barth. Although Bonhoeffer greatly admired Barth, the divergence between them is the foundation of Bonhoeffer's radical thinking. In order to expose this divergence it is necessary to begin with dialectical theology.

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6. H. Ott, Reality & Faith: The Theological Legacy of D. Bonhoeffer.
7. A. Dumas, Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologian of Reality.

CHAPTER ONE.

THE PROBLEM OF DIALECTICAL THEOLOGY

The method of dialectics was first employed by the Greek philosophers. Its origins lie in its Greek meaning where it represented a conversation or dialogue between two parties holding opposite positions. Its central idea is that of compromise. Each statement made about a concept or idea has a counter statement. Both the statement and counter statement are held to be partly correct and partly wrong. By refining and correcting each in light of the other, a third position is reached incorporating both. In the clash of ideas each statement is refined till it becomes more complete in itself. However, the fact is that dialectical is a term which lacks a fixed and uniform definition although it may be possible to infer the precise meaning in a particular writer from the way he uses it.

The dialectical method as applied in theology, probes and investigates paired concepts like time and eternity, God and man, It is a method which does not usually involve more than one mind and is therefore not like the Greek dialectical method involved in conversation. This is the dialectic employed in the theology of Barth. William Nicholls explains it this way:

> "There is no third position, however, which transcends or synthesises the positions of the opposing partners (at least in Barth's understanding of dialectic), for the truth that would fully embody what each in its partiality contends for separately cannot be conceptualised: its only expression is found in the two positions and in their opposition to each other. If a conversation is the model for dialectical thinking, it is not the only form of it. The dialectic can and commonly does go on in a single mind, and it is to this sort of inner dialectic within a single developing position that the term more commonly refers in a philosophical or theological context. Dialectical thinking thus works by negation leading to the affirmation of what survives negation....." [8]

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8. The Pelican Guide to Modern Theology. Vol.1. W. Nicholls. pp 88-9

In order to disclose the differences between Bonhoeffer and Barth which are relevant, we allow Barth to speak for himself. Barth's dialectic, at least in his early works, is a dialectic of contrast. Robert Jensen suggests that Barth's dialectic is God's "No and Yes" to man.[9] God continually confronts the creature with His judgement. God judges man's faith, his religion, his life. Thus it is important to note that Barth's dialectic deals with the contradictions and paradoxes which are part of Christianity. More accurately, he deals with the paradox of Christianity, God becoming man, the eternal entering the realm of time. In dealing with the topic of revelation, Barth's aim was to ensure God's identity. Therefore, he reiterated the Calvinistic premise, finitum non capax infiniti, the finite cannot contain the infinite. Even although Barth firmly believed that God in Christ had revealed Himself to man, he believed it essential to maintain the infinite qualitative between God and man. Barth thus understood revelation in terms of God's otherness, His deity, His holiness. This dialectic of contrast is particularly found in his Commentary on the Letter to the Romans.

A. THE PATHOS OF DISTANCE.

Römerbrief was first published in 1918. Its approach, design, and message caused comment. It was unlike any other commentary. Barth ignored the areas of historical and philological research. He made no attempt to discuss the author, the recipients, or the origins of its writing. From the first page Barth launched into a commentary of statements each with the underlying motif of the infinite distinction between God and man. (Later we shall see that this style and approach resulted in Bonhoeffer's criticism of Barth's positivism of revelation).

In the Letters and Papers from Prison, Bonhoeffer mentions this commentary.[10] Although the Church Dogmatics are also mentioned, the

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9. R. Jensen. God after God. p.3.

10. LPP. p.109.

Commentary on Romans is probably the only major and complete work of Barth's which Bonhoeffer knew. He took exception to the continual reference to the distance between God and man.

> "The Gospel proclaims a God utterly distinct from men. Salvation comes to them from Him, because they are, as men, incapable of knowing Him, and because they have no right to claim anything from Him". 11.

Further,

> "As the Christ, He brings the world of the Father. But we who stand in this concrete world know nothing, and are incapable of knowing anything, of that other world." 12.

From such statements, it is clear that Barth speaks of man in negative terms. Even the grace of God is treated dialectically.

> "Grace is the gift of Christ, who exposes the gulf which separates God and man, and by exposing it, bridges it." 13.

By employing the dialectical method, Barth stressed the otherness of God. G.C. Berkouwer has written.

> "It is evident, therefore, how central is the place of the crisis motif in the Römbebrief. It indicates distance, it signalises the judgement in all its ominous and limiting character; it indicates the infinite distance between God and man, and the radical condemnation of every synthesis between the two that is effected from man's side. There is no possibility of a way of salvation that is of man's making." 14.

The Commentary on Romans is an example of Barth's dialectical method which succeeds in emphasising the gulf between God and man. Although Barth did change this emphasis later, and understood God's judgement in terms of His grace, it was this distance motif of which Bonhoeffer disapproved. Each of the statements above, which can be multiplied many times over, exposes Barth's approach. Statements

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11. The Epistle to the Romans. K. Barth. p.28.
12. ibid.
13. The Epistle to the Romans. K. Barth. p.31
14. The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth. G.C. Berkouwer. p.47.

are made in Römerbrief without relating them to the human situation. They stand in isolation and in a language which only the theologically trained have a hope of understanding. Typically of this approach is the following.

> "The revelation which occurs in him is a hindrance, disturbance and negation of life... a curse on our creatureliness, a manifestation of divine wrath, a work of Ungod...." 15.

Bonhoeffer criticised such a theology for it failed to speak to non-religious man. God is different from man. But what of the incarnation which suggests a synthesis of the human - divine?

Hence dialectical theology came to be known by two other titles, theology of crisis or desperation theology. The idea in the term "crisis" is that man, in his whole lofe before God, is always under the judgement of God. Man's situation vis-a-vis God is one in which he is constantly presented with his own inability to reach out and know God. As part of man's desperation to know God he turns to religion, a subject we shall discuss later. The point made is that Barth's approach, emphasises the distance, difference, separation, between God and man. Because of this, Barth frequently speaks of man's finitude, his limitations, weakmesses, sin, creatureliness. The grace of God is then a mere tangent point by which God and man intersect, and is only experienced if God condescends to reveal Himself to man. Barth's dialectical theology therefore does not seek a synthesis between God's judgement and His grace. Man remains in a state of "not knowing" unless God reveals Himself to him. The pathos of distance stresses the infinite qualitative distinction between God and man. Thus Römerbrief is a rigorous and sustained analysis of man as a finite being in his attempt to know God.

It may be that Barth was correct to stress the concept of distance. It was important for him to state man's limitations and

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15. The Epistle to the Romans. p.132

possibilities in an age when the temptation existed to obscure these points. However, his critics, including Bonhoeffer, believed that the validity of the incarnation was seriously compromised. If God did become man, as much of the New Testament suggests, what happens to the emphasis on the distance between God and man? Is the incarnation really and truly a bridging of the gulf between God and man? It is at this point that Bonhoeffer radically diverged from Barth.

Bonhoeffer does not deny the sin and weaknesses of man nor the holiness of God. However, he did object to a theology which stressed these aspects to the exclusion of human goodness and strength. Bonhoeffer's synthesis stresses that man is to be understood in terms of anthropos teleios, man in his wholeness, man in his strengths as well as his sin. He castigates existentialists and psychotherapists,

> "who demonstrate to secure, contented, happy mankind that it is really unhappy and desperate..... Where there is health, strength, security, simplicity, they spy luscious fruit to gnaw at..... They make it their object first of all to drive men to inward despair." 16.

and he continues,

> "There is a kind of malicious satisfaction in knowing that everyone has his weaknesses and nakedness..... This irresponsibility and absence of bonds has its counterpart among the clergy in what I should call the 'priestly' snuffing around in the sins of men in order to catch them out ..... From the theological viewpoint, the error is twofold. First, it is thought that a man can be addressed as a sinner only after his weaknesses and meanness have been spied out." 17.

Bonhoeffer himself noted the danger of dialectical theology. By its emphasis upon the sin and finitude of man, an unbalanced view of man, in his relationship to God, is occassioned. Man, according to Bonhoeffer, must be understood not only as a sinner, but a creature with many aspects of goodness and strength. It would be wrong to assume that,

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16. LPP. p.107
17. LPP. p.117

> "man's essential nature consists of his inmost and most intimate background, and that is defined as his 'interior life'." 18.

Bonhoeffer considered that Barth had over-reacted to the gulf between man and God. He would rather speak of this relationship in terms of man's wholeness.

> "That is why I am so anxious that God should not be relegated to some secret place, but that we should frankly recognise that the world and men have come of age, that we should not speak ill of man in his worldliness, but confront him with God at his strongest point ..." 19.

Bonhoeffer sought to redress the imbalance of dialectical theology by seeking a synthesis between the two sides of human sin and human goodness, that is man in his totality.

It is remarkable that Barth and Bonhoeffer both began at the same point and with the same motives. They each sought an understanding of reality in terms of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, from the standpoint of the incarnation. Both agreed that the starting point of all theological investigation must be this revelation of God to man. Yet it is precisely at this point that they diverge. We shall now examine what Bonhoeffer called Barth's positivism of revelation. This concept is found in the context of Bonhoeffer's attack on religion. Both these concepts will provide further examples to prove that Bonhoeffer is not dialectical in his thinking.

B. THE RELIGIOUS CONCEPT OF "POSITIVISM OF REVELATION".

Barth understands religion as a "species with a genus in which there may be other species."[20] Religion is a universal phenomenon but it stands under the judgement of God because it is a human attempt to reach out and know God. It is therefore a contradiction of the theology of revelation.

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18. LPP. P.117
19. LPP. P.117
20. Church Dogmatics Vol.V p.281. .K. Barth.

> "Religion is the human attempt at the replacement of the divine work by a human manufacture.... Religion is the contradiction of revelation." 21.

Barth continues his attack on religion stating that it is a limited and conditioned phenomenon.

> "Religion always is conditioned absolutely.. by nature and climate, by blood, soil, by the economic, political, cultural..... in short, the historical circumstances in which man lives." 22.

Bonhoeffer praised Barth's attack on the concept of religion but considered that he had not proceeded far enough. Bonhoeffer wrote that Barth, (in his criticism of religion)

> "has still not proceeded to its logical conclusion but has arrived at a positivism of revelation which has nevertheless remained essentially a restoration." 23.

Barth and Bonhoeffer wished to rest faith, not on religion, but revelation. However, Barth's dialectical method led him into a dualism over revelation. After criticising and attacking religion Barth introduced the idea of <u>true religion</u>. Religion becomes a "creature of grace", capable of "redemption" by God. While moving in the dialectical circle, Barth corrected and refined the concept of religion till "true religion" was reached. We can now understand Bonhoeffer's criticism that despite Barth's attack, he resulted in restoring it as a viable concept. André Dumas makes the relevant comment,

> "As a good dialectician, therefore, Barth 'abolishes' nothing. He attacks, criticises, examines, turns things around, tests, builds, completes.....
> Bonhoeffer, however, works in a very different way. He is a paradoxical thinker rather than a dialectical thinker. His attention is not focused, like Barth's, on the 'religious' eighteenth century and nineteenth century,

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21. <u>Church Dogmatics Vol.V</u> p.286
22. <u>Church Dogmatics Vol.V</u> p.326
23. <u>LPP</u>. P.92-95

> but on the 'non-religious' twentieth century and he observes that all twentieth century men, himself included, manage to live without religion." 24.

It was at this point that Bonhoeffer criticised Barth for constructing a positivism of revelation.[25] Bonhoeffer, himself, provides the definition.

> "Barth was the first theologian to begin the criticism of religion - and that remains his really great merit - but he set in its place the positivist doctrine of revelation which says in effect, 'Take it or leave it'; Virgin Birth, Trinity, or anything else, everything which is an equally significant and necessary part of the whole, which latter has to be swallowed as a whole or not at all. That is not in accordance with the Bible. There are degrees of perception and degrees of significance, i.e., secret discipline must be re-established whereby the mysteries of the Christian faith are protected from profanation. The positivist doctrine of revelation makes it too easy for itself, setting up as in the ultimate analysis it does, a law of faith, and mutilating what is, by the incarnation of Christ, a gift for us. The place of religion is taken by the Church - that is in itself, as the Bible teaches it should be - but the world is made to depend upon itself and left to its own devices, and that is all wrong." 26.

Writing on the atonement, Barth further exposes his approach in terms of a positivism of revelation.

> "By his blood, then, Jesus is proved to be the Christ, the first and the last word to men of the faithfulness of God. By his death he declares the impossible possibility of our redemption....." 27.

Such a passage reinforces Bonhoeffer's criticisms for it is a purely religious statement, unrelated to the life of men in the world which Bonhoeffer believed to be no longer as religious. Man's language is secular. Therefore Bonhoeffer writes, of Barth,

> "It was not that he subsequently, as is often claimed, failed in ethics, for his ethical observations - so far as he has made any - are just as significant as his dogmatic ones; it was that he gave no concrete guidance, either in dogmatics or in ethics, on the non-religious interpretation of theological concepts." 28.

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24. A. Dumas. p.183
25. World Come of Age. A Symposium on Bonhoeffer. Edited by R.G.Smith: "Karl Barth's Positivism of Revelation" by R. Prenter. p.93ff.
26. LPP. p.92ff.
27. Römerbrief. p.105. Epistle to the Romans.
28. LPP. p.109

The positivism of revelation builds a pyramid of statements which remain unrelated to man's life in the world. Bonhoeffer did not believe that the incarnation was a mere tangent point where the eternal and time intersected. In writing about redemption and resurrection, Bonhoeffer stressed the relationship of Christ's Cross and Resurrection to man's life in the world.

> "Redemption on this side of death, whereas salvation myths are concerned to offer men deliverance from death." 29.

and,

> "the resurrection sends a man back to his life on earth in a wholly new way." 29.

It was in this sense that Bonhoeffer took theological statements and related them to everyday life. Christianity is not only about what God has done. It is about what God has freed man - through the Cross and Resurrection - to achieve in the world. Bonhoeffer sought to synthesise the Christian message with man's life in the world. This is further seen in the synthesis of faith and worldliness.

C. FAITH AND WORLDLINESS.

Bonhoeffer believed it possible and necessary to seek a synthesis between God and the world, and to find a synthesis between faith and worldliness. At first sight these two concepts might seem irreconcileable. How can one be faithful to God, have faith in God, and at the same time be faithful to the world, and have faith in the world? Dialectically, these concepts are opposites. The yes to God implies a no to the world. The dialectical method would refine the yes and the no without negating either. One would then be left with an irreconcileable tension. But Bonjoeffer's understanding of reality, his grasp of the incarnation, his appreciation of the life of Jesus Christ, persuaded him that a genuine synthesis between faith and

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29. LPP. p.112.

worldliness is not just possible but vital for Christianity.

> "There are not two realities, but one reality and that is the reality of God which has become manifest in Christ in the reality of the world." 30.

In one of his most illuminating passages he spelt this out.

> "Man is challenged to participate in the sufferings of God at the hands of a godless world. He must therefore plunge himself into the life of the world without attempting to gloss over its ungodliness with a veneer of religion, or trying to transfigure it. He must live a 'worldly' life and so participate in the sufferings of God. He may live a worldly life as one emancipated from all false religions and obligations. To be a Christian does not mean to be religious in a particular way, to cultivate some particular form of asceticism (as a sinner, a penitent or a saint), but to be a man. It is not some religious act which makes a Christian what he is, but participation in the suffering of God in the life of the world.....
> This is metanoia. It is not in the first instance bothering about one's own needs, problems, sins, fears, but allowing oneself to be caught up in the way of Christ.....
> This being caught up into the Messianic suffering of God in Jesus Christ takes a variety of forms in the New Testament. It appears in the call to discipleship, in Jesus's table fellowship with sinners, in conversion in the narrower sense of the word, (i.e. Zacchaeus, in the act of the woman who was a sinner (Luke 7) an act which she performed without any specific confession of sin, in the healing of the sick (Matthew 8:17), in Jesus' acceptance of children." 31.

Faith is given shape and historical content in such a passage. Here faith is related to everyday things, to worldliness. Faith takes root and grows in the midst of the world, because faith embraces the whole life of man. Faith is "participation in the being of Jesus", i.e. in the sharing of the events of that life. What does "participation" mean? Bonhoeffer uses it synthetically. Participation implies

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30. Ethics. p.197.
31. LPP. p.123.

activity, co-operation, association, sharing, partnership. We shall see that Bonhoeffer consistently speaks this way. The Christian is not marked out by his assent to certain beliefs but by his active living of his beliefs. Therefore, faith and worldliness are interlinked. Faith and worldliness complement one another. To have faith without worldliness would be to create a ghetto of meaningless assertions unrelated to life in the world. Faith and worldliness as a synthesis cannot be found in Römerbrief. Barth writes,

> "Faith and its power is invisible and non-historical. Faith is the point at which life becomes death and death becomes life in Christ; and by its operation we are dissolved and reconciled to God." 32.

It is difficult to see how Barth can do justice to the incarnation after such a statement. There is a real anti-historical element in this passage. Also, faith becomes a kind of "not-knowing" since God is so utterly removed from man that man can know nothing of God unless He condescends to reveal Himself to man. Faith appears to have no histroical content in Barth's statement. However, for Bonhoeffer, the incarnation means that faith does have such a basis. Because he believed this, Bonhoeffer could speak of man representing God, of witnessing to God's hidden lordship in the world, and, as our thesis statement says, Bonhoeffer further believed that God revealed Himself as being - there - for-others. This last phrase is a synthesis of faith and worldliness, with God the ultimate involved in the penultimate.

In a more specific area, Bonhoeffer reveals his synthesis of faith and worldliness. In the concept of the mandates, he suggests that these mandates are areas where faith can be expressed. Church, marriage, labour and authority are understood in a typically christological manner. Labour is for the sake of the world which Christ died for. It is nothing less than a sharing in the act of creation with God.

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32. Epistle to the Romans. p.152.

> "By its means there is created a world of things and values which is designed for the glorification and service of Jesus Christ." 33.

For the man of faith these structures can become areas in which his faith finds expression in a tangible way. This synthetic approach to faith and worldliness, seeks space for God to exercise his lordship over every aspect of man's life. Bonhoeffer says,

> "The first three mandates are not designed to divide man up, to tear him asunder; they are concerned with the whole man before God the Creator, Redeemer and Reconciler; reality, therefore, in all its multiplicity is ultimately one; it is one in the incarnate God, Jesus Christ." 34.

In such a passage, Bonhoeffer again reiterates his theme of the importance of the whole man. He is not concerned with the distance between God and man. He is concerned with the partnership created through the incarnation, of God and man being-there-for-others. This is the participation in the being of Jesus.

The oneness of reality, the synthesis between faith and worldliness do not deny, however, that tensions must exist between these two. In facing reality, in being honest, the Christian is made aware of the tensions which exist between faith and life in a faithless world. Yet such a problem led Bonhoeffer to write a magnificently clear passage expressing his solution.

> "... the dread of straightforward simple actions, dread of having to make necessary decisions. I have often wondered here where we are to draw the line between necessary resistance to 'fate' and equally necessary submission..... It is therefore impossible to define the boundary between resistance and submission on abstract principles; but both of them must exist, and both must be practised. Faith demands this elasticity of behaviour. Only so can we stand our ground in each situation as it arises, and turn to it again." 35.

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33. Ethics. p.123.
34. Ethics. p.208.
35. LPP. p.133.

The logical tension for the Christian is that either resistance or submission to the world may be necessary, depending upon the situation. It is not a matter of lessening this tension, or finding some way around it; rather is it facing this tension and living through it. Dumas makes the comment that,

> "It would be wrong to suppose that these different words are simply dialectical aspects of the same reality which could complete and correct and thus lessen the differences between them. Bonhoeffer lives in the midst of a logical and passionate tension.....
> Dialectic does not move towards an all-inclusive view in which the earlier expressions are all synthesised." 36.

The pathos of distance, the positivism of revelation, the dialectic of faith/worldliness know nothing of the elasticity of faith of which Bonhoeffer speaks. Bonhoeffer sought to understand and relate Christian concepts to life in the here and now. When Bonhoeffer had completed his "theological" phase (with the works, Sanctorum Communio and Act and Being) he moved into the dangerous area of Christian discipleship in an irreligious world. It was in such an area that his most radical and exciting thoughts were born.

In conclusion, we should note that Bonhoeffer prophetically saw the need for synthesis in theology and in life. This was inevitable as he struggled to grasp how Christian concepts might be related to the secular world. With the advance of science, technology and the secularisation of all life, a great deal of fragmentation of life occurs. The tensions and contradictions of life are highlighted. From Bonhoeffer's writings, one can discern a recurring theme, particularly in the prison letters. This is the theme of synthesis.

Many of the concepts to be discussed later are characterised by this theme. Bonhoeffer's appeal is to wholeness of life and of man.

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36. Dumas. p.137. See also his footnote on Woelfel.

His search for a synthesis of meaning found its centre in Christ the Man for Others, and his "body", the Church.

D. CONCLUSION.

Bonhoeffer never explicitly attacked dialectical theology. Yet his divergence from Barth and his disagreement with Barth's theological method make it clear that his method is non-dialectical.

He is suspicious of a theology which stresses the sin, weaknesses and finitude of man. The distance motif in Barth failed to convince him for he believed that dialectical theology possessed the tendency of stressing individualism. Bonhoeffer speaks of man in his wholeness, before God. He did so because of the central place given to the incarnation. Man is responsible to God for his life in its totality. But man is not alone in the world. He is God's representative, being-there-for-others.

Further, Bonhoeffer preferred the Lutheran premise that the finite can contain the infinite. Again his understanding of the incarnation suggested to him that God has given himself to and for man. He wrote in Act and Being,

> "The whole situation impels one to ask whether a formalistic understanding of God's freedom in contingent revelation, conceived wholly in terms of the act, is really the proper groundwork for theology. In revelation it is a question less of God's freedom on the far side of us, i.e. his eternal isolation and aseity, than of his forth-proceeding, his given Word, his bond in which he has bound himself, of his freedom as it is most strongly attested in his having freely bound himself to historical man, having placed himself at man's disposal. God is not free of man but for man. Christ is the Word of his freedom. God is there, which is to say: not in eternal non-objectivity but (looking ahead for the moment) 'haveable' graspable in his Word within the church." 37.

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37. Act and Being. p.90-91.

The distance motif and the positivism of revelation are denied by such a statement. Phillips remarks that,

> "While Barth turns to the Reformation and follows the Calvinistic path back to the present, protecting God's freedom and transcendence, Bonhoeffer runs the risk of a Lutheran Christology, pointing to God's committed Presence in Christ for his community." 38.

The Cross bridges the gulf between God and man. God really stands in the place of man, in Christ Jesus (Stellvertreter).

In the statement of the thesis all these elements are contained, and will recur throughout this work. It is necessary, however, to examine in some detail, the major concepts which have become associated with Bonhoeffer and to trace their relationship to the search for synthesis.

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38. The Form of Christ in the World. John Phillips. p.69.

CHAPTER TWO.

WORLD COME OF AGE

A. INTELECTUAL HONESTY

We have shown that Bonhoeffer charged Barth with a positivism of revelation, because he believed that Barth had not related revelation sufficiently clearly to the life of man in the world. In his divergence from Barth, Bonhoeffer committed himself totally to finding the relationship between God and reality. Revelation is only meaningful where it is related to who receives it. This led Bonhoeffer towards his "worldly theology" where he sought to understand the world in relation to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. It was his belief that the reality of the world and the reality of God are not mutually exclusive but converge creating a synthesis of the two. This synthesis of reality and world, however, does not blur the distinction between God and the world. The aim of Bonhoeffer was to give credence to both. Bonhoeffer believed that the reality of God does not engulf the world, nor does the reality of the world exist without relationship to God. This stems from Bonhoeffer's "intellectual honesty" whereby he believed that to do justice to God's revelation one had to understand and respect the secular world.

Dumas has suggested that Bonhoeffer's prison letters do not discuss God very much. Rather his concern is the world.[39] However, the corrective to this is that Bonhoeffer understands the world as God's world. The world come of age stands in relationship to God. This relationship is our immediate concern.

It is not necessary to probe in detail the development of secularisation. It is sufficient to note that the process has been going on for centuries. From the Middle Ages, through the Enlightenment, man has asked questions about himself and his world, resulting in the expansion of the frontiers of human knowledge, in all areas of life. This has led man to a new view and understanding of his world.

The Middle Ages was characterised by the all pervading influence of the church. It determined man's view of himself, his world, and nature. Its overriding concern was the salvation of the soul. The church imposed its authority in almost every area of life. However, there was a shift in consciousness somewhere around the Middle Ages. The heteronomous age, of the theological explanations of events, was made to face the challenge of investigation and exploration of nature. An example is Copernicus, who, having "dislodged" the earth from the centre of the solar system, set in motion the "anthropological revolution". With God no longer the centre of things man began to question himself, his world and nature. There was a radical shift in man's questions. No longer was his overriding concern, the salvation of his soul, but rather the understanding of his world. The reference point became man, not God.

Man was more interested in the "given" facts of life than the areas not observable. Ronald Gregor Smith expressed the mood of the times in his book, The Free Man. He writes,

> "the unfettered autonomous human spirit of exploration and enquiry which was bound by nothing save the consideration of the 'given facts'".

led to

> "the break up of the mediaeval heteronomous culture.... (and).... the Church and civilisation went separate ways...."

Smith then suggests that this new spirit of investigation laid the foundation of the modern world.

> "From this new maturity of man in history there have flowed all the characteristically modern developments, historical science, archaeology, economics, politics, psychology, sociology, and the natural sciences.... all resting whatever their differences and even conflicts of interest, on the same ground of man's nature, regarded as an autonomous entity." 40.

For theology all this had certain repercussions. The world,

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40. R.G. Smith. The Free Man. P.47

nature, and the universe were not considered in supernatural terms. Man's concern turned to his world, the laws of its existence, rather than the world beyond. The traditional teachings of the church were questioned, religion was subjected to criticism, and man became his own authority, creating his own standards and values. Previously, man had existed in face of two separate and distinct orders. These were the reality of heaven and reality of earth. Now, man existed in a single reality - his world.

It might seem that the secularisation of life was a drastic blow to religion. Certainly some have lamented of this, but others have found that God and faith are enriched because of secularisation. This was the position of Bonhoeffer. His intellectual honesty made him face the consequences of secularisation.

B. BONHOEFFER'S USE OF THE CONCEPT - WORLD COME OF AGE.

Four letters contain references to this topic. The first is the letter of March 9th, 1944 where he mentions the term "secularist" but only in a general way. His famous letter of April 30th 1944 paves the way for the more detailed discussion of the world come of age in the two letters of 8th June and 16th July 1944.

It is pertinent to note that Bonhoeffer read considerably in prison. From his wide reading of Kant and the scientist Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker he formulated his understanding of the world. It is worth quoting von Weizsäcker.

> "God and the faded, half religious concepts which have often been substituted for him in recent times, always designate, as scientific hypotheses for the explanation of particular facts, only the incomplete points in science and therefore, with the advance of knowledge they find themselves in continuous and dishonourable retreat."

and

> "Modern science has excluded.. (the question of God) from the circle of its obligatory premises and has banished it to the private sphere." 41.

Later, von Weizsäcker speaks of the concept of space in relation to the work of Nicholas of Cusa and Giordano Bruno. Bonhoeffer does likewise when he writes,

> "In natural science the process seems to start with Nicholas of Cusa and Giordano Bruno with their 'heretical' doctrine of the infinity of space. The classical cosmos was infinite, like the created world of the Middle Ages. An infinite universe, however it be conceived, is self subsisting etsi deus non daretur..... There is no longer any need for God as a working hypothesis, whether in morals, politics, or science." 42.

Now, if Bonhoeffer believed that it was necessary to find a synthesis between the reality of God and the reality of the world, it was also vital to understand this world come of age and its effect upon the traditional teachings and views about God. After all, what kind of God is it who is displaced by scientific explanation of phenomenon?

Gregor Smith makes the comment,

> "The consequences of this series of retreats have been distortions of the understanding of God, confusion among the ranks on both sides, and dishonour of God's name. For in fact by thus attempting to safequard God, the Church has only been safeguarding its idea of God."

and,

> "Before the advancing battalions of intelligence and reason and scepticism, as one area of knowledge after another was captured for technology, or science, or psychology, God has been rescued by too willing hands. The children of light have been happily engaged in drawing God back into the darkness, beyond the frontiers of assured life, into the region which is euphemistically called the mystery of God." 43.

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41. C.F. von Weizsäcker. The World in the Language of Physics. p.259
42. LPP. p.121.
43. op cit. p.100ff.

Bonhoeffer begins his attack against those who lament over secularisation and offers his own solution in the letter of 16th July, 1944.

> "At this point nervous souls start asking what room there is left for God now.....But that is a counsel of despair, which can be purchased only at the cost of intellectual sincerity. It reminds one of the song,
>
> > 'Its a long way back to the land of childhood,
> > But only if I knew the way!'
>
> There isn't any such way, at any rate not at the cost of deliberately abandoning our intellectual sincerity. The only way is that of Matthew 18:3, i.e. through repentance, through ultimate honesty." 44.

Bonhoeffer thus understands the Greek word metanoia (repentance), as they key to a Christian response to secularisation. Repentance is necessary in terms of being intellectually honest about the fact that God no longer holds a key position in modern man's life. Therefore one should not be active in seeking God in other places - like the inner life of man - but active in understanding what God is teaching us about the present situation.

Bonhoeffer gives his answer.

> "And the only way to be honest is to recognise that we have to live in the world etsi deus non daretur. And this is just what we do see - before God! So our coming of age forces us to a true recognition of our situation vis a vis God. God is teaching us that we must live as men who can get along very well without him. The God who is with us is the God who forsakes us. (Mark 15:34). The God who makes us live in this world without using him as a working hypothesis is the God before whom we are ever standing. Before God and with him we live without God. God allows himself to be edged out of the world and onto a cross. God is weak and powerless in the world, and that is exactly the way, the only way, in which he can be with us and help us. Matthew 18:17 makes it

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44. ibid. p.121

> crystal clear that it is not by his omnipotence that Christ helps us, but by his weakness and suffering.
> This is the decisive difference between Christianity and all religions. Man's religiosity makes him look in his distress to the power of God in the world; he uses God as his deus ex machina. The Bible, however, directs him to the powerlessness and suffering of God - only a suffering God can help. To this extent we may say that the process we have described by which the world came of age was an abandonment of a false conception of God, and a clearing of the decks for the God of the Bible, who conquers power and space in the world by his weakness. This must be the starting point for our 'worldly' interpretation." 45.

In his letter of 8th June, 1944, Bonhoeffer attempts to answer Bethge who had sent him some questions on the world come of age. He chose to give his answer from the "historical angle".

> "The movement beginning about the thirteenth century (I am not going to get involved in any arguments about the exact date) towards the autonomy of man (under which head I place the discovery of the laws by which the world lives and manages in science, social and political affairs, art, ethics, and religion), has in our time reached a certain completion. Man has learned to cope with all questions of importance without recourse to God as a working hypothesis. In questions concerning science, art and even ethics, this has become an understood thing which one scarcely dares to tilt at anymore. But for the last hundred years or so it has been increasingly true of religious questions also: it is becoming evident that everything gets along without 'God', and just as well as before. As in the scientific field, so in human affairs generally, what we call 'God' is being more and more edged out of life, losing more and more ground. Catholic and Protestant historians are agreed that it is in this development that the great defection from God and Christ, is to be discerned..... The world which has attained to a realisation of itself and of the laws which govern its existence is so sure of itself that we become frightened..... Efforts are made to prove to a world thus come of age that it cannot live without the tutelage of 'God'. Even though there has been surrender on all secular problems, there still remain the so-called ultimate questions - death, guilt, - on which only 'God' can furnish an answer, and which are the reasons why God and the Church and the pastor are needed. Thus we live, to some extent, by these ultimate questions of humanity." 46

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45. ibid.

46. LPP. pp.106-7

I believe it is significant in this letter that Bonhoeffer has used italics when he speaks of God. The God of the religious man who is made to retreat in the face of scientific discoveries is not the God of the Bible according to Bonhoeffer.

He continues in the same letter to repudiate a negative approach to secularisation. He writes,

> "The attack by Christian apologetic upon the adulthood of the world I consider to be in the first place pointless, in the second ignoble, and in the third, un-Christian. Pointless, because it looks to me like an attempt to put a grown up man back into adolescence, i.e. to make him dependent on things on which he is in fact not dependent any more, thrusting him back into the midst of problems which are in fact not problems for him any more. Ignoble, because this amounts to an effort to exploit the weakness of man for purposes alien to him and freely subscribed to by him. Un-Christian because for Christ himself is being substituted one particular stage in the religiousness of man, i.e. a human law .....
> ..... The world come of age is then no longer an occasion for polemics and apologetics, but it is really better understood than it understands itself, namely on the basis of the Gospel, and in the light of Christ." 47.

It is clear from such remarks that Bonhoeffer is in fact claiming the world come of age in the name of Christ. The world come of age has literally driven out the 'false gods' of superstition; it has removed the gods who were used to explain all phenomena. It has "cleared the decks" of all primitive and metaphysical ways of explaining the world and its workings, and it has done so, according to Bonhoeffer, because Christ has given the key to understanding the true God who is not the "explainer of mysteries" but one who <u>shares</u> in man's worldly life. This point shall be examined later in greater detail, but Bonhoeffer's remarks about the world come of age, do lead to a quite radical conception of God. This conception in fact bears more relationship to man's life in the world than the traditional ideas of

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47. <u>LPP.</u> p.108.

God as all powerful, omniscient, omnipresent.

What then are the actual characteristics of the world come of age and what has resulted for Christianity from such a situation?

Bonhoeffer gives the world come of age a historical basis. Having outlined its beginnings "somewhere in the thirteenth century", Bonhoeffer actually backtracks and suggests that the world can understand itself on the basis of Christ. He suggests this because for him Christ, and Christ alone, reveals the true God who makes man live before Him, as if He were not given! The ultimate source of the world come of age is therefore God himself. It is implicit in Bonhoeffer's later writings that he believes that God, through the incarnation frees man from religious tutelage in order to take responsibility for his world. (We will investigate this point later.) It is at this point that Bonhoeffer makes his special contribution. It is not just that secularisation of the world is God-given, nor is it that the world is therefore allowed to really be the world in its own right. It is the synthesis of these two points that is important. The world does not stand in objective isolation from God. There is one reality and that is the reality in Christ.

In this connection, a key fact is the phrase - etsi deus non daretur. Man lives as if God is not given. Through the long process of secularisation man is led to a state of "autonomy" and investigates the laws which govern the world. In so doing, 'God' is no longer a necessary factor in man's comprehension of the universe. As von Weizsäcker has shown above, science does not admit of God as an indispensable factor in its formulations. God is thus not a necessary hypothesis in science. In one sense this is positive. God is no longer 'moved' from one question already answered without him to another. He is not the God of the gaps, not a metaphysical God. However, some

react in a negative way as Gregor Smith has said. They attempt to find for God, new areas of mystery in which he might be considered relevant - areas like the inner, private life of man. Bonhoeffer is here suggesting that because God is no longer "given", man is able to find out more about his world. The clerical heteronomy of the Middle Ages which only admitted of a religious view of the world is no longer tenable. Of this fact, Bonhoeffer suggests we must be honest.

Man is therefore no longer dependent on the Deus ex Machina. He is not dependent upon a particular view of God to explain his world. Man's former dependence becomes man's new maturity. It is man's world and in the realms of ethics, morality, politics, science he is quite autonomous - he does not need God. It is important to realise that Bonhoeffer pleads that this world and man's view of it is taken seriously. Man's autonomous maturity must not be violated by urging him to find a place for God in everything. Those who would keep man in a state of dependence upon the Deus ex Machina are forced to relegate God to the continuing areas of mystery like death and guilt. Thus God is related only to the weaknesses of man, not his strengths. This is why Bonhoeffer attacks a Christian apologetic which tempts man back to clerical tutelage.

Intellectual honesty, as we have already noted, requires us to accept the fact of secularisation. In so doing, man and God are taken seriously in their own right. God is no longer a surrogate God who comes to solve all of man's problems. It is as if man is once again given the commandment to have dominion over the earth, i.e., to be responsible for his world. (Genesis 1:28) Also it is as if man has realised the value of his own rational powers as a thinking animal. Malcolm Furness expresses Bonhoeffer's point in the following passage:

> "Only when man loves the God of revelation with all his mind as well as with all his heart and soul will he begin to make sense of life and arrive at a Faith that he can both assert and defend without doing violence to the rational powers with which that God has endowed him." 48.

Bonhoeffer himself says,

> "The people deemed that they had now come of age, that they were now capable of taking in hand the direction of their own internal and external history." 49.

Intellectual honesty and repentance, demand that modern man be addressed in a seriousness which realises his strengths and abilities and discoveries.

However, a corrective is necessary here. It should not appear that Bonhoeffer "celebrated" man's coming of age without reservations. The use of the term "maturity" might suggest this. However, the world come of age is not a 'better' world, a kinder place in which to live. The term maturity refers to man's recognition that he does not require religious guardianship, nor is he required to interpret the world in purely religious terms.

Speaking of the theme of worldliness Bonhoeffer expresses caution in the following passage,

> "Yet this theme of worldliness is no cavalier worldliness..... of the enlightened, of the busy, the comfortable or lascivious. It is something much more profound than that (characterised by discipline) in which the knowledge of death and resurrection is ever present." 50.

The world must not be abandoned to its own devices for it remains God's world. The key is that such a world must be viewed in christological terms[51] i.e. understood as the world atoned for by Christ. More profoundly, Bonhoeffer wrote,

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48. M. Furness: Vital Doctrines of the Faith. p.22.
49. Ethics. p.100.
50. LPP. p.125.
51. LPP. p.164.

> "The coming of age of humanity (along the lines already suggested). The insuring of life against accident, ill fortune. If elimination of danger impossible, at least its minimisation..... a western phenomenon. The goal, to be independent of nature. Nature formerly conquered by spiritual means, with us by technical organisation of various kinds. But this immunity produces a new crop of dangers, i.e. the very organisation. Consequently there is a need for spiritual vitality....." 52.

The world come of age may be technologically more advanced but Bonhoeffer is aware of its spiritual fragility. With the demise of the God hypothesis, man has become the centre of his world. He runs the risk of lapsing into various idolatories such as exalting the state, nationalism and material progress.[53] However, Bonhoeffer encouraged a dialogue between theology and the world and for that he is to be commended.

Thus the world come of age (die mündige Welt), is understood by Bonhoeffer in the following ways.

The first is theological. It is God's world, created and redeemed by Him in Jesus Christ. It is God who is making man live before Him as if He were not given. God is no longer considered as a working hypothesis. This leads to the second understanding of the world come of age.

The second viewpoint is an ethical one. Man is responsible for his world, for the shaping of its future, for using his skills and knowledge for good. Later we shall see that Bonhoeffer considered the concept of responsibility as particularly important for Christianity in the modern world.

There is also a liberating effect since the world is allowed to be the world, explainable by its own laws, taken seriously in the sense that it is not intrinsically evil, but the place where God became man and dwelt among us. (John 1). This is related to the new autonomy

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52. LPP. p.164

53. See Theology of Culture/and/Christianity and Encounter with the World Religions, by Paul Tillich.

of man.

Finally there is a hint of protest in Bonhoeffer's view of the world come of age. He protests against the misuse of God to fill the gaps in human knowledge. He protests against a theology which reserves for God the personal and private spheres of man's life. He protests against a theology which uses an apologetic against the world only seeing its faults and godlessness.

Thus for the Christian spiritual life certain facts become clear. The world is not to be abandoned to itself but understood as God's world, the sphere of his redeeming activity. It is to be taken seriously. The life of the world is man's sphere of responsibility. This suggests the necessity for active engagement in the world, seeking new forms of Christian presence within the structures of such a world. The Christian will be called to serve in areas of life which do not admit of any God. He is required to master his technology but to be aware and make others aware of the inherent dangers of such a world which admits of no spiritual dimension. In other words, the spiritual life will seek a synthesis between the reality of God and the reality of the world, doing justice to both. Bonhoeffer gives some clues to the role of the Christian in such a world when he writes about the Church.

> "The Church is her true self only when she exists for humanity..... She must take her part in the social life of the world, not lording it over men, but helping them as serving them. She must tell men, whatever their calling, what it means to live in Christ, to exist for others..... She will have to speak of moderation, purity, confidence, loyalty, steadfastness, patience, discipline, humility, content and modesty. She must not underestimate the importance of human example, which has its origin in the humanity of Jesus....." 54.

Bonhoeffer did not live to write the book from which this quotation comes in outline form. However, the chapters which he outlined

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54. LPP. p.166

contain the major ideas of his later thought. The underlying principle of this book appears in his proposed second chapter on worldliness and God. The principle is that man's relationship to God,

> "is not a religious relationship to a Supreme Being, absolute in power and goodness, which is a spurious conception of transcendence, but a new life for others, through participation in the Being of God." 55.

Bonhoeffer had realised that the form of Christianity which prevailed in his day, was no longer tenable in a world come of age, a world of constant advances in every field of human knowledge. Thus he calls for repentance and intellectual honesty which will give the world its rights as the world. Bonhoeffer therefore moves towards a theology of servanthood for the Christian in the world come of age. The Christian is called to serve the world in all its structures. Just how this is to be achieved will become clearer through the concepts of atonement, the secret discipline, and the Church in the world come of age.

We have suggested that the world come of age is understood by Bonhoeffer as the world reconciled to God. To this point we must now turn.

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55. LPP. p.165

I am indebted to many works on the theme of secularisation, the main ones I mention here. Lesslie Newbigin: Honest Religion for Secular Man. Two works in the series New Directions in Theology today: Vol.5. The Christian Life by P. Hessert; and Vol.6. Man: The New Humanism by Roger L. Shinn. Also The Abolition of Religion by Leon Morris.

CHAPTER THREE.

ATONEMENT: HISTORICAL REDEMPTION.

A. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

The Bible does not contain one theory of the atonement. The writers of the New Testament are not agreed about Christ's death on the cross, except that his death had supreme importance for man and the world. Various theories have been developed ranging from Christ as a ransom for sin, to the subjectivist or moral influence theory of Abelard.[56] All the atonement theories commend themselves in part. The theology behind them is that in a divine act of loving and gracious condescension, God initiated the redemption of man and set him in a new relationship with Himself.

The problem with most atonement theories, is their overemphasis on the actual death of Christ. It assumes great importance almost to the exclusion of the redemptive aspect of Christ's whole life. There is the natural temptation to dwell upon the climax of Christ's earthly life and the evangelists of the New Testament devote a disproportionate time to the last week of Christ's life. However, we shall show that the atonement is already begun in the incarnation, that the whole life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ can be considered as atonement, and that Bonhoeffer continues his search for synthesis in this area.

B. THE FOUNDATIONS OF HISTORICAL REDEMPTION.

We have shown that Bonhoeffer understood the world come of age as a world in which Christ had won redemption. In traditional language Bonhoeffer spoke of Christ as "God who has become man", and that

> "The Incarnate One is the Glorified God....the Word made flesh....." 57.

However, Bonhoeffer sought more than credal statements to justify faith in Christ. He sought to synthesise the person and the

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56. G. Aulén: Christus Victor. SPCK.
57. Bonhoeffer: Christology p.107-110

work of Christ. In other words, to understand the cross, it is necessary to understand the person on the cross. Bonhoeffer wrote,

> "I have access to the work of Christ only if I know the person who does the work. It is essential to know the person if the work is also to be known." 58.

Why should this be so? The reason is that the work of Christ, (his cross) can be ambivalent, equivocal, ambiguous, unless he is known. Many men were crucified in the first century. What then makes Jesus of Nazareth different or unique? To answer such a question, Bonhoeffer believed it necessary to combine soteriology and christology. In his study of both, he came to certain conclusions which determine his particular theory of the atonement. These conclusions were: Christianity is not a religion of salvation; redemption is this - worldly, pre death; the whole life, death and resurrection of Christ is to be understood in terms of atonement.

We shall examine these points now. The most important piece of writing on this subject is contained in the Letters and Papers.

> "To resume our reflections on the Old Testament. Unlike the other oriental religions the faith of the Old Testament is not a religion of salvation. Christianity, it is true, has always been regarded as a religion of salvation. But isn't this a cardinal error, which divorces Christ from the Old Testament and interprets him in the light of the myths of salvation? Of course it could be urged that under Egyptian and later, Babylonian influence, the idea of salvation became just as prominent in the Old Testament, e.g. Deutero-Isaiah. The answer is, the Old Testament speaks of HISTORICAL redemption, i.e. redemption on this side of death, whereas myths of salvation are concerned to offer men deliverance from death. Israel is redeemed out of Egypt in order to live before God on earth. The salvation myths deny history in the interests of an eternity after death. Sheol and Hades are not metaphysical theories, but images which imply the past, while it still exists, has only a shadowy existence in the present. It is said that the distinctive feature of Christianity is its proclamation of the resurrection hope, and that this means the establishment of a genuine

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58. Christology. p.38

> religion of salvation, in the sense of release from this world. The emphasis falls upon the far side of the boundary drawn by death. But this seems to me to be just the mistake and the danger. Salvation means salvation from cares, needs, from fear and longing, from sin and death into a better world beyond the grave. But is this really the distinctive feature of Christianity as proclaimed in the Gospels and St.Paul? I am sure it is not. The difference between the Christian hope of resurrection and a mythological hope is that the Christian hope sends a man back to his life on earth in a wholly new way which is even more sharply defined than it is in the Old Testament.
> The Christian, unlike the devotees of the salvation myths, does not need a last refuge in the eternal from earthly tasks and difficulties. But like Christ himself ("My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?") he must drink the earthly cup to the lees, and only in his doing that is the crucified and risen Lord with him, and he is crucified and risen with Christ. This world must not be prematurely written off. In this the Old and New Testaments are at one. Myths of salvation arise from human experiences of the boundary situation. Christ takes hold of a man in the centre of his life." 59.

Bonhoeffer is challenging traditional theology which defined Christianity as a religion of salvation through which man is released from death, into the world beyond. The important point he makes here is that Israel is made to live its life before God in the world. Each time Israel is redeemed from bondage of one kind or another, she is expected to live more faithfully before God. She is redeemed to be in the world, not redeemed out of the world. Thus Bonhoeffer does not accept the theology which teaches that the Cross of Christ delivers men only from death and sin and points them to the world beyond. Historical redemption means being redeemed in order to live more fully as one of God's people, in God's world. (This is where the concept Stellvertretung, (representation) becomes important as we shall see later.) There is some evidence in the New Testament that the eternal life promised by Christ is not purely other-worldly. It is a dimension of life which

59. LPP. p.112

can be experienced in man's here and now. John Baillie makes this point.

> "But it is in the Gospel and Epistles of St.John that the thought of eternal life as a present possession comes most fully into its own. The author's presupposition seems to be that the real moment of transition to the new order of being is not the moment of physical death but the moment of spiritual rebirth....'And this is eternal life - to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.'" 60.

Thus Bonhoeffer's concept of redemption is far wider than most traditional concepts. Redemption 'reorientates' the life of man in his wholeness. With sins forgiven, with the knowledge of resurrection, the Christian enters the world with a new understanding of himself. Atonement is certainly objective (God initiated), but man is a partner in it. It is something new and dynamic which does not concern itself with death, guilt and other boundary situations alone but encourages man to tackle life's problems, realising that they have no ultimate claim upon him.

Bonhoeffer preferred a theory of atonement which did justice to God and man; a theory which included man's participation in redemption. This participation is expressed in his concept, Gleichgestaltung, Conformation. He writes in Ethics,

> "formation comes only by being drawn into the form of Jesus Christ. It comes only as formation in His likeness, as conformation, with the unique form of Him who was made man, was crucified, and rose again". 61.

and,

> .....
> "To be conformed with the Incarnate - that is to be a real man.....To be conformed with the Incarnate is to have the right to be the man one really is.

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60. John Baillie: And the Life Everlasting. p.160ff
61. Ethics. pp.80-82

Footnote: Gleichgestaltung is a word pregnant with meaning. It refers to a number of ideas such as co-sharing, co-operation, participation, alliance. It is another example of a term used by Bonhoeffer which seeks to express the idea of synthesis in his thought.

> To be formed in the likeness of the Crucified - this means being a man sentenced by God. In his daily existence man carries with him God's sentence of death, the necessity of dying before God for the sake of sin..... Every day a man dies the death of a sinner. Humbly he bears the scars on his body and soul, the marks of the wounds which sin inflicts on him. He cannot raise himself up above any other man or set himself before him as a model, for he knows himself to be the greatest of all sinners. He can excuse the sin of another, but never his own.
>
> To be conformed with the Risen one - that is to be a new man before God. In the midst of death he is in life. In the midst of sin he is righteous. In the midst of the old he is new. ....." 62.

These words are difficult but it is plain that conformation has a strong ethical strain in it. Ott expresses it this way,

> "To be conformed with Christ means to be conformed with Christ Incarnate, Crucified and Risen; with the Incarnate in unreserved openness towards one's neighbour; with the Crucified in acceptance of judgement upon oneself; with the Risen in the maintenance of a hope transcending all that is foreseeable. But this does not mean for Bonhoeffer that man takes upon himself a certain 'virtuousness', but simply that Christ himself 'is formed' among us, in this 'between' in the ethical situation." 63.

How then is conformation possible for man? It is not by an Imitatio Christi since man does not take on the form of Christ. Rather is Christ formed in us,

> "The form of Jesus Christ takes form in man. Man does not take on an independent form of his own, but what gives him form and what maintains him in the new form is always solely the form of Jesus Christ himself. It is therefore not a vain imitation or repetition of Christ's form but Christ's form itself which takes form in man." 64.

Thus conformation is participation in the suffering of God in the life of the world. Atonement means sharing God's gifts with man in the world, i.e., sharing the hope of resurrection in a transformed life. Atonement is the restoration of a relationship with God, once

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62. Ethics pp.80-82
63. Ott. p.273
64. Ethics pp.80-82

broken.

Bonhoeffer therefore argues that the atonement makes possible the restructuring of mankind.

> "..... everything is taken up again in Christ, though of course it is transfigured in the process, becoming transparent, clear, and free from all self seeking and desire. Christ brings it all again as God intended it to be, without the distortion which results from human sin. The doctrine of the restoration of all things - anakephalaiosis - which is derived from Eph.1:10, recapitulatio (Irenaeus), is a magnificent conception, and full of comfort. This is the way which the words, "God seeketh again that which is passed away" are fulfilled....." 65.

Bonhoeffer has spoken of conformation in three stages - with the Incarnate One, the Crucified One, and the Risen One. Atonement is thus not an isolated event of Christ's death, but something which embraces every part of Christ's life. It is certainly true that Bonhoeffer does speak often of the humiliation of Christ, and in his work Creation and Fall[66] he concludes his exegesis with a triumphant note, stating that the Cross is the new Tree of Life. Nevertheless, humiliation and the cross of Christ are understood in relation to the rest of Christ's life. The person and the work are synthesised.

In the above quotation, Bonhoeffer makes reference to Irenaeus and his theory of atonement. It is known as the recapitulation theory, in which it is stated that Christ has won a final victory over all evil and has restored nature and man to a new relationship with God. Irenaeus does not select the death of Christ as the act of atonement. The cross is not selected for special emphasis. Through Christ, the Second Adam, the sin of the first Adam, is removed. The primary task therefore of the atonement is the setting aright of the breach between God and man. The advantage of this theory is that the atonement is

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65. LPP. pp.57-8
66. Bonhoeffer: Creation and Fall. pp. 93-94

initiated by an all gracious God. It is God in Christ who "enters the lists" against evil to restore His relationship with man.

Therefore, the basis for man's life before God, is the example of Christ, substituting himself as representative of God and of man. There is certainly a sense here of Christ being no more than an example for man to follow. Christ's whole life, death and resurrection, commend themselves to man who is morally influenced to change his life. The corrective here is that of conformation. Christ transforms man, not man transforming himself. Thus both Irenaeus and Bonhoeffer understand the atonement in terms of the whole life of Christ. It would be wrong to assume that Bonhoeffer therefore accepted Irenaeus' theory in toto. Bonhoeffer's particular understanding of the atonement is more accurately summed up in the concept of representation which will be discussed in detail later.

Thus we note that although Bonhoeffer does mention the theory of Irenaeus, his own atonement theory is a mixture of the traditional ones.

We detect agreement with Irenaeus in that Christ sums up human history in himself, that Christ has undone the wrong of the first Adam. But Bonhoeffer does suggest that by allowing himself to be edged out of the world and onto a cross, God's suffering love and sharing with man, is manifested. Further, the theory propounded by Dr. Vincent Taylor, [67.] of Christ as man's Representative who stands in our place, is to be found in certain aspects in Bonhoeffer.

It is difficult to see how Bonhoeffer can resolve the apparent contradiction in his thinking at this point. How he can understand the person and work of Christ in the above terms and yet suggest that Christianity is not a religion of salvation is a real problem in his thought.

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67. V. Taylor. The Atonement in the N.T. Teaching.

Yet, according to his view of the atonement, the Christian who believes in Christ's work (incarnation and cross) has a much fuller hope than simply one related to a life to come. The Christian's life is to be lived in the here and now in that hope. Therefore, his hope and the knowledge of the atonement colours the Christian's existence, now.

The God who hangs on Calvary is not the Deus ex Machina, but the God who in Jesus Christ lived among us. The God on the cross does not have the characteristic of power. He suffers for man.

What then can we conclude about the significance of the atonement in the thought of Bonhoeffer?

The heart of all Bonhoeffer's thought is the substitutionary and reconciliatory work of Jesus Christ.[68A] This becomes the very foundation of, and motive force for, man's earthly life. It is so because the atonement may be "once and for all", but Christ continues to take form among us. He does so in three main ways.

The first is found in Sanctorum Communio, in the concept of I - Thou. This is an ethical-social concept, emphasising that man and man confront each other in social situations. Since man is utterly social, he is required to be a responsible being. This leads Bonhoeffer to the position where he defines society as a web of mutually responsible beings interacting. This is the second way that Christ is to be understood as taking up form among us. "Christ is the community by virtue of His being pro-me." [68].

Both these positions lead to the concept of Stellvertretung. Christ is our representative; he takes responsibility for us. The Church, which lives in this reality of Christ's substitutionary work, is therefore called to be the representative of God in the world and to the world. But the Church is Christ existing as community. Therefore, the reality of the atonement is expressed in being-for-others,

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68. Christology. p.47
68A. Scottish Journal of Theology. Article by R.F. Kohler: The Christocentric Ethics of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Vol.23 No. Feb.1970.

in being responsible. Stellvertretung is an active concept with dynamic overtones. It is best understood in conjunction with the idea of participation which is so important in Bonhoeffer. Representation is understood in a twofold manner: Christ's being-there-for-others, and man's being-for-the-other. The Christian is to participate in the Messianic event and he can do so according to Bonhoeffer, if he

> ".... plunges himself into the life of a godless world, without attempting to gloss over its ungodliness with a veneer of religion or trying to transfigure it. He must live a 'worldly' life and so participate in the suffering of God." 69.

Hence being conformed to the 'Christ-Principle' incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection means living as worldly a life as Christ.

> "One must abandon every attempt to make something of oneself, whether it be a saint, a converted sinner, a churchman (the priestly type so-called!) a righteous man or an unrighteoud one, a sick man or a healthy one. This is what I mean by worldliness - taking life in one's stride, with all its duties, its successes and failures, its experiences and helplessness. It is in such a life that we throw ourselves utterly into the arms of God and participate in his sufferings in the world and watch with Christ in Gethsemane. That is faith, that is metanoia and that is what makes a man a Christian (cf. Jeremiah 45)" 69.

and again,

> ".... I do not mean the faith which flees the world but one which endures the world and which remains faithful to the world in spite of all the suffering which it contains for us. Our marriage shall be a YES to God's earth; it shall strengthen our courage to act and accomplish something on earth." 69.

Being wholly for Christ is related to being wholly for the world. Redemption may be understood as an objective event, but it influences man to enter the world in a new way.

> "Action which is in accordance with Christ is in accordance with reality because it allows the world to be the world; it reckons with the world as the world; and yet it never forgets that in

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69. LPP. p.122-5

> Jesus Christ the world is loved, condemned, and reconciled by God." 70.

and,

> "There are not two realities but only one reality and that is the reality of God, which has become manifest in Christ in the reality of the world. Sharing in Christ we stand at once in both the reality of God and the reality of the world..... It is now essential to the real concept of the secular that it shall always be seen in the movement of being accepted and becoming accepted by God in Christ..... The unity of the reality of God and the world, which has been accomplished in Christ, is repeated, or, more exactly, is realised, ever afresh in the life of men." 71.

The atonement therefore places man in a new relationship with God in which he is called to responsibility for his world. Yet this responsibility does not place an impossible burden upon man since God remains above human history. Heinrich Ott expresses it this way,

> "God lays upon us a share of responsibility for the course of history - and God acts over the heads of men who make history, and creates out of evil, good which they had not intended at all." 72.

I understand this in the terms of Bonhoeffer when he wrote,

> "Before God and with God we live with him."

The atonement is therefore not one event in the life of Christ divorced from the rest of his life. His preaching to the poor, his love of the sinner, his table fellowship, his healings, his seeking to make men whole, are all aspects of reconciliation. The atonement does not free man from responsibility but stresses it. Therefore, we have again seen how Bonhoeffer, in seeking a synthetic approach to theological issues, offers a new understanding of the atonement. It is now necessary to examine Bonhoeffer's new terminology.

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70. Ethics. p.230
71. Ethics. p.196-99
72. Ott. p.294 & 302

CHAPTER FOUR.

THE NEW VOCABULARY.

The vocabulary used by Bonhoeffer to describe Christ is consistently spatial (Christ existing as Community) and ethical (Christ, Man for Others). There is a noticeable absence in his writings of any discussion on the Historical Jesus. Bonhoeffer prefers to accept the biblical picture of Christ and does not concern himself with questions of historicity or historical accuracy.

"Christ present" and "Christ taking up form among us" are the mainsprings of his christology. His vocabulary is therefore designed to emphasise the contemporaneousness of Christ. Dumas writes,

> "Most contemporary theology, particularly the dialectical theology represented by Barth's early writings and Bultmann's ongoing work, uses a vocabulary based on events and vertical imagery; such words as event, advent, tangent, encounter, leap and decision are common..... But a doubt soon arises about whether an outside event can ever fully make its way into reality and whether it does not remain tangential to reality and finally insignificant. By adopting a forthrightly spatial vocabulary, drawn both from sociology and logic, Bonhoeffer is trying to overcome the suspicion that the revelation of God in Jesus Christ might be only tangentially related to the ongoingness of the world, without being understood for what it truly is, the central structure of all reality." 73.

It is a characteristic of the New Testament that the person and the function of Christ are united. Mark 8:27-8, is an example of the various titles ascribed to Jesus, each describing a function. Yet it should be noted that the christology of the New Testament does not admit of unanimity. No one title is capable of fully comprehending the person and function of Christ, although some of the titles ascribed to him denote the particular needs of the times.[74] Bonhoeffer thus embarks upon the search for a new understanding of Christ in non- religious

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73. Dumas. p.218-9

74. O. Cullman, Christology of the New Testament.

terminology to meet the age of godlessness. His Christology is thus a working example of his non-religious vocabulary. Dumas remarks that,

> "...The notion of responsibility is central for Bonhoeffer. He reinterprets Christianity so that it is less a religion of redemption or 'salvation' (a circumlocution for Feuerbach's 'candidates for heaven') and more an acceptance of responsibility for life here and now - an ongoing and active exercise in 'resistance and submission' in relation to it. He rarely refers to Jesus Christ as 'Saviour'; instead he uses other words to describe him, which as we have already seen are related to the non-religious character of his vocabulary, words like, 'the responsible man', the 'man for others', 'the deputy' (Stellvertreter), as well as words like the 'structure', the 'place', 'and the centre' of human existence, history and nature. God wants to invest man with responsibility. He gives him impetus and basis for it in what Jesus Christ has done as the head of a restructured humanity." 75.

The search for a new vocabulary to communicate about Christ to the modern mind is a necessary and valuable exercise. The problems involved, however, are many. The main danger of a new vocabulary is that the terminology constructed may be nothing more than a number of concepts depicting modern bias. Albert Schweitzer's Quest of the Historical Jesus,[76] is a magnificent work exposing this point. He showed that many of the "lives" of Jesus depicted the author's own ideals. In this present age of scientific achievement coupled with the awareness of the dangers of science, it could be argued that the concept of responsibility is a vital and relevant one. This might therefore suggest to us that Bonhoeffer's christology is weighted towards his own bias in a situation in Germany where responsibility and the correspondent concept of deputyship, were urgently required. But it is necessary to note that Bonhoeffer's main concern was to understand Christ in concrete terms, and in so doing, he believed that a relevant christology had to include a strong ethical element. We shall now examine three concepts of particular reference to the spiritual life, the pro-me structure,

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75. Dumas, p.286.

76. A. Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus. Of interest in this matter are H. Anderson (editor), Jesus, S. Cave, Doctrine of the Person of Christ.

deputyship, and the Man for Others.

A. THE "PRO-ME" STRUCTURE.

Bonhoeffer makes it clear in his lectures on Christology, that his interest lies not in the questions of how the incarnation happened, but the who of the incarnation.[77] This personal question leads Bonhoeffer to state that Christ is only meaningful in his relationship to men.

> "Christ is Christ not as Christ himself, but in his relation to me. His being is his being pro me. This being pro-me is in turn not meant to be understood as an effect which emanates from him, or as an accident; it is meant to be understood as the essence, as the being of the person himself." 78.

Thus the christology of Bonhoeffer is about the very being of Jesus, who he is in relation to me. The incarnation is not discussed in terms of the divine natures, but rather in terms of relationship. God has dwelt among us in Christ indicating that God is there for man - "für-andere-da-sein". God is not at the boundary of human life but at its centre, in human relationships and in His relationship to us. The pro-me structure is relational, God before, alongside, me. 80.

> "That is, Christ can never be thought of in his being in himself, but only in his relationship to me." 79.

Now we can understand the concept of Christ as Representative, Stellvertreter, which flows naturally from the pro-me structure.

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77. Christology. Although Bonhoeffer does have a section entitled the "Historic Christ", he equates this with Christ present, and thus does not discuss any actual questions about the Historical Jesus.

78. ibid. p.47

80. ibid. p.55

79. See Appendix 1

B. DEPUTYSHIP.

The pro-me structure, is defined by Bonhoeffer in terms reminiscient of Luther's statement, "It is one thing if God is there, and another if he is there for you."[81.] In non-dialectical language, Bonhoeffer understands this as a synthesis of God's Being and activity, and of Christ's person and function.

> "Actio Dei and praesentia Dei, the being For You and the BEING for you, are combined." 82.

This concept of "forness" includes the concept of deputyship which is first noted in the doctoral thesis, Sanctorum Communio.[84.] The term deputy can have a legal connotation in the sense of one standing in the stead of another. It can mean the appointment of one by a higher authority, thus suggesting subordination. However, the deputy does imply real power to act on behalf of another. We may therefore conclude that the concept of deputy signifies the following; serving in the place of, acting for, holding the position of another, and substitute. However, the German makes a distinction between representative and substitute, Stellvertrer and Ersatzmann. Bonhoeffer prefers the term for representative thus emphasing that Christ as representative does not replace God, but stands for God, acting upon His behalf.

The noun (Stellvertreter) includes the idea vicarious which in turn means to endure, or suffer on behalf of another.[83.] It is this meaning which comes closest to that applied by Bonhoeffer. A number of quotations from Sanctorum Communio indicate this usage.

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81. Christology. As quoted by Bonhoeffer, p.48

82. Ibid. p.48

83. Rolf Hochhuth, Der Stellvertreter. This play tells the story of a young Catholic priest who deliberately and consciously takes upon himself the burden of being the Church - the representative of the Church of Rome. The play is an extended investigation of the meaning and implications of the term Stellvertreter. In particular it argues that the Church and its members cannot remain neutral in matters of justice. English translation The Representative.

84. Sanctorum Communio. p.136

> "The people is to repent, but it is not a question of the number who repent, and in practice it will never be the whole people, the whole church, but God can so regard it 'as if' the whole people has repented. 'For the sake of ten I will not destroy it.' (Gen.18:32) He can see the whole people in a few individuals, just as he saw and reconciled the whole of mankind in one man. Here the problem of vicarious action arises, which we deal with later." 85.

and dealing with it later he writes,

> "He (God) takes the punishment upon himself obtains forgiveness for our sins and, to use Seeberg's expression, goes surety for man's renewal. Thus Christ's vicarious action can be understood from the situation itself. In him concrete action within time and its being 'for all time' really coincide. There is vicarious action for guilt and punishment." 85.

This deputyship in vicarious action by Christ then blossoms out into Bonhoeffer's conception of the actualisation of the Church and its members who themselves become involved in deputyship.

> "Each man sustains the other in active love, intercession and forgiveness of sins through complete vicarious action, that is, upon the love of God. But all are sustained by the Church, which consists in this action for one another of its members. The church and its members are structurally together, and act vicariously for each other, in the strength of the church." 85.

Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, the example <u>par excellence</u> for his people.

> "Jesus Christ is for his brethern by standing in their place. Christ stands for his new humanity before God. But if that is the case he is the new humanity. He stands vicariously where mankind should stand, by virtue of his <u>pro-me</u> structure....." 86.

Here Bonhoeffer has achieved a synthesis of <u>pro me</u> and the <u>deputyship</u> structure. And it all takes its meaning <u>Coram Deo</u>, as has been shown above. Thus he can say that all life is in essence a life of deputyship. However, Bonhoeffer chooses to relate deputyship to

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85. <u>Sanctorum Communio</u>. Collins. London. 1963 pp.83-4; p.113; p.136.
86. <u>Christology</u>. p.48-9. (See Appendix 1).

responsibility which he understands as a theological category. This is discussed in Ethics in a more cogent way than in his Christology lectures. It is significant that it occurs in Ethics since Bonhoeffer continually sought a concrete and ethical understanding of Christology.

> "The fact that responsibility is fundamentally a matter of deputyship is demonstrated most clearly in those circumstances in which a man is directly obliged to act in the place of other men, for example as a father, as a statesman or as a teacher. The father acts for the children, working for them, caring for them, interceding, fighting, and suffering for them. Thus in a real sense he is their deputy." 87.

Bonhoeffer turns to Jesus whom he considers to be the deputy par excellence.

> "The fact that Jesus lived without the special responsibility of a marriage, of a family or of a profession, does not by any means set him outside the field of responsibility; on the contrary, it makes all the clearer His responsibility and His deputyship for all men..... Jesus, life, our life, lived in deputyship for us as the incarnate Son of God, and that is why through Him all human life is in essence a life of deputyship..... All His living, His action and His dying was deputyship. In Him there is fulfilled what the living, the action, and the suffering of men ought to be. In this real deputyship which constitutes His human existence He is the responsible person par excellence." 87.

Thus Bonhoeffer understands deputyship in terms of responsibility and as a category of human existence. He emphasises the idea of deputyship as "responsibility for..." [88.]

> "Responsibility, as life and action in deputyship, is essentially a relation of man to man. Christ became man, and he thereby bore responsibility for and deputyship for men. There is also a responsibility for things, conditions and values..... Through Christ the world of things and of values is once more directed towards mankind as it was in the Creation." 87.

Here Bonhoeffer lays the patterns for human existence as a life of taking active responsibility for others, for values, for life. The Christian is called to serve others, share and bear with and for them in all conditions, and actively take part in the building, creating and

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87. Ethics. p.224-226.

88. Dorothee Sölle has written a most impressive book on the theme of "Christ the Representative" in which she takes issue with Bonhoeffer, on

maintaining of human values. But it might seem here that we have found a contradiction in Bonhoeffer. Is not the concept of deputyship/ responsibility pre-eminently an individualistic one? Does it not run the risk of leading into pietism, and creating dependence?

Responsibility inevitably includes dependency, particularly since Bonhoeffer understands these terms in a social connotation. Yet there is no sense of individualism here, not even in intercessory prayer, on behalf of others. Bonhoeffer understood intercession as a socio-theological structure which is explained most aptly by Ott:[89]

> "So I stand as representative in place of the other, as does the community as representative in my place, and Jesus Christ himself as representative in place of the community. All my misfortune is shared, not with Christ only, but with Christ and his saints. For these are now inseparable from Christ. Thus the peculiarly and quite essential social structure of the Church, determined by representation, comes to view and is made intelligible in the light of the structural component of responsible existence which meets us empirically, can be experienced and to some degree analysed by sociology and existential analysis." 90.

Bonhoeffer thus reached a concrete christology of "Christ Present" by the combination of the pro-me and deputyship structures.

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89. Ott ibid. p.219. Intercession has a social structure and is only to be thought of in terms of representation.

90. Ott ibid. p.222.

88. contd. on his interpretation of the theme of responsibility and representation. Sölle argues that responsibility must have its dialectical correlate of dependency. She criticises Bonhoeffer for seemingly ignoring the aspect of dependency or at least not doing it justice. I think she is correct that Bonhoeffer does not appear to discuss dependency but from his writing on the theme of responsibility and representation he does acknowledge that there is a legitimate dependency in deputyship. I suspect that he keeps clear of this aspect because of his belief that 'religion' creates a dependency which he considers to be un-christian. Nevertheless Sölle has rightly pointed out the dangers of selecting a too onesided view of representation (in Bonhoeffer). Bonhoeffer selects representation in terms of man's responsibility; Barth selects in terms of dependency upon God. Sölle would seek a structure which includes both. However, if we assume that Bonhoeffer's theme streams from a christological point of view, then representation does include dependency - although not explicitly mentioned - i.e., being-there-for-others.

D. SÖLLE. Christ the Representative.

The Christian identity is in terms of deputyship, of sharing, acting, interceding, on behalf of all others. The source of such an identity is Christ Himself which is expressed for Bonhoeffer in his concept of Man for Others.[91]

C. THE MAN FOR OTHERS.

The first main point to note is that the Man for Others is Jesus the Christ who has atoned for the world. It is also important to note that in the reference below, the concept of Man for Others is related to Bonhoeffer's idea of transcendence.

Once again we are faced with the problem of Bonhoeffer's thought. The most important reference we have to this Man for Others is contained in his Outline for a Book, a mere handful of thoughts in shorthand.

> "Chapter 2.
> a) 'Worldliness' and God.
> b) What do we mean by 'God'? Not in the first place an abstract belief in his omnipotence etc. That is not a genuine experience of God, but a partial extension of the world. Encounter with Jesus Christ, implying a complete orientation of human being in the experience of Jesus as one whose only concern is for others. This concern of Jesus for others the experience of transcendence. This freedom from self maintained to the point of death, the sole ground of his omnipotence, omniscience and ubiquity. Faith is participation in this Being of Jesus (incarnation, cross, resurrection) our relation to God not a religious relationship to a supreme Being, absolute in power and goodness, which is a spurious conception of transcendence, but a new life for others, through participation in the Being of God. The transcendence consists not in tasks beyond our scope and power,

91. The main point of difference I find with Sölle's interpretation of Bonhoeffer, is her suggestion of a structure of responsibility/dependency as dialectical correlates. Bonhoeffer, it seems to me, remains non-dialectical here. Responsibility and dependency are the two components in deputyship but they fuse into a synthesis. Responsibility is not determined by the one who is dependent. Hence responsibility is not corrected or refined by dependency. Bonhoeffer suggests that one is to be responsible FOR others and FOR THEIR SAKES, but it is possible that the OTHER may not consider himself dependent. Thus responsibility is spoken of by Bonhoeffer at the apparent exclusion of dependency.

> but in the nearest thing to hand. God in human form - not - as in other religions, in animal form - the monstrous, chaotic, remote and terrifying - nor yet in abstract form - the absolute, metaphysical, infinite etc. - nor yet in the Greek divine-human of autonomous man, but man existing for others, and hence the Crucified. A life based on the transcendent." 92.

Here we have the real problems of Bonhoeffer. We are given little indication of what he understood by transcendence, encounter with Jesus Christ, or faith as participation in the being of Christ. But it is possible to sift out some indications of what transcendence means.

In a previous reference to transcendence, he wrote,

> "The transcendent is not the infinitely remote, but close at hand." 93.

Implied in this statement is the idea that the experience of transcendence takes place within man's world. The way it is experienced is through encounter with our fellow man, through serving others, living our life in relation to others. Transcendence is therefore not understood in other-worldly terms, but as purely this-worldly.[94]

Bonhoeffer thus opposes Barth for the idea nascent in his understanding of transcendence, is that the infinite can be experienced by the infinite through service to the neighbour close at hand.

The Man for Others is a synthesis of deputyship, responsible servanthood, and conformation. It is a synthesis of christology, ethics, and practical Christian living. Its source is not humanism in any form. Jesus Christ, the biblical picture of his life for others, is the datum. However, it is a vulnerable concept.

Its vulnerability lies in its apparent simplicity. Even if we add the word suffering Man for Others, it does not do justice to the biblical Christ who is more complex in his relationships to men, than

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92. LPP. pp. 164-5

93. LPP. p. 163

94. What Kind of God? H. Zahrnt. p.130ff

simply as "for others". Its appeal lies in its apparent "secular" language. Yet it is still a theological concept, for as stated above, the Man for Others is Christ, the Redeemer. It has the ability of creating common ground between Christian and secularist in mutual service to one another and the world. It may be that Bethge is correct that it is at least "intelligible" to modern man.[95] Possibly the poem Christians and Unbelievers[96] expresses most what Bonhoeffer meant by Man for Others:

> "Men go to God when they are sore bestead,
> Pray to him for succour, for his peace, for bread,
> For mercy for them sick, sinning, or dead;
> All men do so, Christian and unbelieving.
>
> Men go to God when he is sore bestead,
> Find him poor and scorned, without shelter or bread,
> Whelmed under weight of the wicked, the weak, the dead;
> Christians stand by God in his hour of grieving.
>
> God goeth to every man when sore bestead,
> Feedeth body and spirit with his bread,
> For Christians heathens alike he hangeth dead;
> and both alike forgiving."

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95. Bethge. p.790

96. LPP. p.174

CHAPTER FIVE.

THE ATTACK ON RELIGION

"Not religion, but revelation, not a religious community but the Church." 97.

The above statement was written by the young Bonhoeffer in his first major work, Sanctorum Communio. It paves the way for future developments in the area of religionless Christianity, since it is the beginning of Bonhoeffer's attack on the concept of 'religion'. One of the most important points in the above work, was Bonhoeffer's realisation that the category of the social, was a legitimate one for theology. It was his teacher Seeberg who had introduced him to this idea, but quite characteristically Bonhoeffer used it to understand revelation in concrete terms. All through his life we find this passion for the concrete, this aim of preventing theology from slipping into mere abstractions. By using the category of the social, Bonhoeffer gave to revelation a tangible reference point which is related to reality. The concept of the social is important when we come to discuss the church; it is mentioned here because the concept of religion is attacked because of its failure to do justice to the idea of the church as the body of Christ, or "Christ existing as community". This is why Bonhoeffer says that the church (as defined above) is to be preferred to a religious community.

The context of the above statement is as follows,

> "The relation of Christ to the church can now be stated as follows: essentially Jesus Christ was no mere founder of the Christian religion.... He brought, established and proclaimed the reality of the new mankind.... But God established the reality of the church, of mankind pardoned in Jesus Christ. Not religion, but revelation, not a religious community, but the Church: that is what the reality of Jesus Christ means." 97.

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97. Sanctorum Communio. Collins. London. 1963. p.112

Years later he wrote on the same theme but going much further,

> "We are proceeding towards a time of no religion at all: men as they are now simply cannot be religious any more." 98.

With this quite negative view of religion, Bonhoeffer sought to remove Christianity from a religious base. He did so because he believed religion had the overwhelming characteristic of "individualism".

A. RELIGION.

Bonhoeffer acknowledged his debt to Barth for his criticism of religion (see thesis p.10) but complained that Barth had not gone far enough. Indeed Bonhoeffer suggests that Barth had not carried his criticism to its logical conclusion. The reason for this complaint is not really a question of logic. It is more a question of method and standpoint. Barth, in true dialectical fashion, sought to refine the concept of religion by means of the Christian revelation of God in Christ; Bonhoeffer sought to abolish the category of the religious completely.[98] As we have noted already, the two thinkers diverge more fundamentally than appears at first, because Barth believed that religion was a concomitant part of man's life and that there was a religious *a priori* within all men. Bonhoeffer challenged both these propositions. The important questions which Bonhoeffer's attack on religion have left us are many. How Christianity is to reform itself on a non-religious basis is never explicitly worked out; nor does Bonhoeffer suggest what happens to age-old Christian strategies of preaching, teaching and mission. However, Bonhoeffer understands religion in quite negative terms and uses Barth as his foil for attack.

The relevant passage for our discussion is as follows,

> "The thing that keeps coming back to me is, what is Christianity, and indeed who is Christ

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98. *LPP*. p.91 It should be noted that the use of the term 'religious' is in the connotation applied by Bonhoeffer.

> for us today? The time when men could be told everything by means of words, whether theological or simply pious, is over, and so is the time of inwardness and conscience, which is to say, the time of religion as such. We are proceeding towards a time of no religion at all: men as they are now simply cannot be religious any more, Even those who honestly describe themselves as 'religious' do not in the least act up to it, and so when they say 'religious' they evidently mean something quite different. Our whole nineteen hundred years old Christian preaching and theology rests upon the 'religious premise' of man. What we call Christianity has always been a pattern - perhaps a true pattern - of religion. But if one day it becomes apparent that this a priori premise simply does not exist, but was a a historical and temporary form of human self expression, i.e., if we reach the stage of being radically without religion.... what does this mean for Christianity?". 99.

This passage is extremely difficult but it is related to the above passage from Sanctorum Communio, arguing that Christianity need not be considered as a religion. This might seem a very dubious exercise since Christianity has always been known as a religion in western thinking and it is difficult to expect the suffix 'religion' to be dropped easily. It is not for this thesis to define religion although our understanding of this concept is made easier if we realise that both Barth and Bonhoeffer understood it as a human activity aimed at self-justification by which man seeks to go beyond himself to find help and protection from the gods. 99A & 99B.

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99. LPP. p.93

99A. I am indebted to a number of books on the subject of religion which are good background reading to this discussion. They are:
Leon Morris: The Abolition of Religion-already noted.
Alan Richardson: Religion in Contemporary Debate. SCM 1968
Lesslie Newbigin: Honest Religion for Secular Man. SCM 1969.
Kenneth Hamilton: What's new in Religion. Paternoster. 1968.
Dumas has an excellent section on religion from page 175ff.

99B. Barth's attack on religion is typically dialectical. He informs us that religion is idolatry, a human activity, unbelief. But he works within the dialectical circle and having denounced religion as above he moves towards finding the positive roles of religion. The title of his attack uses 'Aufhebung' which can mean abolition but in dialectical terms means, raising, removal, lifting, abrogation. Religion, since it is a relative necessity for all men, must be restored to true religion.

cont'd.

Bonhoeffer dispraises Barth and his dialectical theology because it does not seek the abolition of religion but its restoration. (In passing we should note that Barth at least shows that religion helps mirror man's sin and the fruitlessness of human attempts to reach God. Thus like Bonhoeffer he begins from the revelation of God in Christ.)

Bonhoeffer does not think dialectically for he believes that God, by revealing himself in the man Jesus, has, among other things, explicitly attacked religion. In other words, the movement which he called the world's coming of age, has provided the opportunity for Christianity to rediscover its true roots since the things characteristic of religion have been or are being eroded.

The first point to be noted in Bonhoeffer's criticism of religion is the attack on "words". I do not believe that this point has ever received the attention it is due. If religion is something to do with man's efforts to reach and understand God, then he will inevitably use words. Bonhoeffer notes that in the world come of age, theological and pious words have become questionable in their usefulness as means of proclaiming the gospel. This is why we have seen that Bonhoeffer seeks a non-religious vocabulary to express his faith (Christ as Deputy, Man for Others). Godsey notes this very point when he writes.

> "Whenever Bonhoeffer explains what he means by 'religion' he connects it with such terms as 'metaphysical', 'inwardness', 'subjective' and 'individualistic'. A religious interpretation of Christianity would be a metaphysical one or an individualistic one, i.e. one which turned it into a system of abstract truths to be communicated to men by words, or which turned it into an individualistic concern for the 'salvation' of the soul for a world beyond the boundary of death." 100.

CONT'D.
The Christian religion is redeemed by grace and justified by God's revelation in Christ. It is clear that this method is not acceptable to Bonhoeffer who is far more radical and would seek the complete abolition of religion. Both men worked from different viewpoints and it is worth noting that Bonhoeffer had died when Barth was beginning his discussion on religion in his Dogmatics. Nevertheless, even if Bonhoeffer had read Barth's later works on the subject, the point of divergence, i.e. the religious premise in all men, remained.
K. Barth. Church Dogmatics. Vol.V.

100. John D.Godsey.The Theology of D. Bonhoeffer. SCM.London.1960. p.249.

Thus the first characteristic of religion to be abolished is the use of words which no longer hold any value except for a few religious souls. Hence there is the need for reinterpretation of theological concepts like faith, atonement and repentance. It was from such a situation that Bonhoeffer urged the necessity of the arcane discipline. He took issue with Bultmann's programme of demythologisation, daring to suggest that it had not gone far enough. Obviously, he believed that Bultmann, after demythologising the New Testament, was still left with 'religious concepts'.

> "A bit more about 'religionlessness'. I expect you remember Bultmann's paper on the demythologising of the New Testament? My view of it today would be not that he went too far as most people seem to think, but that he did not go far enough. It is not only the mythological conceptions, such as the miracles, the ascension and the like (which are not in principle separable from the conceptions of God, faith and so on) that are problematic, but the 'religious' conceptions themselves. You cannot, as Bultmann imagines, separate God and miracles, but you have to be able to interpret and proclaim both of them in a 'non-religious' sense. Bultmann's approach is really at bottom the liberal one (i.e., abridging the gospel), whereas I seek to think theologically. What do I mean by 'interpret' in a religious sense? In my view, that means to speak on the one hand metaphysically, and on the other individualistically. Neither of these is relevant to the Bible message or to the man of today. It is not true to say that individualistic concern for personal salvation has almost completely left us?.....
> Is there any concern in the Old Testament about saving one's soul at all? Is not righteousness and the kingdom of God on earth the focus of everything, and is not Romans 3:14ff too, the culmination of the view that in God alone is righteousness and not in an individualistic doctrine of salvation? It is not with the next world that we are concerned, but with this world as created and preserved and set subject to laws and atoned for and made new. What is above the world is, in the Gospel, intended to exist FOR this world - I mean that not in the anthropocentric sense of liberal, pietistic, ethical theology, but in the Bible sense of the creation and of the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ." 101.

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101. LPP. pp.94-5

Again we find here the seeds of the concept of historical redemption within a world already redeemed. Bonhoeffer further mentions Barth's attack on religion but scolding him for his 'positivism of revelation'. It is here that he first mentions the necessity of the secret discipline which we will discuss next, but we should note that this discipline guards the Christian truths from profanation; that is, not using the theological concepts of creation, fall, redemption, resurrection in a world which cannot relate to them meaningfully in that form. Thus the attack on religion begins with the recognition that 'religious' words are of little value any more and will have to be re-interpreted, or in Bonhoeffer's words above, "to interpret and proclaim.... in a 'non religious' sense."

In the above passage Bonhoeffer has provided us with the main characteristics of religion as he understands it. Daniel Jenkins gives the following apt summary:

> "First, it is individualistic. The religious man is preoccupied with himself and his interior states in such a way as to forget his neighbour even though this individualism may take ascetic and apparently self-sacrificial forms. Secondly, it is metaphysical. God is brought in to complete, as the supernatural, a fundamentally man centred view of reality. Thirdly, the religious people speak of God when human perception is (often just from laziness) at an end, or human resources fail: it is always the Deus ex machina they call to their aid, either for the so-called solving of insoluble problems or as a support in human failure - always, that is to say, helping out human wealness or on the borders of human existence." 102.

Again there is the attack on the use of religious words. Bonhoeffer also means that religious people adhere to the positivism of revelation which we have discussed earlier - the acceptance of everything religious, the acceptance of a law of faith.

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102. Jenkins: Beyond Religion. p.93

B. METAPHYSICAL.

This individualistic approach also finds its complement in the metaphysical explanation of all things, what Bonhoeffer calls the Deus ex Machina. This is specifically related to Bonhoeffer's understanding of the world come of age. The Deus ex Machina is brought in by man to confirm and supplement a religious view of reality. In the world come of age such a god is utterly redundant; this is so, because the areas of human knowledge are continually expanding. The God of the gaps, as he is also called, withers away since he lived off the unexplored areas of human knowledge. According to Bonhoeffer this means the death of religion. Thus he can say that the God hypothesis is now unnecessary, as science continues to explain many areas of human life and experience. The God of metaphysical explanations is meant to be all powerful, but when this role is challenged by the autonomy of man, he is relegated to the boundary situations. Paul Ricoeur explains it this way,

> "When God was consigned to a place outside the world and the public sphere of life, he was retained in the personal, inward, private sphere of life.. The God who simply fills up the gaps in our knowledge of the world is also the God who is experienced only at the edges of human life, i.e. death, sin and suffering." 103.

Bonhoeffer is correct that such a view of God should be discouraged. He is nothing more than a substitute god for man's weaknesses and who would want a god whose eventual sole claim would be in the areas of mystery? Bonhoeffer, after all his criticisms, turns to a positive note, when he writes,

> "I should like to speak of God not on the borders of life but at its centre, not in weakness but in strength, not, therefore, in man's suffering and death but in his life and prosperity. On the borders it seems to me better to hold our peace and leave the problem unsolved. Belief in the Resurrection is not the solution of the problem of death. The 'beyond' of God is not the beyond of our perceptive faculties.... God is the 'beyond' in the midst of our life." 104.

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103. As quoted in Dumas. p.186

104. LPP. p.93

Yet Bonhoeffer suggests that God is not to be known in the suffering of man. This is not strictly true; after all, he does speak of God as suffering for man and of the Christian suffering with God in a godless world, His immediate concern in what he says, is rather the attack on the religious idea of the Deus ex Machina.

The individualistic and metaphysical aspects of religion create further problems.

C. PARTIALITY.

With the demise of the god of the gaps, religion is forced into a reductionism which becomes concerned with certain limited areas of life. We have already spoken of the boundary situations. Bonhoeffer speaks further of this partiality.

> "When God was driven out of the world, and from the public side of human life, an attempt was made to retain him at least in the sphere of the 'personal' and the 'inner life', the private life." 105.

There is only one reality, one world, one man not an inner and outer man, not a secular and a sacred world. Bonhoeffer expresses it this way,

> "On the second point it must be said that the Bible does not recognise our distinction of outer and inner. And why should it? It is always concerned with anthropos teleios, the whole man, even where, as in the Sermon on the Mount, the decalogue is pressed home to refer to inward disposition.....
> This is why I am so anxious that God should not be relegated to some last secret place, but that we should frankly recognise that the world and men have come of age, that we should not speak ill of man in his worldliness, but confront him with God at his strongest point, that we should give up all our clerical subterfuges, and our regarding of existentialism and psychotherapy as precursors of God." 106, 107.

All these aspects of religion are related, interwoven and include within themselves aspects of each other. All religion relates

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105. ibid. p.116
106. ibid. p.118
107. Dumas. p.189

to 'boundary situations' and to 'boundary dependence'.[108] The religious view of man is that of a weak, dependent, torn creature. But Bonhoeffer has a much loftier view of man, even although writing from a Nazi prison. It is now understandable why dialectical theology is sometimes known as 'theology of crisis' - when a crisis comes into human life, men turn to the Deus ex Machina for aid. We can now appreciate Bonhoeffer's call to understand Christianity in non-religious terms. It is not a religion of salvation. It directs man to be mature and responsible before God within this world.

No doubt much of what Bonhoeffer has criticised as religion will be recognised as true. However, has he not exaggerated the negative side of religion? Has he forgotten that Christianity, as known for nineteen hundred years, has been called a religion and that the very foundations of Christianity which he himself used to explore the idea of religionless Christianity have been transmitted through the Christian religion? Further, has not the individual Christian the right - indeed the ultimate concern - to be concerned for his personal salvation? Again is there not a legitimate dependence upon God to aid us in distress as suggested in the Psalms? In fact, has not Bonhoeffer done what he set out not to do - namely, lay stress upon one aspect of Christian belief - God in our strengths?

Most of these questions remain unanswered unless we appreciate that Bonhoeffer's attack is drawn from his biblical approach. Religion directs man in his distress to the Deus ex Machina; but the bible directs him to God in Christ on a tree. It directs him to Christ, the Man for Others, the deputy par excellence, the man of Gethsemane struggling with his religious desire for God to intervene and remove his distress. Christ is made to drink his earthly cup to the lees and we cannot expect anything else. Thus in full circle, we reach the concept of responsibility

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108. Union Seminary Quarterly Review. Vol.XIX Nov.1963. No.1 pp5ff. Green. Bonhoeffer's Concept of Religion.

as the most important category in Bonhoeffer. The bible directs man to be responsible for his life before God. There is no salvation from 'cares and needs' but the call to find God at the centre of our lives in trouble and in prosperity.

Thus the world come of age, die mündige Welt, has created a situation whereby religion, with its stop-gap god and constant retreats in the face of human knowledge, has been discredited. According to Bonhoeffer, religion has "fed" upon the unexplained, human need and guilt, the distress of mankind and the boundary situations of death and life beyond death. Christianity has worn this religious garment but in fact is not really a religion alongside other religions. Christianity is about Jesus Christ, a person, not a new religion. Jesus Christ asks us to follow him, to be involved in the world and to be responsible for our lives before God. Hence our statement on the spiritual life which includes all these elements.

Yet Bonhoeffer has been proved wrong for religion in many guises is still with mankind. It is a more resilient fact of human life than he allowed for. Nevertheless, many of his criticisms of religion are valid. It is now necessary to examine his concept of the secret discipline which safeguards the Christian identity. We shall see that it is a socio-ecclesiological concept and is related to his understanding of the church in the godless world.

CHAPTER SIX.

THE CHRISTIAN IDENTITY - THE ARCANE DISCIPLINE

The notion of the secret discipline occurs only twice and in the last writings of Bonhoeffer. It might thus seem that we are hindered from reaching any final conclusions about this concept as understood by Bonhoeffer. However, it has been our task to show that the thoughts contained in Letters and Papers from Prison do not constitute a complete break with Bonhoeffer's earlier writings. But also we find that the secret discipline does not present itself to us in grand isolation, but in a very intimate relationship to two matters we have already mentioned, the positivism of revelation and the problem of non-religious interpretation of biblical concepts. However, it is important to note in the passing that ideas written down in formal letters need not be without value. The Letters and Papers from Prison are not a treatise; they have the infinite value of leaving our options open on a number of concepts, thus creating a situation where we can enter into a dialogue with Bonhoeffer. This is particularly true in our immediate concern of the secret discipline.

In an age of religionlessness which Bonhoeffer believed to be coming, the specific activities of worship, prayer, meditation, preaching and bible reading would be reduced in significance. However, it was otherwise with Bonhoeffer himself who discovered the importance of these very things in prison. The Christian requires the Christian community, the fellowship of prayer and worship, and the guidance of God's Word in the world come of age. The Christian life in any age must be within the contect of his life together with other Christians.

Bonhoeffer tackles the important questions for the Christian

in the world come of age in his famous letter of April 30th., 1944. After repudiating Barth's positivism of revelation he turns to the issue of a "secular" understanding of God. It is in this context that we find the secret discipline.

> "What is the significance of a Church (church, parish, preaching, Christian life) in a religionless world? How do we speak of God without religion, i.e., without the temporally-influenced presuppositions of metaphysics inwardness and so on? How do we speak (but perhaps we are no longer capable of speaking of such things as we used to) in secular fashion of God? In what way are we in a religionless and secular sense Christians, in what way are we the Ekklesia, 'those who are called forth,' not conceiving of ourselves religiously as specially favoured, but as wholly belonging to the world? Then Christ is no longer an object of religion, but something quite different, indeed and in truth the Lord of the world. Yet what does that signify? What is the place of worship and prayer in an entire absence of religion? Does the secret discipline, or, as the case may be, the distinction (which you have met with me before) between the penultimate and ultimate, at this point acquire fresh importance." 109.

We should note that Bonhoeffer is not advocating that the traditional Christian concepts be translated into "new" concepts. That would be too simple a solution to the problems of Christianity in a secular world. Bonhoeffer is arguing that we find the meaning of the traditional concepts through engagement with the world and relate them to that world. We have been given a rich heritage of concepts which cannot be demythologised effectively without losing their essential meaning. They are valid to Bonhoeffer, and many Christians, but they must be protected against devaluation and profanation by making them acceptable to the world. Nor is it acceptable to Bonhoeffer to speak to the world of all the Christian concepts since this is the repudiated positivism of revelation. There must be a certain reserve, a caution, when we approach the world with our Christian concepts. Our faith must

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109. LPP. p.92 (This passage indicates why Bonhoeffer believed it necessary to turn to his 'new vocabulary').

remain involved in the penultimate, while finding a way to manifest the ultimate within the penultimate. The secret discipline is this reserve, this boundary beyond which we must not throw the great Christian ideas at the world.

The arcane discipline is therefore a strategy through which and by which the Christian is to live his faith in the secular world.

Bonhoeffer certainly asks more questions than he answers in this letter. However, it is clear that he is ill at ease with any programme of demythologisation and equally with a positivism of revelation. His main aim is to relate the ultimate and the penultimate in such a way that both remain what they essentially are. The distinction between the penultimate and the ultimate is to remain but if they are to be related (that is synthesised) the secret discipline will be necessary. In this sense the secret discipline is a "stop-gap" whereby the Christian concepts like redemption and resurrection are protected from profanation. The Christian's faith asks him to believe in these ultimate cornerstones of his faith, but the secular world neither recognises nor understands them as ultimate. It is important therefore not to press these tenets of the faith to the world but to "protect" them by not speaking openly about them. We recognise an immediate problem for traditional Christianity in this idea. It has always been a characteristic of Christianity to preach and commend the faith through the spoken word. What happens then to such a strategy in terms of the secret discipline? An answer is provided from the period of the fourth century when a secret discipline was in operation. However, at this juncture it is important to ask more specifically what the secret discipline is.

Is the secret discipline a secret one, or a discipline of secrecy? If it is meant to be a discipline in secrecy then it possibly

refers to worship, prayer, and meditation being practised in secret, This interpretation however, tends towards an individual practice of these things and would seem to clash with Bonhoeffer's repudiation of pious Christianity. However, there is evidence that in the early centuries of the Christian faith a practice of secrecy surrounding the central rites of the faith was maintained.[110] The sacred rites of baptism and eucharist, the formularies of the Lord's prayer and the creeds, were safeguarded against profanation by being taught to the initiate after he had undergone instruction. These matters were not a matter of preaching or apologetics. This is the theological meaning of the latin term, disciplina arcani. There is nothing to suggest that Bonhoeffer did not use this phrase in its theological meaning. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to believe that the secret discipline should be understood as a discipline of secrecy about the "mysteries" of the Christian faith.

We have suggested that the secret discipline is related to both the positivism of revelation and the non religious interpretation of biblical concepts. Thus we can assume that the secret discipline ensures that the Christian concepts are safeguarded against a too "worldly" interpretation to make them acceptable to the world. And by so doing these concepts are protected until they can be reinterpreted meaningfully. Thus we see that Bonhoeffer does not call for a "reduction" in the content of Christianity; he does not advocate the abandonment of difficult concepts like grace and repentance; he does advocate a protection of them through the secret discipline.

This protection is however not one way. It also protects the world. We have noted the importance which Bonhoeffer attached to the distinction between the ultimate and penultimate. The world

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110. See Appendix 2. Also see Ernst Lohmeyer, The Lord's Prayer, pp 13-32 for an exposition on how the Lord's prayer was understood by the early Christian communities and its place in the life of the church.

is accepted as secular, and therefore, is unable to grasp the significance and meaning of Christian concepts. The Christian concepts must not be "forced" upon such a world.

We should also note that this idea of protection is a positive rather than a negative one. It is not a protection which ensures a privileged status for the Christian. It is in fact not a protection of the Christian at all, but of the very things which make a Christian, faith in Christ, resurrection, repentance. Thus there is a sense of Christian anonimity, of not parading one's faith and beliefs before men, but of choosing the way of service. This protection is costly. The cost is being silent before a world which the Christian believes "needs" the Gospel. But Bonhoeffer was aware of the dangers in trying to commend Christianity to such a world.

> "Cheap grace means grace sold on the market like cheapjacks' wares. The sacraments, the forgiveness of sin, and the consolation of religion are thrown away at cut prices.....
> Cheap grace means grace as a doctrine, a principle, a system. It means forgiveness of sins proclaimed as a general truth, the love of God taught as the Christian 'conception' of God. An intellectual assent to that idea is held to be of itself sufficient to secure remission of sins.....
> Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner.....
> Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate." 111.

There is no clearer explanation of what Bonhoeffer means by profanation than this passage from The Cost of Discipleship.

To achieve the recovery of the meaning of such concepts as grace, Bonhoeffer argues that the Christian cultus, worship, prayer, concepts, and teaching require to be kept secret from the world. He

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111. The Cost of Discipleship: pp 45-7

returns therefore to pristine Christianity in which initiation after considerable instruction was considered necessary. Of course we must ask how Christianity is then to be related to the world, if there is to be a discipline of secrecy. Bonhoeffer's answer is contained in his Sermon to DWR,

> "Atonement, and redemption, regeneration, the Holy Ghost, the love of our enemies, the cross and resurrection, life in Christ and Christian discipleship - all these things have become so problematic and so remote that we hardly dare to speak of them..... Our Christianity today will be confined to praying and doing right by our fellow men. Christian thinking, speaking and organisation must be reborn out of this praying and this action." 112.

The secret discipline is therefore an act of repentance by the church itself.[113] It repents of its history of cheap grace by holding a silence about its great truths; but repentance requires action. The action is to be the penance of vicarious servanthood, the synthesis of praying and doing right by our neighbour.

The arcane discipline ensures that the Christian concepts are not lost in a godless world, but that neither are they spoken of meaninglessly. Again we can trace the concept of responsibility.

It would seem that Bonhoeffer is suggesting that the structure of mission for both church and individual is the structure of prayer and righteous action. This is again a genuine synthesis not a dialectic. Prayer and action stream from each other in the form of submission and resistance. Through intercessory prayer for the world and others, the Christian submits to the godlessness of the world by faith in God's providential care; but prayer is a response to God, and this response finds expression in action, in the resisting of evil and doing right.[114]

In the discipline of secrecy, the Christian spiritual life is

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112. LPP. p.155
113. World Come of Age. Ed. R.G. Smith. Article D.B. Karl Barth's Positivism of Revelation pp. 93-130.
114. Ott. pp. 295-302

a synthesis of prayer and righteous action - not prayer paraded in the face of men; but righteous action within the world. Prayer and action feed one another since prayer is not an evasion of one's duties or responsibilities but a sharing, with God, for the world and others. It is in this sense that Dumas understands the arcane discipline which he calls the "secret breath of action".[115] It is because of what the arcane discipline protects that the Christian is moved into action. Hence, the arcanum is not a shield to protect the individual in any religious sense; it is rather the strategy which arms the Christian with faith in Christ, and sends him into the world with the knowledge of resurrection. It is because of this secrecy, that Bonhoeffer speaks of the Christian in terms of a non-religious vocabulary, deputy, representative, being-for-others, worldly Christian.

Bonhoeffer also unites his thoughts on the ultimate/penultimate and the arcane discipline. This is another way of speaking of the synthesis of faith and worldliness. Because of his attack on religion Bonhoeffer seeks to give place to the 'things before the last' the penultimate, the life of man in the world. But his worldliness is not shallow. For the Christian, worldly as he may be by his engagement within in, still requires the 'hidden life' of faith, a disciplined life grounded in devotion, prayer and worship. Godsey puts it this way,"... the worldly life always requiring the nourishment of the secret discipline and the secret discipline always sending a man back into the world."[116]

The ultimate and penultimate form a continuum, not a dialectic, because there is one reality in Christ, not, gospel and world, but gospel for world.

Our discussion has concentrated upon the individual Christian. It is important, however, to see that the arcane discipline has an ecclesiological reference. Bonhoeffer had stressed, in both Creation

115. Dumas. p.203

116. Godsey. p.254

and Fall, and Sanctorum Communio, the importance of sociality and community. At Finkenwalde, he had approached the arcane discipline in terms of a community life. This gathering together had its value in sending students out into the world better prepared to serve it because of the seminary experience. Bonhoeffer did not understand the secret discipline in terms of the individual life without reference to the community life. That would have been religious. Dumas speaks of the church as the "fellowship of Christological obedience" [117.] where the Christian is nourished in the faith before being sent forth to engage the world in Christ's name. He (the individual) cannot exist on his own, he needs others. Thus the Church is "Christ existing as Community", Christus als Gemeinde existierend.

Reginald Fuller has noted this very point when he writes that the Ekklesia is to gather together and celebrate the presence of Christ through the sacrament of Communion. Fuller says that the phrase, "Do this in remembrance of me....." is plural. Christians are meant to gather together in Christ; this gathering, this community, is the mainspring of mission and discipleship. This gathering together to worship, pray, learn of Christ, is essentially a social activity; and because man's faith sends him from the gathered church into the church scattered in the world, he has to relate his faith to his worldly life.[118.]

The arcane discipline allows the Christian to say an emphatic 'Yes' to the penultimate while holding in his heart, along with his fellow Christians, belief in Christ as Lord, the ultimate. The Christian can only live this truly worldly life because the arcanum ensures that this "Yes" is not a blind acceptance of the secular world. This world come of age (mündig) has attained to its own autonomy but it is still a judged world and atoned for in Jesus Christ. In speaking of the church Bonhoeffer outlines this very point,

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117. Dumas. p.197

118. The Place of Bonhoeffer: ed. Marty. Greenbacks. Article by Fuller. p.171ff.

118. The Place of Bonhoeffer: ed. Marty. Greenbacks. Article by Fuller. p.171ff.

> "The church is a bit of the world, a lost, godless world, under the curse, a complacent evil world." 119.

Because Bonhoeffer would have us believe that we are really "earthbound" creatures, that our whole existence is lived out in the penultimate, he would have us be responsible to and for that world. This faith would be meaningless without an arena in which to express it. Faith finds this arena to be the world and the arcanum ensures that faith is channelled into activity within the world.

Again, the Christian may be called to be a worldly man, fulfilling his secular duties to the best of his abilities, whether moral, social, or political, but his identity as a follower of Christ is safeguarded by the arcanum. It is so because within the gathered church, he learns and relearns of Christ and the ancient truths of Christianity. It therefore ensures that ethical action does not slip into merely 'good works' or a form of humanism, for all action is really action for Christ. Thus we see that the arcanum protects the faith on all fronts. It does not allow the faith to be reduced in order to meet the world on its terms; nor does it attempt a transposition of the faith into another language (i.e. Bultmann's use of Heidegger and existentialism or Tillich's Christian anthropology).

It is a fact that Bonhoeffer sought to keep all of the orthodox Christian concepts, and to keep them without a reinterpretation which would simply change their terminology. Indeed his charge against Bultmann is that they cannot be changed. The non-religious interpretation of biblical concepts is not a programme like demythologisation. It is an understanding of how the traditional concepts can be lived by the Christian. For instance, repentance is lived in the form of service to others; belief in resurrection is lived in terms of renewal for the world through vicarious action, of being responsible.

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119. No Rusty Swords. Fontana. 1965. p.149

The world is accepted by the Christian not on its own terms, but only under Christ. Faith and Worldliness are not two polar opposites for the Christian. They are complementary to each other. It is the belief of Bonhoeffer that because of the secret discipline, the Christian is freed to be wholly for the world and wholly for Christ.

The Christian life is manifested only indirectly. The marks of this style of life are submission to the reality of the godless world and yet resistance to evil within that world; a disciplined life of prayer and worship within the church fellowship; and silent humility within the world which cannot understand Christian terminology.

Of course Bonhoeffer does reduce Christian witness to prayer and ethical action. What happens then to preaching, evangelism, and mission? Or can we say that the arcane discipline is the instrument of modern mission for the Church? Is it meant to create a new atmosphere and climate in which Christian proclamation will one day become viable again? I think that this is the key to this most difficult concept in Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer himself concludes his "Sermon to DWR" on his baptism,

> "It is not for us to prophecy the day, but the day will come when men will be called again to utter the word of God with such power as will change and renew the world. It will be a new language, which will horrify men, and yet overwhelm them by its power. It will be the language of a new righteousness and truth, a language which proclaims the peace of God with men and the advent of his kingdom. "And they shall fear and tremble for all the good and for all the peace that I procure unto it." (Jeremiah 33:9). Until then the Christian cause will be a silent and hidden affair, but there will be those who pray and do right and wait for God's own time. I hope you will be one of them and that one day it will be said of you: "The path of the righteous is as a shining light, That shineth more and more unto the perfect day." (Proverbs 4:18)." 120.

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120. LPP, p.160. See Appendix 2.

CHAPTER SEVEN.

THE CHURCH. CHRIST EXISTING AS COMMUNITY

Bonhoeffer's doctoral thesis, Sanctorum Communio, is an exhaustive study of the church. It was written in 1927 and published in 1930. However, Bonhoeffer continued to write and discuss about the church. In 1931 he entered the Ecumenical movement as Youth Secretary to the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches. (A precursor to the World Council of Churches.) He travelled widely throughout Europe speaking at various conferences further formulating his thoughts on the church. Indicative of the problems he tackled are two addressed preserved in No Rusty Swords, "What is the Church?" and "The Church is Dead". From this period he produced his masterpiece of theological orthodoxy, The Cost of Discipleship, devoting the last chapter to the theme of the church.

In discussing the concept of the church, we should recall that Bonhoeffer's christology involves ecclesiology. Christ is always related to his church, which is nothing less than His Body which takes up space in the world.

A. SANCTORUM COMMUNIO.

This work is obscure in its method, pedantic in its style, highly technical, abstract in its conclusions, and uses sociology in a questionable way.[121] There is also a notable ommission in it. Bonhoeffer dismisses Troeltsch with a few words. He does so beacuse Troeltsch appraoched the question of the church in terms of history. He understood the church as a phenomenon of religion which developed and grew out of historical processes. He believed that revelation was not accessible to investigation other than through the medium of

121. Bonhoeffer does not include any empirical data as evidence for his thesis. This is a doubtful method in sociology. Also it is questionable if sociology would consider revelation as a suitable category for its subject matter. See Peter Berger, Sociology & Ecclesiology, in The Place of Bonhoeffer, Ed. Marty.

religious activity. Bonhoeffer's concern was not history but revelation. He ignored the historical question of the church as he ignored the question of the historical Jesus.

The basic axiom of his thesis is,

> "...that man, as spirit, is necessarily created in a community, and that his general spirituality is woven into the net of sociality." 122.

This emphasis upon the social aspect of human life is later transposed to that of the church as community. God ordains that men should live together. The category of the social is therefore the foil which Bonhoeffer uses in his unending search for the concreteness of revelation.

> "...the reality of the church, which is at once a historical community and established by God." 123.

The church is created through the act of God alone. God has willed that man should live in community; therefore the only viable concept for the church is that of community. But Bonhoeffer goes further. The church is Jesus Christ; he is not the founder of the church; but really the church.[124] To Bonhoeffer, the biblical understanding of the church knows only one form of revelation, Christ as community, and this is the visible body of believers. Thus Bonhoeffer denies the validity of speaking of the invisible church, of the communion of saints in heaven. His search is for the visible church within the world, which lives by historical redemption. Thus his concern is not faith and history, but faith and its expression in community.

All through his works, Bonhoeffer gives prominence to the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. But this event is not understood as an isolated one 'located' in the past, for he believes that Christ takes

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122. S.C. p.44
123. S.C. p.88
124. S.C. p.111

form time and again within the world of men, as the church, as community. Christ occupies space wherever there is a community of men who participate in him, what he calls metanoia, the act of 'being caught up in the way of Christ.'[125] Sociality may have its faults. It is a most difficult concept to grasp, but at least Bonhoeffer remains consistent, for his use of the category of the social ensures that revelation is no mere abstraction, but has a concrete reference. Thus Bonhoeffer avoids the many pitfalls of speaking of the church in terms of a system, or institution. Doctrines cannot occupy space, nor do they transform men or world, nor do they defeat evil or injustice, or bring reconciliation.

The church is understood as Collective Person because of its role in the world. This concept includes within itself the idea previously discussed of representation, or vicarious action. The church is in the world; it is a part of the world (as we shall see later); but it is an interceding church; a church which has the lofty vocation of representing God to the world. It does so because of its sociality and its new "life-principle" of "vicarious action".[126] The Christian must have this life-principle as the cornerstone of his being. It is nourished through the arcane discipline which itself, finds expression within the church. It is a basic fact in Bonhoeffer that a man cannot be a Christian if he is separated from his brethern in Christ. The church, the divine creation, is willed as a structure, rooted in community.

> "The Christian comes into being and exists only in Christ's church. He is dependent upon it, that is, dependent upon the other man. Each man sustains the other in active love, intercession, and forgiveness of sins through complete vicarious action, which is possible only in the church of Christ, resting as it does, in its entirety upon the principle

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125. LPP. p.123
126. S.C. p.107

> of vicarious action, that is, upon the love of God. But all are sustained by the church, which consists in this action for one another of its members. The church and its members are structurally together, and act vicariously for each other, in the strength of the church. This constitutes the specific sociological character of community based on love." 127.

It is clear that Bonhoeffer has used sociology and the category of the social to lead us through to his deeply concrete understanding of the church. It is an understanding which unites christology and ecclesiology. God in Christ takes up form within the community of believers. Woelfel calls this the 'Christopersonal Community'. Christ, who has atoned for the world, the deputy for and to man, calls men into conformation with himself, to be deputies.

> "The Church is the place where deputyship of Christ for humanity is fulfilled through the deputyship of believers towards one another and towards the world." 128.

In this early work, Bonhoeffer has paved the way for his criticism of religion. "Christus als Gemeinde existierend" is anti-individualistic because of its social reference. It is relational, binding all Christians together in Christ through the pro-me structure of Christ and the concept of deputyship. It is anti-ascetic, stressing the visible church here and now participating in this deputyship. This point becomes clearer with the later definition by Bonhoeffer of the Christian faith as historical redemption. Bethge has written that the Church, understood by Bonhoeffer as an act of revelation by God, is then to be grasped in such social terms. Indeed, transcendence and revelation must be thought of in social terminology. The truths and concepts of the church, grace, justification, reconciliation, have a social sphere. This-worldly transcendence is a quality of the Christian life, (nearness and not remoteness) or in the phrase of Woelfel's "the personal community of neighbours in - Christ."[129.]

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127. ibid. p.136
128. Die Mundige Welt. Vol.1. p.26 Article by von Hase.
World Come of Age. Ed.R.G.Smith. Article by Bethge. p.34. Collins.
129. Woelfel. p.161

We have selected the main points of this work which we consider are relevant to our thesis. They are three-fold. The emphasis on the social aspect of revelation and the church; the importance of the visible church which occupies space in the world; and the social/christological concept of deputyship.

Nevertheless, from a critical viewpoint, Bonhoeffer leaves many unanswered questions. Are we to understand the Church as collective person, theologically, sociologically, or existentially? Indeed, is this not the main problem in Bonhoeffer's thesis for 'Christ existing as community' could be understood wrongly, i.e. Christ as a mythological figure? Does the concept of the collective person reflect the individual Christian? Does it reflect Christ? For some answers we must investigate his other works, for the church remained with Bonhoeffer, as a most important area of study and thought.

B. WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

In 1932, Bonhoeffer prepared lecture notes on this topic. He explained the duality of the church. This enabled him to express what he meant by the visible church, for it is both a divine and a human instrument. He is best left to express it himself.

> "The church is a bit of the world, a lost, godless world, under the curse, a complacent, evil world.....The church is the presence of God in the world. Really in the world, really the presence of God. The church is not a consecrated sanctuary, but the world, called by God to God; therefore there is only one church in all the world.
> The church is an institution for maintaining Christian piety and morality. It must be preserved for the people-otherwise it kicks over the traces. It 'serves' public life, order, state.....
> The church is a union of religiously inclined, interested men, strangely fond of displaying their religiousity in their form of 'church'.

> .....But, the church, is 'community', the communion of saints, those freed by God from loneliness, one hearing the other, giving himself, knowing himself responsible because he is bound by God to him. Community through sacrifice, prayer, and forgiveness. The breaking of the chains of solitude, the reality of being with one another and for one another, love, brotherhood. And all this from God. God, the present Christ, lays the basis of the community; it is his people called from the world by his word, bound to him their sole Lord in faith, bound to their brothers in love." 130.

The fact that Bonhoeffer himself prefers to speak of a duality rather than a dialectic of the church indicates his opposition to this movement. In this selection we again see his emphasis on the church as God's act, yet still a human community. It is a community of deputies, Christo-personal, bound to one another and the world through the Incarnation in which God creates space for himself. While at Gland in Switzerland in the same year, he preached on the topical sermon, "The Church is Dead". There we find how Christ is present in the thoroughly Reformed tradition through the medium of the Word and Sacrament.[131] In the three years Bonhoeffer had moved beyond a mere discussion of the church as "Christ Present". In 1935 he described the visible church gathered and the arcane discipline in practice.

> "The special character of a seminary of the Confessing Church derives from the difficult situation in which we have been placed by the church struggle. The Bible forms the focal point of our work. It has once again become the starting point and the centre of our theological work and of all our Christian action. We have learnt here to read the Bible once again prayerfully. That is the significance of our morning and evening devotions in which we hear the word of the Bible continuously. After we have read a psalm together, each of the brethern in turn reads one passage from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament, interspersed with verses from hymns and leading up to free prayer and the Our Father said together. In the daily period of meditation we consider a fairly short biblical text appointed for the whole week. In the morning we listen to lectures .... which end with a discussion.....It is the Lord's Supper,

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130. No Rusty Swords. Fontana. 1970. pp.149-151.

131. ibid. p.183

> however, that has been the chief means of bringing us together. Confession and brotherly talk together have become our necessary and most important preparation for this." 132.

This is the real heart of the term 'community', a communal life built around the Word of God and the Sacraments, nourishing the life of the individual within the context of others. This is what Martin Thornton has described as the 'rule of orthodoxy' found in the midst of Bonhoeffer's radical thoughts, the use of prayer, psalms, meditation, sacraments.[133] Only those committed to Christ can participate in this gathered community with the Eucharist the centre of the act of faith, protected by discipline through communal living and confession.

This is a much more practical understanding of the church than we find in Sanctorum Communio. Bonhoeffer's thoughts were moving in the direction of a disciplined life of faith which was to lead him to his work Cost of Discipleship in 1937. The continued passion to find and understand the visible church again appears in a talk entitled "The Visible Church in the New Testament."[134]

Bonhoeffer begins in this paper to draw clear lines of demarcation for the Christian in the church. He was not interested in one particular church but in the real church, formed wherever men participated in Christ.

> "Man can do nothing for his salvation, but he can go to the church; the promise of the Spirit is given to the individual only in so far as he is a member of the community, gathered together. Now the entirely new thing happens: the Spirit comes.
>
> b. The coming of the Spirit and the founding of the church is a visible event, and not an incorporeal concept. The Spirit makes a place for himself in the world by coming with visible signs. The community is immediately placed visibly before everyone else; it is given up to their judgement. The founding of the church is no hidden thing, 'done in a corner'; it is a

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132. The Way to Freedom. Fontana Library of Theology & Philosophy. 1972. p.35

133. M. Thornton: The Rock and the River. p.93

134. ibid. pp.45-50

> visible designation of all who have been called. The Spirit exposes his community to the world. It immediately becomes the 'city on the hill, which cannot be hid.'." 135.

The church is something radically new in the world; its 'space' is questioned by the world which cannot understand its nature. This is the New Community formed in the midst of the judged world, yet atoned for in Christ. Bonhoeffer continues,

> "Part of the world is made afresh after the image of God. (Col.3:10) Thus no new religion has been founded; a part of the world has been made anew. That is the founding of the church. The event of Whitsuntide thus does not consist primarily in a new religiousness, but in the proclamation of a new creative act of God. And that means that the whole of life is requisitioned. It is not a matter of putting the religious before the profane, but of putting God's act before both religious and profane." 135.

And Bonhoeffer then goes on to attack the religious concept of the church.

> "A religious fellowship is concerned to put the religious above the profane, to divide life into religious and the profane; it is concerned with and ordering of value and status. A religious fellowship has its end in itself in the 'religious' as the highest...." 135.

The shape of this new creation of God is found by Bonhoeffer directly in the Bible.

> "In Acts 2:42ff, 4:32ff, we can already find the first beginnings and the hints of the direction in which this new creation is to take shape. The place of preaching and the confession, the teaching of the Apostles, breaking of bread, prayer, the place of officers and of gifts, signs and wonders, the place of the Christian commandments, of discipleship and community goods, and the limits of this place, towards the people in Acts 2:47 and towards the kingdom of God in the mission." 135.

Again, as we read on, we find familiar renderings of the <u>arcanum</u>, and in particular, the role of <u>Didache</u>.

> ".....this <u>didache</u> creates <u>koinonia</u>..... the liturgical gathering is the origin of the <u>koinonia</u> and is similarly its goal. Brotherly fellowship grows only with the hearing of the Word." 135.

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135. ibid. pp.45-50

Bonhoeffer therefore limits the church to a specific area of a gathered community of believers, celebrating the presence of Christ in Word and Sacraments and fellowship. This narrowing of the boundaries of the real Church came to full flowering in 1937.

Bonhoeffer writes in Cost of Discipleship, that,

> "It is certain that there can be no fellowship or communion with him except through his Body. For only through that Body can we find acceptance and salvation. The answer is, through the two sacraments of his Body, baptism and the Lord's Supper." 136.

With almost passionate zeal he pours out phrase after phrase limiting salvation to a definite area, defining the revelatory act of the Church to a set space.

> "To be in Christ therefore means to be in the Church." 136.

> "No one can become a new man except by entering the Church, and becoming a member of the Body of Christ. It is impossible to become a new man as a solitary individual." 136.

Here is the christological concept of participation in Christ and in Christ's community. This is the protection of the arcane discipline where the faith and its content is protected from profanation by exposing it to the world. Bonhoeffer called this the waste of cheap grace in the opening of The Cost of Discipleship. Here is the ecclesiological ground in which the arcanum is to be rooted.

In his chapter "The Visible Community" Bonhoeffer discusses the consequences of the Incarnation. Because Bonhoeffer understands it in social/theological terms the Incarnation is not an isolated event of history, not something which happened a long time ago but something which continues throughout history. The church therefore, as understood in terms of a community, ensures the "extension" of the Incarnation. Dumas notes this when he says that the "Church is the ongoing outworking

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136. Cost of Discipleship. Macmillan. 1963. pp.267-269

of the Incarnation",[137] a structure within the world, with a 'space' which gives tangible expression to the reconciliatory work of Christ. But just how is this community truly visible in the world? Again in traditional Reformation style, Bonhoeffer informs us that it is visible 'through the preaching of the word' and

> "It has been demonstrated that the Church of Jesus Christ claims space in the world for its proclamation. The Body of Christ becomes visible to the world in the congregation gathered round the Word and Sacrament." 138.

(This last quotation at least ensures that Bonhoeffer recognises the local, parish, church as playing an important role.)

However, Bonhoeffer realises the dangers of his foregoing argument. All that has been said is related to the church in the widest sense of that troublesome word. But how is the church actually manifested in the world of everyday living? Is the church purely a gathered community, or does it have space in other areas of life?

> "We must now ask whether we have adequately described the visible nature of the church, or whether it claims further space in the world. The New Testament gives a clear answer. The church needs space not only for her liturgy and order, but also for the daily life of her members in the world. That is why we must now speak of the living-space (Lebensraum) of the visible Church." 139.

His answer is as follows,

> "Wherever Christians live together, conversing and dealing with one another, there is the church, there they are in Christ." 140.

and,

> "The member of the Body of Christ has been delivered from the world and called out of it. He must give the world a visible proof of his calling, not only by sharing in the Church's worship and discipline, but also through the new fellowship of brotherly living. If the world despises one of the brethern, the Christian will love and serve him. If the world does him violence, the Christian will succour and

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137. Dumas. p.82
138. ibid. p.281
139. ibid. p.284
140. ibid. p.288

> comfort him. If the world dishonours and insults him, the Christian will sacrifice his own honour to cover his brother's shame. Where the world seeks gain, the Christian will renounce it. Where the world exploits, he will dispossess himself, and where the world expresses, he will stoop down and raise up the oppressed. If the world refuses justice, the Christian will pursue mercy, and if the world takes refuge in lies, he will open his mouth for the dumb, and bear testimony to the truth. For the sake of the brother, be he Jew or Greek, bond or free, strong or weak, noble or base, he will renounce all fellowship with the world...." 141.

and,

> "The value of the secular calling for the Christian is that it provides an opportunity of living the Christian life with the support of God's grace, and of engaging more vigorously in the assault on the world and everything it stands for." 142.

There is certainly an element here which sees the world as enmity to Christ. But it must be borne in mind that despite this attack on the world, Bonhoeffer does emphasise that the church is in the world, its members are in the world, and its sphere of activity is in the world. The church is the hidden treasure in the cursed ground of the world. The idea of <u>historical redemption, pre-death</u> is again reiterated.

We have traced some of Bonhoeffer's ideas on the church from his doctoral thesis in 1927 to his last published work in 1937. Throughout we have noted that he is consistent in his understanding of the social significance of revelation. But he is also rather narrow, antagonistic to the world, and abstract. What actually happens to the church in the world come of age, in the midst of religionlessness, is our next priority.

C. <u>A RELIGIONLESS CHURCH</u>?

Before discussing this we must keep in our minds certain relevant facts. Bonhoeffer's writings on this topic are extremely limited. His thoughts are conditioned by his belief in the end of religion and the importance of the <u>arcane discipline</u>.

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141. ibid. p.289
142. ibid. p.298

His questions in the letter of April 30th. 1944 about the significance of the church, of parish, preaching, worship, prayer, speaking of God, remain questions, except for a general hint that part of their answers might be related to the secret discipline.

The Church simply does not exist at the centre of men's lives. It no longer appeals to men through the affective side of the human personality, whether in the world of art, architecture, pageantry, drama, education, religious symbols or words. This affective aspect is always visible, externally manifested. Bonhoeffer therefore urges us to consider a secret discipline.

In his 'Outline for a Book' his first chapter was to deal with the coming of age of humanity and the end of religion. He mentions that the Church (Protestant Church) is on the defensive. Pietism helps maintain Christianity. Without giving any explicit explanation of what he actually means by Pietism, Bonhoeffer uses the term to cover all his criticisms of the religious man, namely, concern for inwardness, God related to man's inner life, the unguarded use of the name of God and the concern for ascetic acts. The Church, while on the defensive, becomes preoccupied with itself 'an institution of salvation' and results in 'championing ecclesiastical interests'. In direct opposition to these possible outcomes for the church in a world come of age, Bonhoeffer asks it to take risks for mankind. But before it can do so, the church will have to stop asking people to believe in it, to support its position in the world, and above all else it must not impose its beliefs on men. Bonhoeffer believed that men should be pointed to the 'faith of the Bible and Christianity' and that they should be asked the deeply personal question of 'what do I believe' and not 'what must I believe?'

All of these things inevitably result in a direct threat to the

church as we know it. But Bonhoeffer carried his thoughts on the church through to what we consider to be their logical conclusion.

> "The Church is her true self only when she exists for humanity. As a fresh start she should give away all her endowments to the poor and needy. The clergy should live solely on the free will offerings of their congregations, or possibly engage in some secular calling. She must take her part in the social life of the world, not lording it over men, but helping and serving them. She must tell men, whatever their calling, what it means to live in Christ, to exist for others. And in particular, our own Church will have to take a strong line with the blasphemies of hybris, power worship, envy and humbug, for these are the roots of evil. She will have to speak of moderation, purity, confidence, loyalty, steadfastness, patience, discipline, humility, content and modesty. She must not underestimate the importance of human example, which has its origin in the humanity of Jesus, and which is so important in the teaching of St.Paul. It is not abstract argument but concrete example which gives her word emphasis and power....." 143.

To many, these words seem naive and over dramatic. And yet we all know within ourselves that the church has accumulated too much wealth and property while preaching to the world to help the poor and needy. Intellectual honesty is costly discipleship. To be honest, therefore, the church would have to review its policies in all matters of wealth.

To take part in the social life of the world presumably means that the Christian should enter fully into the whole of life while colouring it with his witness of moderation, purity, patience. We doubt if Bonhoeffer means that the church should take part in social occasions, giving the odd prayer, dedicating the odd building, saying grace before a gargantuan meal. This would be nothing more than coating such occasions with a thin veneer of religion.

With the call to engage the world, Bonhoeffer means a political engagement, a Christian presence and witness through concern in political matters.[144] This requires a concrete reference and as we have shown

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143. LPP. pp.164-66

144. See Appendix 3

throughout this work, the most concrete witness for the Christian is the responsible example as God's representatives.

Bonhoeffer's call to the church in the world come of age is directly related to his attack on religion. God is to be found in the centre of all life, not its boundaries, not in the gaps of human knowledge, nor the secret areas of human life. Boldness, risk, servanthood and action are the keys which open a new existence for the church. Faith must be set loose in the world, 'elastic' enough to confront any and every situation with Christ crucified, risen and Lord. There must not be a 'created space of privilege' for the church and its members. Essentially its motive principle of life must be a willingness to serve the world while ensuring that through the secret discipline, the Christian faith itself is not paraded before the world in any cheap, apologetic way. Unpretentious service is the instrument of mission for the church, and sharing with others, being alongside others, as God in Christ ranged himself alongside man.

The religionless church, will be a duality of church gathered and church scattered. It will be gathered to hear the Word of God and to celebrate the Sacraments (secret discipline); and scattered into the whole of life, as men in their secular callings, applying Christian principles and love to their situation. The periods of withdrawal as the gathered church will be for the sake of more effective engagement, not a religious retreat for the members. The church must transcend religion, its own forms and orders, in order to serve Him who is the church personified.

For the present time, the church of Christ will be more faithful to its Lord by such service than by any apologetic of preaching at or to the world.

> "The Christian cause will be a silent and hidden affair, but there will be those who pray and do right and wait for God's own time." [145]

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145. LPP. p.160

The church is only true to itself when she is Christ existing as community, holding the fabric of human life together in mutual service, love and just living; when she has as her very essence of existence, being-there-for-others. This is more than an ethical statement; it is again the synthesis of christology, ethics, and the search for concreteness, deriving its basis from the biblical revelation of Christ, Man for Others.

The writings of Bonhoeffer on the church do not, as far as we can see, discuss the place of liturgy or order. It would therefore seem that Bonhoeffer's search for a new life in Christ, for a deeper spirituality, is to be found in obedience to the divine command to 'love one another' and 'be neighbours to one another'.

The question becomes a pointed one drawn from the parables of Jesus. Exactly what is the style of life for the Body of Christ in a world come of age? Is it to be like the leaven in the lump, hidden in the midst of life and yet serving that life? Or like a light glowing openly from a hill top boldly lighting the way for others?

If we accept the important place of the arcane discipline in the thought of Bonhoeffer then it would seem that the leaven in the lump is a more than satisfactory parable of the church's life for today. The point of the above quotation is that one day, the church may again, be a shining light to all.

It is in this sense that mission and evangelisation are to be replaced by the arcanum. If the 'theistic containers' of church language and symbols have indeed been shattered, as John Robinson suggests,[146] then mere words to the world will not be enough. Even the Christian words of reconciliation and redemption, will be meaningless. But, the Christian, nourished in and through the arcane discipline of the church gathered, can adopt the style of life of being responsible within

146. J. Robinson. Christian Freedom in a Permissive Society. p.132

whatever context he finds himself.

It seems that Bonhoeffer finally comes to one phrase to describe the church and the Christian in a world come of age - namely, to 'plunge himself into the life of a godless world.....to live a worldly life....."

> "It is in such a life that we throw ourselves utterly into the arms of God and participate in his sufferings in the world and watch with Christ in Gethsemane. That is faith, that is metanoia....." (147.

"To watch with Christ in Gethsemane". This could well be the clue we are seeking. Gethsemane emphasises the humanity of Jesus; his acceptance of the world in its full godlessness; the pushing of God onto a tree and so out of the world. Gethsemane existence means silence since words have no effect on men. It means a willingness to be sacrificed unpretentiously; and it combines submission and resistance in a synthesis of prayerful action. This means submission to the world and its condemnation, and yet there is the idea of resistance through trust, through utterly throwing oneself into the hands of God.

The church is always one person. It is never really an institution or a structure, a set of beliefs or doctrines, nor is it in being only when gathered under a vaulted roof. Bonhoeffer does emphasise the very important concept of the church as community. But he does not mean that the individual Christian loses his identity when he is placed in the world. This is where the concept of representative ensures clarity. The church, Christ as community, the individual Christian, is God's representative to men. The individual is the church, wholly, fully, and completely. He is a 'bit of the lost, godless world', he is judged and condemned as a "sinner", yet he is under the grace of atonement, a forgiven sinner. Sociality is not a concept of 'exclusiveness' but a means of bringing true community into being through individual action. The church is always one person.

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147. LPP. p. 125

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

The concept of the spiritual life must be a practical one. The problem is how to translate faith and belief into reality which can be lived in our daily lives. There is a danger that our faith in God will remain a hypothesis, untested in experience. The very concept of a spiritual life breeds its own peculiar problems. It does so because it is a concept as wide as one wants to make it. While we have attempted to unravel the thoughts of Bonhoeffer to help us define the spiritual life in the world come of age, many questions from his thoughts remain unanswered. Nevertheless, from the foregoing discussion a number of relevant guidelines can be traced.

However we define the spiritual life, it must not be a life limited to certain activities like prayer, worship, meditation or good works. Nor is it a life designed to create saints or to make men more religious. The spiritual life must not be partial but it must have certain emphases.

Bonhoeffer has been called a 'radical', a 'revolutionary' and a precursor to the 'Death of God' movement. Yet he is more than all these things. We are convinced that Bonhoeffer is best understood as a 'radically orthodox theologian'.[148] We mean by this that the concept of radical is to be understood in its pristine meaning. It derives from radicalis, latin for fundamental, which itself comes from radix meaning root. It is in this sense that the radical goes to the 'root' of the matter in hand; he asks the fundamental questions. He is a participator in the way things are, but asks why they are that way, and how they can be changed. The radical is an 'insider', someone who participates in history, in the church, in politics, in science, and who, by his participation, can rightly question his own traditions. Thus the

148. Appendix 3.

radical goes back to the very roots of his traditions whatever discipline he is in. Bonhoeffer was such a radical for his immediate point of departure in every question about Christianity, religion, grace, this-worldliness, is the root question, "Who is Jesus Christ....?"

It might seem that the concept of radical is contradicted by the term orthodox. But orthodoxy is a set of truths on which one's tradition is based. We have seen how Bonhoeffer returns time and again to his own rule of orthodoxy. There is his use of prayer, meditation, Bible reading, and his keeping of the Christian calendar. In a sense this aspect of his discipleship is nothing less than the arcane discipline in action. These things are a set of religious exercises but not for themselves. They are Bonhoeffer's spiritual nourishment necessary for his life in the world.

We should further note certain aspects of his thinking discussed above. Bonhoeffer's spirituality takes cognisance of man in his wholeness; he understands the world as God's, and the incarnation as the central fact and event of the Christian faith. It teaches man that the world is the sphere of God's activity and he believes in detachment (arcane discipline) but also of engagement in the world.

Most notable is his belief that nothing in the world is profane for those who believe in the incarnation. In this sense we have to understand his use of the concept of transcendence. Bonhoeffer speaks of transcendence as nearness. What does this mean?

The world come of age is a world accessible to scientific study, open to technological advances, and secular in its life. To speak to such a world of transcendence is almost an impossibility. To ask secular men to see God in their scientific study and technology is unfair. The divine cannot be perceived in these things per se. Yet the Christian who believes in the hidden presence of God will have eyes and

ears to perceive God in this world. His example comes from Jesus. He took as his subject matter, the mundane things of life, a woman cleaning her house, a man sowing seed, a hirer of labour, the world of nature and the politics of his day. But in the parables of Jesus, he opens these everyday things of life to perceive the reality of God working in and through them. In other words, Jesus' words offer a new interpretation of the everyday world. The ultimate is understood in relation to the penultimate, and the penultimate derives its meaning from the ultimate.

It is in this sense that Bonhoeffer suggests that transcendence is experienced in nearness. Transcendence is not the experience of the "other world" but of this world, our neighbours, of being-for-others. This is the central truth of the incarnation, that God is in the world of men in the form of Christ. Of course we must guard against equating transcendence or the ultimate with human effort. This indeed is one of the main problems in Bonhoeffer. He resolves it by turning to music. Life is a multi-dimensional affair, a polyphony of experiences which requires the cantus firmus of faith in Christ. Therefore, Christian discipleship is an openness to all life while appreciating the facts of life as they are. Did not Bonhoeffer himself remain open to God's guiding hand while facing the fact of his own imprisonment? Yet we must seek more concrete expression of the spiritual life.

A. THE STRUCTURE OF SPIRITUALITY.

The spiritual life is a synthesis of six structures. These may be denoted as follows:

i. Ethical Christology:
ii. The arcane discipline:
iii. The concept of servanthood:
iv. The concept of suffering:
v. The idea of God in the facts:
vi. The concept of the responsible deputy:

i. Ethical Christology

This structure combines Bonhoeffer's two main themes, Christ and ethics. It is important how man lives before God since Bonhoeffer believed that the world is always relative to Christ whether it knows it or not. It is therefore more important how the Christian lives before God. We have already seen that Bonhoeffer lays great emphasis upon the concept of deputyship which he derives from Christ himself. Deputyship, as we shall see under vi, is an ethical concept. But it is also that part of his christology which is concrete and hence provides a practical element. Thus the first structure contains three important aspects.

Christology. This is the orthodox aspect. In everything the Christian refers to Christ; it is Christ pro-me, between me and my situation. It is the aspect of faith in Christ the redeemer, the hidden Lord of men. This is a faith-statement. Therefore, the ethical aspect ensures that faith is translated into living.

Ethical. Bonhoeffer speaks of taking life in one's stride, of facing reality, of living in the midst of tensions and decisions, of intellectual honesty, and of responsible living. This implies engagement in and of the world rather than withdrawal. This is particularly seen in Bonhoeffer's understanding of the mandates. In all four mandates, the Christian is required to be responsible and to see the areas of labour, marriage, church and authority as areas claimed by Christ. In these four mandates, in which Bonhoeffer believed all men stand, the Christian can witness to his faith in God by being true, faithful, decent, graceful, men for others. The Christian stands out not just as he who prays for his neighbour, but who acts right by him also.

Concrete. Faith in Christ finds its expression in ethical living. This expression is manifested in my willingness to serve others, to share and take responsibility for others, to protest against evil and injustice,

and to take my part in the everyday world. More specifically, the Christian is to take his secular calling seriously. If this means he is a doctor, then he is to be a good, responsible doctor; if a machine operator, then he is to be the best possible. Alec Vidler expresses it this way,

> "We are to live with men and serve them in all those areas where Christ is never named though they belong to him, or where he is named only to be misunderstood or reviled." 149.

Bonhoeffer himself wrote,

> "We may have to face events and changes which run counter to our rights and wishes. But if so, we shall not give way to bitterness and foolish pride, but consciously submit to divine judgement and thus prove our worthiness to survive by identifying ourselves generously and unselfishly with the life of the community and the interests of our fellow men." 150.

This of course leads to a social gospel of good works unless we understand that Bonhoeffer's Christian lives within the atmosphere of the arcane discipline.

ii. The Arcane Discipline.

This discipline is a "check" upon the modern day Christian. There are so many opportunities for us to do good works, to be involved in charitable enterprises without ever thinking of Christ and his cross. Bonhoeffer's Christian must breath the air of Christian concepts like cross, resurrection, atonement, grace, repentance. He must experience the closeness of his brothers in the gathered church, uniting with them in intercessory prayer for the world, and preparing himself for the tasks to be done in God's name. We have already noted that the arcane discipline has an ecclesiological reference. Whatever form the church may have in the world come of age, the Christian requires to be united with his fellow Christians in an act of corporeate worship. The arcane discipline ensures that the totality of human experiences, visions and

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149. A. Vidler, Essays in Liberality, p.95ff.

150. LPP. p.159

hopes, are interpreted from a christological point of view. But as we have also noted, the arcane discipline "protects" the world. The Christian has a "song of the earth" sung in unison with his "song of faith". This is further evidence of Bonhoeffer's synthesis.

> "The Christian remains earthbound, when his desire is towards God; he must go through all the anxiety before the laws of the world; he must learn the paradox that the world offers us a choice, not between good and evil, but between one evil and another, and that nevertheless God leads him to himself even through evil. He must feel the gross contradiction between what he would like to do and what he must do; he must grow mature through this distress, grow mature through not leaving hold of God's hand, in the words, 'Thy will be done'. A glimpse of eternity is revealed only through the depths of our earth, only through the storms of a human conscience. .....The man who would leave the earth, who would depart from the present distress, loses the power which holds him by eternal, mysterious forces. The earth remains our mother, just as God remains our Father, and our mother will only lay in the Father's arms him who remains true to her. That is the Christian's song of earth and her distress." 151.

Here is the essence of Bonhoeffer's idea of the spiritual life.

All men, Christian alike, are made to live in the midst of tensions, the dilemma of difficult decisions, the uncertainty of human existence. However, the Christian life is a synthesis of faith and worldliness, of ethical responsibility and trust in God. The basic structure of faith is the enduring of reality in all its forms, before God. And the Christian can endure reality because of the strength and guidance given to him through the arcane discipline. Nothing less than a discipline of faith is necessary if the Christian is to remain faithful to God his Father, and still be true to mother earth. The arcane discipline is the counterpoint of the incarnation. It forever reminds the Christian that his faith is not a matter of belief in God but of active participation in Jesus Christ, because God has ranged himself alongside man in Christ.

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151. No Rusty Swords. p.43

iii. Servanthood.

The concept of servanthood is directly related to the idea of suffering which we will discuss next. It contains the idea of participation. In order to really serve someone in Christ's name, it is necessary to be involved with them in their life. One does not serve another in order to create dependence. Service must be directed to helping others to be responsible in their own right. Christian service is unpretentious service for the sake of Christ. It is being-there for-others, not only for their sakes, but for Christ's sake who calls his disciples to be representatives of his gospel. Again we note the idea of engagement within the world. Further, servanthood is christological in essence, for Christ is the model life of servanthood.

iv. Suffering.

The concept of suffering is not a matter of pain. It is a theological concept. The clue is Christ's sufferings in Gethsemane. It is important to note that Bonhoeffer's Christ is thoroughly this-worldly. He had to endure the tensions of this life, the misunderstanding of his cause and actions, the submission to human judgement. Although the Son of God incarnate, Jesus was fully immersed in this world and its ways. He suffered the pain and humiliation of his cross but his sufferings amounted to more. Possibly his greatest suffering was the godlessness of the world. He had to bear this godlessness on behalf of God! Bonhoeffer expresses this as the sufferings of God in the world.

He wrote,

> "Later I discovered and am still discovering to this very moment that it is only by living completely in this world that one learns to believe. One must abandon any attempt to make something of oneself whether it be a saint, a converted sinner, a churchman (the priestly type, so-called!) a righteous man or an unrighteous one,

> a sick man or a healthy one. This is what I mean by worldliness - taking life in one's stride, with all its duties and problems, its successes and failures, its experiences and helplessness. It is in such a life that we throw ourselves utterly into the arms of God and participate in his sufferings in the world and watch with Christ in Gethsemane. That is faith, that is metanoia and that is what makes a man a Christian." 152.

Bonhoeffer recognised that man is faced with innumerable choices, with willing to do right, yet always subject to failure. In one sense this is suffering, the precipice upon which we all walk, of human uncertainty. Suffering also requires honesty. It requires the Christian to face reality and to bear it. Such things as the demise of God from so much of human life, the silence before a world needing the Gospel yet unwilling and unable to receive it, and the inadequacies of the Church, are further examples of suffering. Yet through it all, Bonhoeffer commends us to entrust our causes and plans, our hopes and efforts, our anxieties and failures, into God's hands, trusting that, by so doing, He will lead us through these things to Himself. There is no more relevant example of suffering than Bonhoeffer's own anguished decision to will the downfall of Hitler by active resistance. Suffering is a structure of the spiritual life.

v. God in the facts.

It is at this point that we believe Bonhoeffer reached his greatest maturity and most important insight. Two passages are relevant,

> "Whatever weaknesses, miscalculations, and guilt there is in what precedes the facts, God is in the facts themselves." 153.

> "It depends upon a God who demands bold action as the free response of faith, and who promises forgiveness and consolation to the man who becomes a sinner in the process." 154.

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152. LPP. p.125
153. LPP. p.63 (As translated by Ott.)
154. LPP. p.138

Bonhoeffer has been called a theologian of reality. Reality, as we have seen, was an important concept to Bonhoeffer. He believed in one reality, under Jesus Christ. Reality is made up of the facts of life and human experience. Since Bonhoeffer would have us find God in the centre of our lives, in health, prosperity, sorrow and trouble, he would therefore have us find God in the facts of life. It is in this sense that he wrote the above passages.

God and the facts are not identical. But neither are they in opposition as if God had to struggle against the facts. It is Bonhoeffer's particular contribution to the question of reality, that God in Christ is factually in the reality of the world. God's immanence is not selective but truly involved within the totality of reality. We have already emphasised that the ultimate and the penultimate stand in relationship. Bonhoeffer is suggesting that God and the world are a continuum, never separated but not identical. Of course the idea of immanence is conditioned by the hiddenness of God within reality. But the idea that God is in the facts suggests to us that man in confronted by God within the facts of his life in the world. This is the new idea of transcendence, the sharing with God in his sufferings, the participation in the messianic event of Christ.

The facts of our life may result in guilt; the facts may indicate human failure. However, God is above the facts and His providential care ensures that we will receive forgiveness. He is able to turn our failure to His ends. We may ask why God should be in the facts? He is in the facts to reconcile the world in its totality to Himself. How then is this relevant to the spiritual life?

The idea of God in the facts is related to the synthesis of intercessory prayer and righteous action. Intercession, as we have seen, is an act of discipleship by the individual and the Church. It

is a form of submission and human committment to one's neighbour. In the act of intercessory prayer, the Christian makes a committment to be concerned for his neighbour while also committing his neighbour to God's care. But action on behalf of one's neighbour (the idea of deputyship) is the necessary counterpoint to intercession, ensuring that our duty to our neighbour is ever before us. Yet God remains in the facts. Even if our intercession and our actions are not successful, God can change our failure into good. This is the final position for the Christian. The God who is ever before us, demanding our responsible action on His behalf, does not forsake us. God demands "bold action" but he also provides forgiveness for he who becomes a sinner in his actions for others. This is the freedom of the Christian. He lives in the knowledge that despite his failures and the misuse of his strengths, the Christian is made free of his past by the God who is ever before us. Prayer is therefore contemplation on the facts of life, and the implementation of faith on these facts.

Faith is thus "let loose" in the world of men. The Christian stands his ground trusting in God. But he has a further aspect of strength. The church intercedes for the Christian also. The gathered community under the Word of God supports the Christian as he engages the world in Christ's name. The maturity and responsibility of the Christian in the world come of age is seen in his refusal to "use" God to solve his problems or to deliver him from the cares of the world. The sphere of the Christian's activity is the whole world which must be reconciled to God. The Christian must therefore throw himself into life. All the facts belong to God.

vi. <u>The responsible deputy.</u>

The basic structure of the spiritual life is the concept of <u>deputy</u>. We have already examined this concept but it is necessary

to understand how it weaves its way through all the other structures. It is of course a christological concept. Christ is the Man for Others, the deputy for man and for God. It is not a passive idea since it contains the notion of participation on behalf of others. We have noted that Bonhoeffer is concerned about the matter of human guilt. (see above) This is where the concept of deputy reaches prominence. Christ accepts man in his weakness, sin, and guilt. But not just "man" generally. He accepts each man as an individual and take responsibility for him in God's name. Ott expresses it by saying that,

"God leaps into the gap....." 155.

created by man's weakness. God and man are no longer separated, but united in the reality of Christ, the representative. Because Christ takes responsibility for us, we are always set free from sin and guilt to participate in the world in a new way.

Man is restored to a position in which he can have new faith in himself because of Christ. This is a new way of understanding man. It is close to Bonhoeffer's idea of the atonement. Man is objectively reconciled to God by Christ who stands in our stead for us. Christ restores our life from guilt and sin to a situation where we can become responsible again within the areas of family life, church life, labour, state and community life. In Creation and Fall Bonhoeffer's theme is that the whole of creation (reality) is taken up in the reconciliatory work of Christ which makes all things new.

> "Christ on the Cross, the murdered Son of God, is the end of the story of Cain, and thus the actual end of the story..... And under the flaming sword of the Cross, mankind dies. But Christ lives, The stem of the Cross became the staff of life, and in the midst of the world life is set up anew upon the cursed ground. In the middle of the world the spring of life wells up on the wood of the Cross and those who thirst for life are called to this water, and those who have eaten of the wood of this life shall never hunger and thirst again."

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155. Ott. ibid. p.308

In sacramental language, Bonhoeffer poetically reiterates the basic content of the faith of the Christian.

> "What a strange paradise is this hill of Golgotha, this Cross, this blood, this broken body! What a strange tree of life, this tree on which God himself must suffer and die ... but it is in fact the Kingdom of Life and of the Resurrection given again by God in grace .....". 156.

With such a faith the Christian can engage the world in Christ's name. The atonement, indeed the whole life and work of Christ, sends a man back into the world in grace. The Christian life is "lived in the sight of the ultimate, while not shrinking from full engagement in the penultimate."

Thus the spiritual life is structured, but not in any rigid sense. Each of the structures examined cannot be considered on their own. They flow into the other, nourishing and expanding each. The spiritual life must be an integrated life, a mixture of orthodoxy and that radical element which is for ever questioning our faith. The Christian life must be a synthesis of prayer and action.

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156. Creation and Fall. p.93

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUDING POSTSCRIPT

It has been a misunderstanding of Bonhoeffer that he expected a complete renewal of Christianity. Renewal he did believe in, but he also saw that there would be a time of waiting till the right conditions prevailed for renewal. It was in this sense that he turned to the arcane discipline as a means of safeguarding and enriching the Christian Faith. Bonhoeffer leaves us with no guidance about mission, evangelism, or the reorientation of church life. He did leave us with a style of life characterised by prayer and responsible action. He asks us to reconsider our terminology and to seek new ways of presenting the truths of Christianity without reducing their significance and power. Also, he left us the example of his own discipleship while urging that the world, in all its godlessness, is allowed to be the world. He was wrong that we were proceeding to a time of no religion. But he was correct that Christianity has to be reassessed continually for each new age.

His orthodoxy remains a challenge to our own Christianity for he exposed the falseness of a Chriatian faith which did not have regard to the doctrine of the incarnation. The radical yet orthodox question, "Who is Jesus Christ for us today" characterises the ever present problem for the believer. In the end, this is the one question which demands an answer since it is Christ's own question.(Mk.8:31).

One thing remains to be said. Bonhoeffer's theology is obscure at many points because it remained unfinished. Yet his life and teaching is a clear example of what he believed, namely, "That God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself."[157] This is the final christology and the future hope for man in the world come of age.

We summarise our conclusion as follows,

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157. Col. 1:20

> 'Christ is the Incarnate Son of God. Having confessed this from our hearing, reading and studying of the Word of God, we are moved to ask the existential question about what he achieved and what this achievement means to and for us. We confess his atoning work, his example of responsible deputyship. Finally, we ask what we are to do to continue his work. We find the answer, in the present situation, that God requires of us to live responsibly by doing right by our neighbour, being-there-for-others in the whole of life, and by taking the resurrection seriously, believing in renewal of the world.'

Bonhoeffer himself wrote,

> "In Jesus Christ we have faith in the incarnate, crucified and risen God. In the incarnation we learn of the love of God for His creation; in the crucifixion we learn of the judgement of God upon all flesh; and in the resurrection we learn God's will for a new world." 158.

This is the final synthesis in Bonhoeffer. Through all his search for non religious interpretation of biblical concepts even in his new vocabulary, Bonhoeffer ultimately returns to Jesus Christ as confessed in Scripture. He speaks here of "God's will for a new world." How is renewal of the world possible? Bonhoeffer believed that the process leading to the world come of age had a liberating affect. As Jürgen Moltman has said,

> "God, faith and the church have finally been liberated from their role as helpers in need and may now be themselves again." 159.

Bonhoeffer had spoken of the church and the Christian in terms of being-there-for-others. The sphere in which renewal of world, church, and Christian life is to take place is the sphere of service. But it should be emphasised that this idea of service includes within it the components of doing right by our neighbour and prayer for our neighbour. Bonhoeffer understood the Man for Others as Jesus Christ whose being-there-for-us is interpreted as vicarious

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158. Christology. p.108ff

159. Theology and Joy. J. Moltman. p.80

service. This is the fundamental structure for the church and the individual Christian. Yet it must be added that being-there-for-others is not the only answer. The incarnational theology of Bonhoeffer demands that we also say, being-there-with-others. Christ, as representative, not only stands for us, but also with us. This is Bonhoeffer's theme of participation.

Being-there-for-others is the understanding of redemption by Bonhoeffer. It is the being-there-with-others that is the manifestation of the Christian spiritual life.

Gregor Smith's words aptly summarise our study of the spiritual life in the world come of age.

> "It is a kind of humourous, humble, self-effacing secrecy of devotion and hope, which finds no counterpart in the visible world, nothing in symbol, or gesture, by which it may be fully reflected and expressed; nothing in the cult or ritual which may presume to take its place.....Bonhoeffer was looking past these things to the form for his faith which could actually meet the world, actually be in it, without reserve as Christ was in it..... That faith itself rested on the sketchy and strange tradition within Christianity of secrecy, exclusiveness, fastidiousness, which has never received great prominence... It is the tradition whose origins lie in the same region as the origins of the doctrine of election; but it has a different bent and outcome. 'Cast not your pearls before swine'; 'shake off the dust of that city from your feet'; 'this is my body': these are all sayings which presuppose, indeed demand, a kind of initiation and secrecy which clearly forbids the intrusion of the curious or self-certain. The words of Christ are for all, indeed, and the powerful strain of universalism has swept Christianity along many triumphant lines. Paul's equally powerful stress on the givenness, the gift of God's grace, combines with this universalism to keep the idea of secrecy and exclusiveness from too great prominence in Christian history. Nevertheless, it is there, and the simplicities of the Gospel, the call to be humble, and unostentatious in prayer, never using naked power, but always service, and sacrifice, are both its sustenance and its preservative." 160.

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160. R.G.Smith. p.105. The Free Man

Gregor Smith speaks here of the mystery of Christianity. It is a mystery which surrounds its great concepts and beliefs. It is a mystery which protects the faith from profanation.

Mystery - that is in the end the subject matter of theology. But it is a particular mystery, that of God, Christ, man, not on their own but together, related. Our human language, no matter how grand and lofty, no matter how precise, is not fashioned to express the mystery at the centre of the Christian faith. All the theologians, like Bonhoeffer, may write to express and conceptualise that faith; but in the end the living of faith is the final proof of its validity. Bonhoeffer took upon himself, however unconsciously, the burden and role of Representative of God. Like Hochhuth's priest Riccardo, Bonhoeffer felt deeply the awful responsibility of his nation. Yet he could well have spoken the same words as Riccardo,

> "God is not master of history, but in Him our final destiny lies. In Him all man's suffering is concluded." 161.

It was the faith of Bonhoeffer that Christ himself has undertaken the responsibility of all mankind. In this Bonhoeffer trusted. It was in this faith that his suffering was concluded. It is in this direction that Christian spirituality may find its new impetus in a world where suffering is in danger of becoming an acceptable part of all life without reference to "participation in the sufferings of Christ".

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161. R. Hochhuth. The Representative. p.274

APPENDIX 1.

I have found Ebeling's work, Luther of significance in relation to Bonhoeffer's concept of pro-me. Ebeling discusses Luther's kindred concept of Coram Deo. The word "coram" can be translated by the German "vor" and the English "before the face of". The coram relationship has both an active and a passive connotation. The active element implies looking at something, while the passive implies being looked at. Ebeling suggests that this coram relationship is the "characteristic human situation." Again he suggests that the "fundamental situation of the coram relationship is existence Coram Deo, existence in the sight of God, in the presence of God, under the eyes of God, in the judgement of God, and in the word of God." This is reminiscient of Bonhoeffer's statement, "Before God and with Him we live without God."

Ebeling further suggests that "With these reservations in mind let us add a few final comments on Luther's approach to the Coram Deo relationship. To exist before God and to exist before the world are not two possible and mutually exclusive choices, two separate realities, but an alternative relationship which is necessarily simultaneous. Someone who possesses his existence in the sight of God does not thereby cease to exist in the sight of the world. And someone who possesses his existence in the sight of the world is not thereby deprived of his existence before God."

The significant point here is that the pro-me structure in Bonhoeffer is relational and can be equally understood in Luther's Coram Deo. Christ in his being-there-for-others stands in the Coram Deo relationship and the Christian in his relationship to God stands also Coram Deo.

Luther: Gerhard Ebeling. pp.132-201.

APPENDIX 2.

See also the work by William Nicholls in the Pelican Guide to Modern Theology already mentioned where he defines the arcane discipline in a very clear way.

Also, I am indebted to the article by Gisela Meuss from Die Mündige Welt where she discusses the original concept of arcani disciplina. She notes that this is not a common concept but it is related directly to the life of the early church. In the fourth century a.d., the Christian faith became the official religion of the empire under Constantine and Theodosius. This was a remarkable change for the faith. Leitzmann puts it this way,

> 'The church grew into an essential element of public life, an element forming part of the very world which she had combated obstinately up to that point.'

(H. Lietzmann: History of the Early Church. Vol.iv. p.98. Lutterworth)

With this official status, the masses entered the church, and there grew the danger of infiltration into the church of many teachings drawn from the mystery cults. To safeguard its teachings and sacraments from profanation, the church developed a secret discipline a discipline of secrecy around its cultus. Only the initiated, who had undergone careful preparation, were admitted to the full church fellowship. This danger of profanation can be seen in the Roman church which lived out its existence underground, in the catacombs of Rome. The rituals and liturgy were performed in secret; catechumens were "excluded from the mysteries of worship" and prior to the eucharist 94 being celebrated they were dismissed with the words, "Let the catechumens depart." The whole purpose of this discipline of secrecy was protection for the Christian faith and to ensure a limited amount of infiltration from 'foreign' teachings. Three aspects are to be noted: one is that only the initiated were admitted to worship since only they could grasp the meaning of Christian symbols and terminology; instruction in the faith was an important aspect of church life; service and caring were not restricted by the secrecy but complements to it. At all costs the faith must never by cheapened.

I have used the article by Meuss, Die Mündige Welt. Vol.111. pp. 70-75. Also,
A New Eusebius: ed. J. Stevenson. SPCK. London, 1965. which gives valuable background documents to the life of the early church and in particular its problems in a pagan culture. The letter of Pliny the Elder gives the example of how the Christians were eyed with suspicion because of their strange cultus meals, gatherings, secret meetings, strange symbols. pp. 13-16.

94 Life of the Early Church. C. Welsford. p.225

Documents of the History of Christianity, ed. Kidd. Vol.I, No.19. This section gives a valuable account of a catechumen called Caecilius under instruction and paints a picture of the early church in its discipline of secrecy.

It would seem that Bonhoeffer understood the arcane discipline in its original connotation of the early church since there is no reason to believe that he understood it in a special way.

APPENDIX 3

Martin Thornton: The Rock and the River

At this point it is important to take cognisance of Martin Thornton's criticisms of Bonhoeffer in the above work. The main difference between Thornton and Bonhoeffer is that Thornton is more optimistic about the future of traditional orthodoxy and the church. He sees a future for the traditional 'religious' activities of prayer, fasting, worship, bible reading. On a note of agreement, he suggests that the letters from prison betray a rule of orthodoxy applied and kept by Bonhoeffer, i.e. evening prayers, meditation, Gerhardt's hymns. However, Thornton believes that Bonhoeffer failed on two points.

1) Bonhoeffer failed to grasp the value and significance of ascetical theology. He tended to be unsure about the term "ascetical". Without realising it, Thornton believes Bonhoeffer was orthodox even although many commentators have missed this.
2) Bonhoeffer "jumps from doctrine to ethics without prayer...."(p.50). He does not tackle the basic problem of how the arcane discipline is to be lived without being orthodox.

It should be noted that Bonhoeffer struggled in his last years to understand how to relate Christian activities to life in the world. It is possible that Bonhoeffer failed to tackle the question of ascetical theology. He was suspicious of so called "religious activities". Thornton is wrong to suggest that Bonhoeffer was more orthodox than he realised. Bonhoeffer's orthodoxy is radical, because he always asked why one should pray, worship, meditate. Further, Thornton, in dealing with Bonhoeffer's views does not seem to take enough account of the world come of age. Indeed, Thornton does not seem to recognise such a world. Therefore, his understanding of orthodoxy must be different from that of Bonhoeffer's.

It should also be noted that Thornton recognises the issue of Christian engagement - withdrawal. However, he treats this dialectically, admitting a tension quite unresolveable. Bonhoeffer, in seeking a synthesis between engagement - withdrawal, does foresee a solution, although he never explicitly spells it out. His solution, however, points in the direction of his writing on resistance - submission where he believes that the two are acceptable modes of Christian spirituality. (See thesis p.16).

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