J.I. DE KEIJZER

Bonhoeffer's Theology of the Cross

Dogmatik in der Moderne

Mohr Siebeck

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Edited by

Christian Danz, Jörg Dierken, Hans-Peter Großhans,
and Friederike Nüssel

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The Influence of Luther in "Act and Being"

Mohr Siebeck

J.I. de Keijzer, born 1965; BA in Biblical Studies at the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Heverlee, Belgium; MA in Christian Thought at Bethel Seminary, St. Paul, USA; PhD from Luther Seminary, St. Paul, USA; currently an independent scholar interested in the intersections of cross theology, radical theology, public theology, and social justice.
orcid.org/0000-0003-2697-7728

ISBN 978-3-16-156999-9 / eISBN 978-3-16-157000-1
DOI 10.1628/978-3-16-157000-1

ISSN 1869-3962 / eISSN 2569-3913 (Dogmatik in der Moderne)

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data are available at *http://dnb.dnb.de.*

The book was typeset by epline in Böblingen using Times New Roman typeface, printed on non-aging paper by Laupp & Göbel in Gomaringen and bound by Buchbinderei Nädele in Nehren.

Printed in Germany.

For Annekatrien Saromani

Acknowledgments

This study is the result of intricate processes many of which have histories that reach back before the time I first encountered Bonhoeffer's theology. Elaborate networks of people were and are involved. It is the result of countless intentional and unintended contributions by people from all walks of life with contradictory aspirations, opinions, and visions.

This study should not have taken place. And yet here it is. Much of it has been written, "as if God is not given." If it wasn't for all the people who wittingly and unwittingly participated and contributed, this study would certainly not have seen the light of day. And so the acknowledgments penned down here are hardly adequate to express my gratitude to those to whom gratitude is due. They are written in the awareness of their failure to do justice to the unmerited gift of being with others.

First of all, I would like to thank those theology professors who have influenced me in charting the course I eventually took. I think of my Bethel Seminary (St. Paul) professors Dr. Thorsten Moritz, who craftily destabilized the hermeneutics of certainty, Dr. David Nah, who quietly insisted that evangelical theology can be otherwise, Dr. Joel Lawrence, who passionately and convincingly introduced me to a theologian by the name of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Dr. Kyle Roberts, who showed me a different path in theology and had the courage to walk it himself. At Luther, a team consisting of Drs. Gary Simpson, Lois Malcolm, and Alan Padgett assisted me up the lonely mountain of the comprehensive exam and through the desert of Ph.D. research. The monthly Ph.D. group at Dr. Malcolm's home to which I was generously invited has been of invaluable help to learn to think through what it means to be a theologian and to partake in a theological community. I cannot thank the theologians of "the round table" enough for their wisdom, input, and creativity. Dr. Padgett has helped me at various points to better understand Karl Barth's theology and I owe him gratitude for graciously assisting me in getting my first paper published. Dr. Simpson, my advisor and Luther teacher, "showed me Luther." I am grateful for the many hours we talked in his office and carefully examined Luther's texts together. This was how I needed to discover Bonhoeffer. The way he teaches and advocates social justice as a natural outcome of the theology of the cross will continue to inspire me.

My gratitude goes out to the academic communities that I have been part of. I remember with warmth the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Heverlee, Belgium. It all began there, many years ago. At Bethel Seminary, St. Paul, I found a space to ask questions and deconstruct while at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, I received a response to the anxiety of falling away from certainty by learning to embrace the ambiguity of faith. I am deeply grateful as well for the scholarships received at Bethel Seminary and Luther Seminary. Thinking of the people, mostly unknown to me, who stand behind these scholarships, it is easy to get overwhelmed.

I thank specific communities that I have been part of. I think of Bethel Seminary Village, where the notion of discipleship was vivid and tangible in friendships and conversations. I thank the libraries at both Bethel and Luther for allowing me to not only be their student worker but also become part of their communities. Librarians are amazing people and the theologian's most important ally. Gratitude, also, for the international community at Luther Seminary and those who make this community possible, Marie Hayes and Chenar Howard.

I have received friendship from many people. Among them I must mention Jon and Mandy Prince who provided a home away from home; Chris and Harald Eriksen, son and father, both among my close friends, for the conversations, support, and whiskey nights; Bill Brantly and George Thomas, for going south with me when things went south; and Derek Maris, for being sounding board, theological constructor supreme, and close friend.

Many thanks to my copy editors. While preparing this manuscript for publication in the Netherlands, these people from the USA, Germany, and Pakistan gave invaluable advice. Thank you, Luke Brekke, Robert Myallis, Laura Beth Gatzke, Suleman John, Greg Gillum, Keven Glassel, Mark Nygaard, Harald Eriksen, Chester O'Gorman, Karen Alexander, Patti Chandler, and Jennifer Bartholomew. I'm also deeply grateful to the staff at Mohr Siebeck. Their kindness and patience as well as their expertise are astounding. Thank you, Katharina Gutekunst, Elena Müller, Bettina Gade, and Tobias Stäbler.

I thank my family, notably Annejoke and Julio, for their persistent financial support during the years of study. Thank you Mary for giving me space to put the finishing touches to the manuscript in the Netherlands. I'm grateful especially for my parents, Jaap and Fieke de Keijzer. Their unwavering support continued when my questions took me in different directions than they anticipated.

Lastly, thanks to my daughter, Saromani. How I have been and continue to be inspired by our late night conversations about rock music, trauma, the meaning of life, radical theology, and the intellectual pursuit. It reminds me of what this theology stuff is all about: to live life fully, in spite of loss and pain; to never give up hoping while always striving for the good and loving the neighbor.

Oud Vossemeer, The Netherlands, March 2019 J.I. de Keijzer

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List of Abbreviations

CD I/1	Karl Barth, The Doctrine of the Word of God, Church Dogmatics, vol. I/1
DBW 2	Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke 2: Akt und Sein
DBWE 1	Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 1: Sanctorum Communio
DBWE 2	Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 2: Act and Being
DBWE 3	Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 3: Creation and Fall
DBWE 4	Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 4: Discipleship
DBWE 5	Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 5: Life Together and Prayerbook of the Bible
DBWE 6	Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 6: Ethics
DBWE 7	Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 7: Fiction from Tegel Prison
DBWE 8	Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 8: Letters and Papers from Prison
DBWE 9	Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 9: The Young Bonhoeffer: 1918–1927
DBWE 10	Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 10: Barcelona, Berlin, New York: 1928–1931
DBWE 11	Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 11: Ecumenical, Academic, and Pastoral Work: 1931–1932
DBWE 12	Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 12: Berlin: 1932–1933
DBWE 13	Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 13: London: 1933–1935
DBWE 14	Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 14: Theological Education at Finkenwalde: 1935–1937
DBWE 15	Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 15: Theological Education Underground: 1937–1940
DBWE 16	Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 16: Conspiracy and Imprisonment: 1940–1945
LW	Luther's Works
Romans	Karl Barth, Epistle to the Romans, 2nd edition

Chapter 1

Introduction: Confessions of a Crypto-Lutheran

1.1 A Forest of Bonhoeffer Interpretations

Bonhoeffer's popularity is at an all-time high. More than seventy years after his death, publications about his life and theology continue to pour forth from the press. This is simple evidence for the fact that Bonhoeffer is widely considered to be one of the most beloved and important theologians of the twentieth century whose work and thought continues to inspire and enthrall thousands of people today. Bonhoeffer has been relevant in and for contexts that were vastly different from those of the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany. The recent upsurge of populism across the Western world, however, seems to infuse the interest in his theology with renewed urgency.

Bonhoeffer's tremendous popularity comes with the dual dangers of redundancy and obfuscation. One might ask whether there is still a need for yet another work on Bonhoeffer. The answer to that question will have to be left up to the readers as well as the narrower community of Bonhoeffer scholarship. The danger of obfuscation, however, needs to be addressed before I begin this project. Is this study going to add yet another version of Bonhoeffer in the already conflicting forest of interpretations?

Many Bonhoeffers have emerged, all with their claim to both fame and authenticity.[1] According to Haynes,

> interpreters continue to claim Bonhoeffer as a 'true' radical, liberal, or conservative. He is invoked as a champion of orthodoxy, neo-orthodoxy, the theology of secularity, political and liberation theologies, religious pluralism, and postmodernism.[2]

Bonhoeffer's professional career began in the Weimar period and ended abruptly just before the end of the Second World War. His life was, like the times in which he lived, characterized by turbulence. The intellectual legacy he bequeathed to us is far from unified and complete. Bonhoeffer's life came to an end in the "midst of life,"[3] before he could have even begun to think about the articulation of his mature thought. What we have from him fascinates and con-

[1] Stephen R. Haynes, *The Bonhoeffer Phenomenon: Portraits of a Protestant Saint* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004).

[2] Haynes, *The Bonhoeffer Phenomenon*, 10.

[3] Cf. DBWE 3:41.

tinues to inspire, yet it is also fragmented, incomplete, and sometimes even incoherent.[4] Haynes notes, "Given the bewildering plethora of interpretations that attach themselves to this man, there is understandable interest in recovering the historical Bonhoeffer."[5]

With this investigation, I'm adding my own tree to the forest of Bonhoeffer interpretations: a distinctively Lutheran Bonhoeffer who is deeply rooted in Luther systematically but ultimately bears fruit with a powerful practical theology that appeals across denominational and confessional boundaries. It is easy for the reader to assume (as well as for the writer to think) that this is merely another take on Bonhoeffer in a never-ending array of portraits fulfilling as many imaginations in hope of addressing as many audiences. It is quite true that *my* Bonhoeffer is the product of a very particular and personal trajectory in which very personal questions, set in a twenty-first-century context, were addressed that, well over seventy years after Bonhoeffer, speak to quite a different situation. Moreover, speaking of a Lutheran Bonhoeffer is potentially adding confusion to the discussion as long as the term "Lutheran" is not clarified. "Lutheran" can mean many things. In its 500-year history, Lutheranism has gone through many phases and developments. Even today, in the North American context, there are many varieties, denominations, ranging from very conservative to more liberal. When I, as a non-Lutheran, speak of a Lutheran Bonhoeffer, I do so with a certain innocence. What I mean, however, is that Bonhoeffer, as a modern theologian, steeped in the German theological liberalism of Berlin and yet having been captivated by the dialectical theology of Barth, forged a unique path in theology that, though modern, was deeply influenced by the original writings of Luther. It might well be that the encounter with Barth spurred Bonhoeffer to draw closer to Luther since Bonhoeffer showed little interest in Luther initially[6] and is reported to have wanted to distance himself from the Luther Renaissance around Karl Holl.[7] This development in Bonhoeffer's thought is not part of the current investigation of this Lutheran influence, however, and I merely claim that Bonhoeffer appears to be deeply influenced by Luther by the time he starts writing *Sanctorum Communio*. For me "Lutheran Bonhoeffer" does not denote a Bonhoeffer who wants to be a Luther scholar or aligns himself intentionally with the Luther Renaissance, or becomes a classic systematician reiterating classic Lutheran doctrine. The term merely indicates for me that time and again, at crucial moments of decision in the labor of theology, Bonhoeffer makes use of fundamentally Lutheran insights even when they

[4] Bonhoeffer's charge against Barth of "positivism of revelation" for instance, has caused a lot of debate and even left Karl Barth wondering as to its meaning. See DBWE 8:362, 588.

[5] Haynes, *The Bonhoeffer Phenomenon*, 10.

[6] See Charles Marsh, *Strange Glory: A Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (New York: Vintage Books, 2014), 44.

[7] Marsh, *Strange Glory*, 44, 50.

are couched in modern jargon or make use of modern philosophical language. This is the case to such an extent that in hindsight, irrespective of whether this was Bonhoeffer's overt intention, one can speak of Bonhoeffer's entire work, and notably his *Act and Being*, as a *theologia crucis*.

Ultimately, I hope that in spite of my own shortcomings and the personal nature of the questions addressed, there is something about this particular version of Bonhoeffer that warrants some attention and will aid Bonhoeffer scholarship to come to a better understanding of the sources and structure of Bonhoeffer's thought.

1.2 A Lutheran Bonhoeffer

The above leads perhaps to the suspicion that Bonhoeffer is hijacked for an ideological purpose or that at the very least this Bonhoeffer too is a flawed one. The threat of such a misuse can never be completely avoided. Indeed, the particular Bonhoeffer I am pursuing in this inquiry is admittedly a contextual interpretation. All that can ever be achieved is a portrait painted with concern for historical accuracy and theological fidelity. As such, the product of this attempt will enter the field of Bonhoeffer studies and be weighed by more knowledgeable and more experienced Bonhoeffer scholars. But as it becomes part of a larger discussion it may contribute something valuable, spark some interest, and bring something new to the table. As but one element in a larger communal hermeneutical attempt, it will also be judged wanting here and there as falling short of perfection.

Yet, I trust that the Bonhoeffer I present will not merely join the fray of conflicting interpretations but will genuinely contribute to a better understanding. My hope is based on two things: (a) There is a strong case for the Lutheran interpretation of Bonhoeffer that suggests that Bonhoeffer's connection with Luther is at the heart of Bonhoeffer's theological project. Notably, two recent projects, one by Michael DeJonge and one by Gaylon Barker, point out to what extent Bonhoeffer is guided by insights that come directly from Luther's theology;[8] (b) The Lutheran Bonhoeffer seems endowed with a remarkable ability to offer clarity in certain problems that Bonhoeffer scholarship is characterized by. To say it in a different way, the Lutheran Bonhoeffer has quite a bit of explanatory power. He helps to clarify Bonhoeffer's relationship with Barth, as will become evident in the following pages, but also provides a missing link between the systematic and the practical Bonhoeffer. There are three problematic areas

[8] Gaylon Barker, *The Cross of Reality: Luther's Theologia Crucis and Bonhoeffer's Christology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015) and Michael P. DeJonge. *Bonhoeffer's Reception of Luther* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

in Bonhoeffer studies for which the Lutheran Bonhoeffer, and in particular the reading of *Act and Being* as a *theologia crucis*, can be useful. These problems are the following.

1. *A One-sided approach to Bonhoeffer scholarship*. Generally speaking, there is a strong emphasis in Bonhoeffer literature on Bonhoeffer's later works. Bonhoeffer's theology is subject to a dichotomous approach in which his academic work (esp. the dissertation and the *Habilitationsschrift*) are often ignored in favor of his later more accessible and practical works. De Gruchy observes that "generally there has been much more interest in Bonhoeffer's life and thought outside the academy."[9]

An informal survey I did of Bonhoeffer publications from 1988 to 1995 listed in the *International Bibliography on Bonhoeffer*[10] reveals that of the about 750 publications listed for that period roughly 54% are related to ethics, practical theology, or political theology, while a second group of historical, critical, and biographical publications accounts for roughly 24%. Only 18% intentionally engaged Bonhoeffer's systematic theology and its confessional and philosophical underpinning, while a mere 4% concerned itself with an integrative approach to the totality of Bonhoeffer's systematic and practical writings.

As such Bonhoeffer is the topic of theological excitement but his work is also prone to misinterpretation. Bonhoeffer interpretation is easily marred by incompleteness. Frick laments,

> In spite of the plethora of Bonhoeffer studies there is a large lacuna regarding studies that have addressed Bonhoeffer's intellectual grounding in a thorough, comprehensive and methodical manner. Scholarly attention to this important subject matter has indeed been scarce.[11]

It is not that an emphasis on the later works is lamentable or that the interest in Bonhoeffer, fueled by an interest in ethics and practical theology, is to be deplored. On the contrary, such a focus continues to be needed. Rather, such attention, by limiting its focus only on the later Bonhoeffer, runs the risks of becoming one-sided and suffering from an impaired interpretation. Proper attention for the whole Bonhoeffer, with special regard for his intellectual development, as a reliable foundation for interpretation, ought to result in a better understanding of Bonhoeffer's more accessible works.

The Lutheran Bonhoeffer forces one to look at the heart of this problem as it draws the attention to Bonhoeffer's formative academic years. If it is true that Luther was important for Bonhoeffer, it follows that a Lutheran-system-

[9] John W. de Gruchy, "Bonhoeffer's Legacy: A New Generation," *Christian Century* 114 (April 1997): 343–345.

[10] Ernst Feil and Barbara E. Fink, eds., *International Bibliography on Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Gütersloh: Kaiser, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1998).

[11] Peter Frick, ed. *Bonhoeffer's Intellectual Formation: Theology and Philosophy in His Thought*, vol. 29 of *Religion in Philosophy and Theology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 2.

atic Bonhoeffer will bring much-needed clarity to this under-developed work in Bonhoeffer studies.

2. *Bonhoeffer's theological method*. Bonhoeffer is seen by some as a thinker who was not very systematic. His work allegedly exhibits an ad hoc approach to issues as they confronted him.[12] Because of this, Bonhoeffer is not always accorded the full appreciation and attention that his theology warrants. Bonhoeffer's thought, however, is rather complex. In it, theology and philosophy are woven together in a multifaceted tapestry. According to Frick, "The complex relation between philosophy and theology in Bonhoeffer's thought is further complicated by the question of how specific philosophers and theologians shaped his intellectual development."[13] This makes for a puzzle, but also for the contention that it would be wrong to overlook the systemic muscle power of his thought. The suggestion in this study is that Bonhoeffer's theology is informed by a robust, albeit somewhat implicit, theological method that, when uncovered, will lead to a better understanding and application of his more accessible work. I claim that this theological method is essentially a reworking of Luther's *theologia crucis* with the help of philosophical concepts, notably ones borrowed from Heidegger. Not only interpretation of the later Bonhoeffer will benefit from this, but Bonhoeffer will emerge as a theologian who was on his way to make an important systematic contribution in his own right. The question of Bonhoeffer's relevance leads us back to Bonhoeffer which in turn leads us back to the theological method that framed his thought and action.

Since Bonhoeffer's early academic work, in which serious efforts are underway to formulate a theological method, is deeply influenced by Luther, it is more or less self-evident that research into the Lutheran influence in Bonhoeffer will bring clarity to Bonhoeffer's work as a systematic theologian.

3. *Unity in Bonhoeffer's thought*. Talking about Bonhoeffer as a systematic thinker brings to attention the third issue in Bonhoeffer studies. Where there seems to be a lack in focus on Bonhoeffer's intellectual development, those studies that actually do pay attention to this area are not always successful in relating the different parts in Bonhoeffer's intellectual development to each other. This may well be intentional in many instances since a genealogical approach ought to be less interpretative and more concerned with the material details of evidence. Moreover, such research often focuses on the influence of one thinker or the development of just one thematic element. But it still does not bring Bonhoeffer scholarship closer to the emergence of a possible unity in Bonhoeffer's thought.

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[12] Barth, "To Rector Eberhard Bethge, Ringsider near Neuwied," in *Letters 1961–1968*, ed. Jürgen Fangmeier and Hinrich Stoevesandt, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 252.

[13] Frick, *Bonhoeffer's Intellectual Formation*, 6.

To illustrate this it is interesting to note that according to Adam Kotsko, Bonhoeffer's entire project is informed by a systematic outworking of the Hegelian spirit,[14] while Ralph Wüstenberg believed that Bonhoeffer stayed loyal to a Kantian approach to epistemology.[15] This does not deter Charles Marsh from giving due attention to the important influence of Heidegger in Bonhoeffer's thought,[16] in spite of the fact that Ernst Feil never mentions Heidegger at all in his study on Bonhoeffer.[17] In scholarship that pursues a thematic understanding there is equal discord, for while Gaylon Barker emphasizes a rootedness in Luther's theology of the cross that goes back to Bonhoeffer's encounter with Karl Holl, who provided the impetus to the Luther Renaissance,[18] Reggie Williams maintains that the crucial source for it is to be found in Bonhoeffer's encounter with African American Christianity in Harlem.[19] Clifford Green emphasizes sociality as the kernel of Bonhoeffer's theology,[20] but for Barker, it is the theology of the cross,[21] while Pangritz considers it self-evident that Bonhoeffer remained within the Barthian camp.[22] If all these takes on Bonhoeffer would absolutely and simultaneously be true, the law of non-contradiction would be violated multiple times.

When no attempt is made to uncover an underlying unity in Bonhoeffer's thinking, one continues to be confronted with the fragmentary nature of Bonhoeffer's work and the stark difference between the young and the mature Bonhoeffer. The underlying unity between the early and the later Bonhoeffer and the unity between his academic-systematic and ethical work must, therefore, be subject of study. If this is not attempted, only an incoherent collage of fragmentary evidence will result, historically interesting and devotionally inspiring, no doubt, but prone to rhetorical abuse and lacking the punch of relevance. There will be ethics without identification of the proper theological sources. That is lamentable because Bonhoeffer's work exhibits an organic integration of sys-

[14] Adam Kotsko, "Objective Spirit and Continuity in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer," *Philosophy and Theology* 17 (2005): 17–31.

[15] Ralf K. Wüstenberg, *A Theology of Life: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Religionless Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 46.

[16] Charles Marsh, *Reclaiming Dietrich Bonhoeffer: The Promise of His Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 111–134.

[17] Ernst Feil, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985).

[18] Barker, *The Cross of Reality*.

[19] Reggie Williams, "Developing a *Theologia Crucis*: Dietrich Bonhoeffer in the Harlem Renaissance," *Theology Today* 71, 1 (2014): 43–75.

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

[21] Barker, *The Cross of Reality*.

[22] Andreas Pangritz, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer: 'Within, Not Outside, the Barthian Movement,'" in *Bonhoeffer's Intellectual Formation: Theology and Philosophy in His Thought*, ed. Peter Frick, vol. 29 of *Religion in Philosophy and Theology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 245–282.

tematic and ethical/practical theological motifs. One of Bonhoeffer's early concerns was that of method, or in his own words "theological concepts":

> At the heart of the problem [i. e., of epistemology and ontology] is the struggle with the formulation of the question that Kant and idealism have posed for theology. It is a matter of the formation of genuine theological concepts, the decision one comes to between a transcendental-philosophical and an ontological interpretation of theological concepts. It is a question of the "objectivity" of the concept of God and an adequate concept of cognition, the issue of deterring the relationship between "the being of God" and the mental act which grasps that being.[23]

In short (and highly simplified): How can one make theological claims after Kant and Hegel? Bonhoeffer's answer is to develop a theological method out of a Lutheran orientation in dialogue with dialectical theology and continental philosophy. His endeavor was set against the backdrop of the instability of the Weimar period, efforts in ecumenical work, resistance against the Nazis, the acknowledgment of secularity, and an ongoing interaction with his liberal theological heritage. In all of this, Luther's influence was central. Bonhoeffer tellingly finished his lecture course *The History of Twentieth-Century Systematic Theology* with: "Who will show us Luther?"[24] The Lutheran Bonhoeffer, then, will be portrayed as one in whom during his academic years the theology of the cross proves formative after which it bears fruit in his later works (as well as his personal life). The driving force behind, and unifying motif in Bonhoeffer's theology is the *theologia crucis*, initially as an important component for his social ecclesiology in *Sanctorum Communio*, subsequently as an aid in making theological claims in *Act and Being*, and then increasingly as the motif for how the Christian life is lived in the world. This is a rough outline of how systematics and ethics are linked in Bonhoeffer.

1.3 *Act and Being* as *Theologia Crucis*

Instead of parsing Bonhoeffer's writings for hints of a *theologia crucis* (such a work has already been undertaken fruitfully and in and of itself it is not enough to pursue an exhaustive investigation into the presence of the *theologia crucis*), this exploration will narrow its focus to an examination of Bonhoeffer's *Habilitationsschrift*, *Act and Being*. I will attempt to perform a reading of *Act and Being* as a *theologia crucis*. This performance is not intended as an exercise in creativity but as an effort to bring out and make explicit what is genetic to Bonhoeffer's theology. Even though this narrows my engagement with the material, given the wide array of thinkers that Bonhoeffer discusses in *Act and Being*,

[23] DBWE 2: 27.
[24] DBWE 11: 244.

I have to limit this project to the two main discussions Bonhoeffer undertakes in his book so as to make it manageable, namely the discussions with Barth and Heidegger.

A further delimiter is required, however. Bonhoeffer's *Act and Being* consists of three main chapters. The first chapter is a critical assessment of how philosophy and theology in a post-Kantian world have dealt with the question of autonomous human knowledge. This, of course, problematizes the concept of revelation. In his second chapter, Bonhoeffer offers his solution to that problem by appropriating Heidegger's ontological phenomenology. This to give conceptual clarity to the relationships between Christ, believer, and the church by using nomenclature with a Heideggerian affinity: "believing *Dasein*" (believer) and "being of revelation" (i. e. Christ as well as the church). After treating the *being* of *Dasein* in chapter two, the third chapter zooms in on that particular *Dasein* that finds itself in the being of revelation. Since in this project my primary aim is to discover how Bonhoeffer constructs his theological method (i. e. how he arrives at theological claims and how revelation needs to be conceived with the help of Heidegger's concept of *being*), the focus will be on Bonhoeffer's second chapter where he presents the church as the being of revelation in analogy to Heidegger's *Being*[25] of beings. Since this study develops its argument by paying close attention to Bonhoeffer's criticism of Barth, the first chapter of *Act and Being* is also important. Though the third chapter's analysis of *Dasein*, essentially Bonhoeffer's theological anthropology, is no less fascinating, drawing it into this research would make this project extend beyond its original intended boundaries. Generally, this inquiry will also stay clear from a thoroughgoing description of the ecclesiological implications of Bonhoeffer's work. I will address ecclesiological concepts only where they pertain to an understanding of the church as revelation or the church community as *theologia crucis* (which is basically the same thing). I will, therefore, talk about the church as the Body of Christ and the church as *Stellvertreter*, but not go into detail about how ecclesiology, pneumatology, and Christology intersect in *Sanctorum Communio*, or the internal and outward ministry of the church (intercession, forgiveness, proclamation, etc.). Even Bonhoeffer himself shows restraint in his elaboration of the ecclesiological implications of his method in *Act and Being*. These limitations will ultimately have the added advantage of clarity and depth.

There are not many monographs on *Act and Being*. Two must be mentioned. One dates back from 1988: *Theology and the Dialectics of Otherness*, by Wayne

[25] The concept of being will not be capitalized in this study, except when it appears in the title of Bonhoeffer's study *Act and Being*, since for Bonhoeffer being is not an entity and even less does it refer to God or some such. The word merely symbolizes realistic/ontological modes of thinking and is used by Bonhoeffer because of his interaction with Heidegger. It is capitalized in this instance as well as a few others when it is expressly used as a Heideggerian concept.

Whitson Floyd.[26] Rather than being a monograph on *Act and Being* it compares Bonhoeffer's dialectic of otherness in *Act and Being* with the thought of Theodor Adorno. The second one is more recent and is only available in German. Christiane Tietz-Steiding's excellent *Bonhoeffers Kritik der verkrümmten Vernunft: Eine erkenntnistheoretische Untersuchung* is a thorough analysis of the theology of *Act and Being*.[27] In this work, Tietz-Steiding uncovers the origins of Bonhoeffer's thought in a critical manner and explains why Bonhoeffer later felt he needed to distance himself from his ideas in it. For Tietz-Steiding, *Act and Being* is the wrestling of a young theologian who yet had to achieve maturity, while for me *Act and Being*, no doubt providing just a snapshot of a project in progress on its way to maturity, also represents the arrival of a sophisticated retrieval of the *theologia crucis*. Tietz-Steiding investigates *Act and Being* primarily within the context of early twentieth-century thought, while I will, in addition to Bonhoeffer's dialogues with others, be primarily concerned with how he learns from Luther and attempts to express what he learns into a twentieth-century vernacular. I will interact with Tietz-Steiding's work when I assess the extant scholarship on Bonhoeffer's interaction with Heidegger precisely on the point where there is an apparent disagreement, namely, the appropriation of Heidegger's concept of being for the formulation of the *theologia crucis*.

In addition to these two monographs, I should make mention of Michael DeJonge's *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation* which engages in an excellent analysis of *Act and Being* in order to clarify the relationship between Bonhoeffer and Barth on the one hand and Bonhoeffer and the Luther Renaissance on the other.[28] DeJonge's study provided one of the initial impulses to look deeper into the influence of Heidegger on Bonhoeffer and I will interact with it in chapter 6.

In this study, I will undertake a systematic-hermeneutical analysis of two decisive intellectual encounters. These two encounters are with Barth and Heidegger. While Bonhoeffer absorbed many theological and philosophical influences, it is my opinion that a close examination of Bonhoeffer's interaction with Barth and Heidegger will shed light on crucial moments in Bonhoeffer's development of the theology of the cross. These two encounters, then, should aid an understanding of the third encounter, namely that with Luther's theology. By way of these two conversations, I hope to cast light on the particular nature of Bonhoeffer's innovative *theologia crucis*. This does not mean that my trajec-

[26] Wayne Whitson Floyd, Jr., *Theology and the Dialectics of Otherness: On Reading Bonhoeffer and Adorno* (New York: University Press of America, 1988).

[27] Christiane Tietz-Steiding, *Bonhoeffers Kritik der verkrümmten Vernunft: Eine erkenntnistheoretische Untersuchung*, in *Beiträge zur historischen Theologie*, vol. 112 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999).

[28] Michael P. DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation: Berlin, Barth & Protestant Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

tory is linear, however. I start with Barth, travel back to Luther, and return to the twentieth-century again for Heidegger.

Bonhoeffer is at times portrayed as either Barthian or anti-Barthian.[29] He is neither. There is no doubt that Bonhoeffer was deeply taken with the Barthian revolt against nineteenth-century liberal theology. Bonhoeffer aligned himself with its primary objectives of de-anthropologizing theology and prioritizing revelation. However, in the way Bonhoeffer sought to articulate and methodologically shape these objectives, he chose a radically different path. Reading his *Habilitationsschrift*, *Act and Being* as a young theologian's original attempt to do what Barth tried to accomplish but in a radically different way, will untangle the complex relationship between the two. It also provides a clear direction along which the later Bonhoeffer needs to be interpreted: in dialogue with but journeying beyond and diverging from Barth.

Where Barth made use of a Kantian influence to talk about revelation, Bonhoeffer used the philosophy current and available in his own time. That is to say, there are strong indications of the influence of phenomenology in Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer's interaction with Heidegger, although limited in time, seems to have had a decisive and lasting impact. Because of the ambiguous and *ad hoc* presence of phenomenology, however, the intellectual relationship with Heidegger will have to be investigated and clarified.

It should also be noted that when I speak of a Kantian aspect to Barth's theology I neither mean to ignore the other aspects of his theology nor do I intend to present him as a Kantian *pur sang*. It is well established that Barth is a theological realist but also fairly well-known that the success of this realism is conditioned by a Kantian or idealistic aspect in his theology, which expresses itself in the dialectical method. It is precisely with regard to this very way of safeguarding theological realism and prioritizing revelation that Bonhoeffer criticizes Barth and diverges from his project. It is no surprise then that, in tracing Bonhoeffer's criticism of Barth, the Kantian or idealistic side of Barth is consistently highlighted.

Behind all Bonhoeffer's conversations with theologians and philosophies, and in particular his encounter with Barth and Heidegger, stands Luther's *theologia crucis*. It alone can satisfactorily explain Bonhoeffer's judgments and decisions. And only through these judgments and decisions, in turn, does one come to an understanding of the unifying motif of the *theologia crucis* in Bonhoeffer's thought.

This rather sweeping statement about Bonhoeffer's theological decisions brings me to the heart of the matter, the claim of this book: Bonhoeffer's the-

[29] A rather Barthian interpretation can be found in the work of Andreas Pangritz. See Andreas Pangritz, *Karl Barth in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), as well as Andreas Pangritz, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "Within, Not Outside, the Barthian Movement*," 245–282.

ological development unfolded along a fresh articulation of Luther's *theologia crucis*. This *theologia crucis* did not have a primary orientation toward a confessional restatement of Luther's sixteenth-century theology but was rather fully conversational with developments in both the theology and philosophy of Bonhoeffer's time. Bonhoeffer thus articulated a rather innovative version of the *theologia crucis* that eclipsed the Barthian project, incorporated elements from phenomenology and pointed theology toward a post-metaphysical and post-liberal trajectory while it sought to prepare the church for a worldly yet Christocentric existence. All this, I believe, is not only part of, but intricately linked to and dependent upon Bonhoeffer's *theologia crucis*.

Earlier, I pointed out the arduous task of introducing a Lutheran Bonhoeffer to Bonhoeffer scholarship. A similar imprecision befalls the concept of the *theologia crucis*. Luther introduced the *theologian of the cross* in his 1518 *Heidelberg Disputation* but never attempted a treatise where the particular theology of such a theologian of the cross was outlined. In fact, Luther was to return to the *theologia crucis* only in his later theology from the 1540s. To understand Luther's *theologia crucis* you often have to read between the lines. Moreover, the reappropriation of the *theologia crucis* in the late eighteenth century and after was done under vastly different circumstances and at times in rather unorthodox – or better: idiosyncratic – ways. Today, the theology of the cross, while undoubtedly marked by a historical and thematic link to Luther's original thought, has found so many interpretations and constructive applications that to speak of a single or identifiable original *theologia crucis* is next to impossible.

The term "theology of the cross" is today as much a modern construct as it is shorthand for Luther's theology. Generally speaking, we can say that the term is used to characterize theologies that are linked in a deep organic way to Luther's theology that he expressed with his use of the term. The *theologia crucis* insists that there is a decisive break between God's salvific work in Christ and our expectations (philosophically sophisticated or not) of this salvific work and that this break is presented by the suffering presence of God in Christ with and for us as divine promise. This basic theme, however, has been appropriated and modified in many different ways. To use this term as characteristic of Bonhoeffer's theology is, on the one hand, to point back to Luther's theology as source for Bonhoeffer. It means, on the other hand, to use that term as a modern construct to intepret Bonhoeffer's work. The term is both historical and hermeneutical. There is a tension between the attempt to uncover a particular original and my embeddedness in a certain use of the term "theology of the cross" today. It is only in this tension, however, that I can do this work.

For this reason, I will employ a more exegetical-hermeneutical approach to Bonhoeffer and his discussion partners from which certain conclusions will be drawn. It is not the intent, therefore, to construct some standard of originality against which Barth and Bonhoeffer are going to be measured. Rather my inten-

tion is to show how and where and in which way Bonhoeffer leans closer to certain intuitions of Luther that lead him away from Barth to a more Heideggerian way of thinking thereby crafting his own unique version of the *theologia crucis*.

In spite of the difficulties surrounding the concept of "*theologia crucis*," three overall characteristics of the theology of the cross will emerge that will be deemed germane for the articulation of any cross theology and characteristic of most. These three characteristics will be indicated by three spatial metaphors: The first one locates God as being on-the-cross. The second one speaks of doing theology in-front-of-the-cross. The third one speaks of this cross theology as moving into-the-world. When, at the end of this study, I conclude that Bonhoeffer's *theologia crucis* is marked by the three characteristics of a deconstructive moment, hermeneutical existence, and ethical call, I also hope to show how these three run parallel to the spatial metaphors with which I described Luther's theology of the cross.

While this research project has a largely hermeneutical character by way of a systematic analysis of the thought of Bonhoeffer *vis-à-vis* Barth and Heidegger, the hermeneutical work will be preceded by a historical investigation of the material relationship between *Act and Being* and an essay by Barth called *Fate and Idea*. The findings came to light during my research and serve, by way of a departure point for this project, as an additional historical warrant for the claims made.

1.4 Overview

Keeping in mind all the caveats, difficulties, and conditions for this project, this investigation attempts to argue that Bonhoeffer's *Act and Being* is a modern form of the *theologia crucis* irrespective of whether Bonhoeffer was consciously working with such a concept. In order to support this thesis, I will attempt to perform a reading of *Act and Being* as *theologia crucis*. To do that I will take the following steps in this inquiry.

Chapter two begins with the above mentioned historical investigation of the material relationship between *Act and Being* and Barth's *Fate and Idea*.

In chapter three, I will look at the relationship between Bonhoeffer and Barth. While acknowledging the close relationship between the two, attention to the epistemological framing of Barth's theology and a close reading of Bonhoeffer's criticism of Barth at crucial points will eventually uncover a fairly strong disagreement between the two theologians.

This matter will, in the fourth chapter, be the starting point for an exploration of the theology of the cross in Luther, Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, and a number of Luther scholars. This exploration is not complete but will be used to show that Barth's appropriation of the *theologia crucis* has a strong dialectical orien-

tation that leads to divergence from the typical Lutheran insights that are dear to Bonhoeffer. In this chapter, the main work will consist of exploring two metaphors, distance and presence, to approach the theology of the cross.

The fifth chapter inscribes distance and presence into act and being as Bonhoeffer uses the terms. The chapter closes with an alternative take on the *theologia crucis*, inspired by a text by Luther, in which the concepts of community, presence, and being play an important role.

In chapter six, the concept of community is brought to bear on the concept of being as Bonhoeffer employs it in *Act and Being*. In order to achieve that, the relationship between Bonhoeffer and Heidegger is explored. Deciphering the influence of Heidegger on Bonhoeffer will bring me close to a reading of *Act and Being* as *theologia crucis*.

In the last chapter, after dealing in-depth with the concepts of act and being through my engagement with Barth and Heidegger respectively, the road is cleared for a reading of *Act and Being* as a theology of the cross. The two concepts are further explored in their philosophical context but also (and especially) in their context of Bonhoeffer's constructive theological proposal. Thus my reading of *Act and Being* as a *theologia crucis* will be complete.

Chapter 2

Fate or Idea: Bonhoeffer as Subversive Reader of Barth

2.1 Material Evidence

In this chapter, I will compare *Act and Being* with Barth's published lecture series *Fate and Idea*.[1] Paying attention to historical circumstances and textual evidence, I argue that Bonhoeffer patterned his *Act and Being* rather closely after Barth's *Fate and Idea*. As an introductory foray into the complexity surrounding the relationship between Bonhoeffer and Barth, this chapter will provide historical evidence in support of the hermeneutical exercise of the chapters that follow.[2] If my conclusions are correct, this chapter does indeed provide solid backing for the claim in this work that *Act and Being* needs to be read as *theologia crucis*. The resulting hermeneutics, then, will automatically lead me to the influence of Heidegger on Bonhoeffer on precisely this reading.

2.2 Historical Context

In the period of February-March 1929, Karl Barth gave a series of lectures at the Hochschulinstitut in Dortmund. The series was entitled *Schicksal und Idee in der Theologie* and got published right away in *Zwischen den Zeiten*[3] (and much later also in *Theologische Fragen und Antworten*.)[4] The *Zwischen den Zeiten* publication must have become available just before Bonhoeffer commenced work on his *Habilitationsschrift*, *Act and Being*,[5] during the summer of 1929, since his first major engagement with Barth draws heavily from *Fate and Idea*.

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[1] Karl Barth, "Fate and Idea in Theology," in *The Way of Theology in Karl Barth: Essays and Comments*, ed. H. Martin Rumscheidt (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1986).

[2] I would have never come upon the reading presented in this chapter if it weren't for the fact that I was already reading Bonhoeffer (and Barth) from the perspective developed in the remaining chapters. Indeed, this chapter was almost an after the fact discovery. Once I stumbled upon the relationship between *Act and Being* and *Fate and Idea* and realized that Bonhoeffer is in fact closely but subversively following Barth, I knew that the thesis put forward in this work has a very solid basis.

[3] Karl Barth, "Schicksal und Idee in der Theologie," in *Zwischen den Zeiten* 7 (1929): 309–348.

[4] Karl Barth, "Schicksal und Idee in der Theologie," in *Theologische Fragen und Antworten*, (Zollikon: Evangelischer Verlag AG, 1957), 54–92.

[5] DBWE 2.

Initially, in August of 1928, Bonhoeffer had envisioned his *Habilitationsschrift* to be on consciousness and a theology of the child.[6] Eventually, *Act and Being* took quite a different form. Though the themes of consciousness and the child were left intact,[7] generally the final product looks like an overview of and investigation into rival philosophies and theologies with regard to the problem of epistemology. Why such a change from the original conception?

Unless a new biographer finds new hitherto hidden primary sources, it will remain a mystery. What is known, however, is that Bonhoeffer engages Barth in a rather critical tone in *Act and Being*. What is also known is that in one of the sustained critical conversations Bonhoeffer has with Barth, he refers repeatedly to Barth's essay *Fate and Idea*.[8] When one digs a little deeper, paying attention to both works, one soon realizes something very odd. The entire discourse, structure, and argument of *Fate and Idea* seem to have functioned as a model for Bonhoeffer's own project. The question forces itself upon the observant reader: Did Bonhoeffer do this intentionally? And, irrespective of whether he did, what was he after?

From an early twenty-first-century vantage point, it is tempting, when speaking of Barth's theology, to refer mainly to the *Church Dogmatics*. One should bear in mind, however, that by the time Bonhoeffer wrote *Act and Being* the first volume of Barth's *Church Dogmatics* had not yet been published. The Barth Bonhoeffer knew was a new Barth that was in the process of emerging after the first edition of his *Romans Epistle*. The material from Barth's oeuvre that was available for Bonhoeffer consisted largely of Barth's *Romans Epistle*,[9] *Zwischen den Zeiten*, and *Die Christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf*. Among the material in *Zwischen den Zeiten* was *Fate and Idea*.

The two works, *Act and Being* and *Fate and Idea*, have led different lives throughout history. The connection between the two went unnoticed, I presume, because the publication of Bonhoeffer's work underwent a rather peculiar process. Bonhoeffer initially sought to get it published by Kaiser Verlag, Barth's publisher, with the help of Paul Althaus.[10] After this proved difficult without a substantial delay, *Act and Being* was, in accordance with Bonhoeffer's desire to get this work in print sooner rather than later, published by C. Bertelsmann publishers, in September 1931, as part of the series *Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie*, with the help of Althaus and Lütgert.[11] Interestingly, the publication history of *Act and Being* was in this way itself illustrative of the different course Bonhoeffer charts in this work away from Barth. Even though a review of the

[6] DBWE 2:2–3.
[7] DBWE 2:27.
[8] Barth, *Fate and Idea*.
[9] Barth, *Romans*.
[10] DBWE 2:5.
[11] DBWE 2:5.

work appeared in *Zwischen den Zeiten*,[12] Bethge informs us that Barth took note of *Act and Being* only well after Bonhoeffer's death.[13] In this way, *Act and Being* was historically disconnected from Barth's own *Fate and Idea*.

The review of *Act and Being* was, apart from a few compliments for the sincere effort, not very positive. It was written by philosopher Hinrich Knittermeyer who is himself criticized in *Act and Being*[14] for absolutizing the "You" and its ethical boundary at the expense of the *a priori* of revelation.[15] Knittermeyer interprets Bonhoeffer's attempt to ground theology on an ontological footing, thereby subordinating transcendentalism to ontology,[16] as a misunderstanding of transcendentalism and thus dialectical theology.[17] It follows that Bonhoeffer's synthesis of act and being in the church is therefore suspect.[18] Understanding the church as a sociological category leads to prejudices. Knittermeyer thinks that as a result the church is understood in abstractions by Bonhoeffer not realizing that it is not sociology that makes the church the being of revelation but the fact that "die Kirche der Ort des gegenwärtigen Geschehens der Offenbarung ist (trans., the church is the location of the contemporary event of revelation)."[19] For Knittermeyer transcendentalism is really the only philosophy useful for theology.[20]

The few Bonhoeffer scholars who made attempts to comprehensively examine the intellectual development of Bonhoeffer and analyzed his theological method must have overlooked the connection between *Fate and Idea* and *Act and Being* or thought it not important enough to write about. But, whoever sees the connection realizes that the similarities are simply too strong to ignore. Here one finds a paper that simply waits to be written, but, more importantly, one discovers a piece of the puzzle of Bonhoeffer's thought. It will, furthermore, shed light on the complex relationship between Bonhoeffer and Barth.

2.3 Barth's Argument in *Fate and Idea*

In his lecture series, Barth addresses the "conventional distinction in intellectual history between *realism* and *idealism*."[21] For Barth, "fate" and "idea" stand

[12] Hinrich Knittermeyer, "Rezension von D. Bonhoeffer, *Akt und Sein*," *Zwischen den Zeiten* 11 (1933):179–183.
[13] Eberhard Bethge. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 178.
[14] DBWE 2:101.
[15] DBWE 2:87, 165.
[16] Hinrich Knittermeyer, *Rezension*, 179.
[17] Knittermeyer, *Rezension*, 180.
[18] Knittermeyer, *Rezension*.
[19] Knittermeyer, *Rezension*, 181.
[20] Knittermeyer, *Rezension*, 182.
[21] Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 1.

for two broad groups in Western thought and he could have easily used some other word pair:

> I picked this particular pair of concepts almost accidentally from a whole series of others which could also have expressed what I meant. I might just as well have said: "reality and truth," or "nature and spirit," or the "objective and the non-objective," or the "conditioned and the unconditioned," or "experience and reason," or "heteronomy and autonomy," or "experience and reason." I might also have said "realism and nominalism," or "romanticism and idealism."[22]

Barth notes that both philosophy and theology find themselves in either the camp of realism (fate) or idealism (idea). Somehow human thought is faced with a binary option to either let conceptual thought be driven by what is given with the world or to let consciousness have the priority in devising conceptual schemes by which to understand reality and, as far as theology is concerned, God. Barth makes it clear that theology is not philosophy. The temptation is always there "of seeking and finding God in fate or God in idea."[23] Even though the nearness of theology to philosophy is "a nearness as necessary as it is perilous,"[24] the task of theology is yet to be critical of this nearness.

After giving attention to the philosophical dimension, Barth proceeds to discuss theological approaches, first on the side of fate and then one the side of idea. Fate is the most natural way to approach God. God is in the givenness of the world: "The realist confidently supposes that in what is given he is able to encounter something similar to God, and this confidence gives definition to his teaching."[25] At the end of his section in which he discusses Aquinas with his *analogia entis*, Schleiermacher, and others, he concludes:

> The hesitation necessary toward theological realism – I intentionally do not put it any stronger than that – can be summarized like this. Does not realism come dangerously near to conceiving of God as given by fate at the very point where God has nothing in common with fate, namely, at the point of his coming?[26]

Under the concept of idea, Barth summons Plato, Descartes, and Kant, among others. For Barth the concept of idea seeks

> a kind of supreme court where reality can be considered, legitimated as such, and finally supplied with a foundation. It seeks for something not given, non-objective and unconditioned, namely, for the noetic and ontological, presupposition of all that is given, objective and conditioned. (…) It asks in short about idea.[27]

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22 Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 25.
23 Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 32.
24 Barth, *Fate and Idea*.
25 Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 33.
26 Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 42.
27 Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 43.

Idealism in theology "aspires to do justice to God's hiddenness even in the midst of his revelation, to the divine hiddenness that points to the divine disclosure."[28] Barth sees problems with idealism as (a) theology can easily turn into ideology, (b) its dialectical mode of thought can only provide a copy of the reality of God's truth and is never able to fully capture it in human words, and (c) it is forced to scholarly speak discursively about a truth that is not discursive but absolute and as such runs into an antithesis between its truth and God's ultimate truth.

Barth acknowledges that ultimately, even though theology operates in its own realm, it cannot avoid dealing with the same problems that philosophy is dealing with. "Theology too must come to terms with the two boundaries of human thought – truth and reality."[29] Barth then discusses the tendency in philosophy to seek some form of synthesis between realism and idealism (as both Thomists and Hegelians claim their teachers achieved) such that a third way becomes possible. Such a *tertium*, however, is often merely the elevation of one's *primum* or one's *secundum* (i. e., one's own idealism or realism). But theology cannot do this. It cannot propose an integrative third way to describe its object: "Theology may be oriented toward realism or idealism, but as theology it has neither the *primum* nor the *secundum* as an overarching *tertium*." Theology knows no synthesis because its object is the Wholly Other God. The relationship between theology and philosophy is thus complex:

> Between theology and a philosophy that strictly remains philosophy, what can and will exist is not only a well-wishing neutrality, not only concord but – at least for the theology in whose name we speak here – a rich and instructive community of work.[30]

Barth wholeheartedly shares Luther's deep revulsion for the God-concept that comes as the result of a *speculatio majestatis*. One should not speculate about "God in his incomprehensible power, wisdom, and majesty."[31] But since God is to be spoken of in theology, something must be done. Barth turns to Luther again as one who "did not reject the necessity of theological dialectic."[32] Such a dialectic brings dangers with it. It "can all too easily become a Trojan horse in whose belly the noxious enemy of the old nonetheless enters into Ilium."[33] Since God's Word is not bound, theological dialectic "can be genuine only as it is open to this conception – only as it serves this and only this conception, that is, as it serves the freedom of God's Word."[34] Toward the end, Barth makes it clear that such theology can only function properly when it "makes the concept

[28] Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 46.
[29] Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 52.
[30] Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 54.
[31] Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 55.
[32] Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 56.
[33] Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 57.
[34] Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 59.

of predestination central to its concept of God instead of regarding it as just one among others,"[35] because only when it is done in and out of faith, in obedience fully dependent on Godself, can it be true theology. If theology does not do this, it turns into a *theologia gloriae* instead of a *theologia crucis*.[36]

In short, Barth offers his dialectical theology, having both characteristics of realism and idealism but avoiding any form of synthesis of human concepts, as a theology for today, while making explicit reference to its historical roots in Luther and the theology of the cross.

2.4 Differences and Similarities

Barth's concept of "fate" corresponds with realistic approaches in philosophy and theology while his "idea" refers to idealistic approaches. In realistic approaches, theologians attempt to discover something about God as emerging or evident from the givenness of creation. This is usually done via an *analogia entis*, i. e. an analogy of being between the divine and created reality. Idealistic approaches focus more on conceptual schemes of God departing from human consciousness. Typically such approaches see a barrier between consciousness and God and do not automatically envision God as given. Mystical approaches fall into this group as well as Kant's transcendentalism.

One might argue that the idealist way of thinking approaches the reality of God via a human *logos* and that the realists are more focused on the being and givenness of the world. Terminology like "idealist act theologies" and "ontological being theologies" could easily represent Barth's concepts of idea and fate. Barth, does in fact, connect the terms "act" and "being" to his conceptual scheme. When Barth discusses realism's "concern to understand God as actuality,"[37] he drives the need of understanding our experience as reality home. We perceive ourselves in the world and we have experiences and the question is:

> Do I experience them? Do I experience them in the unity and totality of inner and outer experience? Are they *real* for me? Are they real for *me*? How do they concern me? Whatever does not concern me wholly and finally, how can that be anything for me but a nothing? Act means being, and being can only mean act.[38]

The need for consciousness (act) to understand itself as having real existence (being) is deeply felt. Barth is specifically addressing realism here, he brings act or consciousness in conversation with ontology. But since act, as consciousness,

[35] Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 59.
[36] Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 60.
[37] Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 36.
[38] Barth, *Fate and Idea*.

is deeply related to the idealist project, he has implicitly connected fate and idea with being and act, respectively.

In *Act and Being* Bonhoeffer employs being and act as conceptual markers for his project, dividing recent and contemporary Western thought up into two chunks, two possible modes of doing philosophy and theology. In doing so he fulfills Barth's insistence that act means being. Bonhoeffer too provides a definition for his keywords. He writes:

> At this point only general and preliminary definitions should be given about the nature of act and being in light of which we can raise further questions. On the one hand, act is comprised of relationality, the infinitive-extensive, that which is bound to consciousness, discontinuity, and existentiality. (The term 'existentiality' here should be taken to designate not the sphere of the 'there is' ['es gibt'], but rather the central, potential engagement of a person.) On the other hand, being is comprised of confinement-to-the-self, the infinitely-intensive, that which transcends consciousness, continuity.[39]

For the purposes of this work, these definitions, perhaps aided by their vagueness, line up quite well with what has been learned about Barth's concepts of "fate" and "idea" above. Do theological concepts arise from the givenness of the world in order to be acknowledged by thought as such, or does consciousness impose a conceptual scheme upon reality such that it conceives of God as something that is not given with the world?

Once one realizes that idea (Barth) corresponds to act (Bonhoeffer) and that fate (Barth) corresponds to being (Bonhoeffer), the link between *Fate and Idea* and *Act and Being* draws the attention. Could it be that Bonhoeffer was inspired by the published version of Barth's lecture and that he envisioned giving his own account of Western thought through the prism of his own word pair, act and being? While there is no concrete historical evidence that Bonhoeffer modeled his *Act and Being* after *Fate and Idea*, it is not only entirely possible that this is the case, there are in fact a number of similarities and differences that provide compelling arguments for the idea that Bonhoeffer got part of his inspiration for his *Habilitationsschrift* from *Fate and Idea*. I have to emphasize that this can only be partly so since even a superficial reading of *Act and Being* will immediately reveal that one of the major influences in this work consists of Heidegger's ontological phenomenology as laid out in his *Being and Time*,[40] the title of which bears a great similarity to the title of Bonhoeffer's work as well.

It is not just the occurrence of the word pair "act and being" in Barth's lecture that makes one think. Even the structure of both *Fate and Idea* and *Act and Being* exhibit a striking similarity on various points. Like *Fate and Idea*, *Act and Being* is a treatise about the method of theology and the manner in which revelation can be properly conceptualized or talked about without it being

[39] DBWE 2:29.
[40] Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

usurped into a human system. Barth is more concerned with talking about the nature of theology and making clear that though philosophy and theology are different they are also deeply related to each other as can be seen in the similar binary option of realism and idealism that both exhibit. Bonhoeffer is less concerned to meander about the nature of theology or the relation between philosophy and theology. He is more interested in the specific way the problem of act and being affects today's theology. He starts *Act and Being* by saying: "The most recent developments in theology appear to me to be an attempt to come to an agreement about the problem of act and being."[41] That with "recent developments" Bonhoeffer is referring to dialectical theology is clear from the fact that the next sentences mention Barth, Gogarten, and Bultmann. The other main development in theology is the Luther Renaissance (Althaus, Seeberg, Holl, and Hirsch are mentioned a few sentences down).[42] Whoever reads between the lines can see two rival conceptions of the theology of the cross emerging right here.

Bonhoeffer is more systematic in his approach than the meandering if not poetic Barth. He proceeds to take on act and being approaches in both philosophy and theology in order to judge them as falling short of providing adequate concepts to formulate a genuine notion of revelation (i. e., a proper theological methodology). In this judgment, he reads like Barth. Generally speaking, both act and being concepts in contemporary philosophy and theology either let human consciousness be in control of the boundary between humanity and revelation (i. e. are in control of the conditions under which revelation may occur), or overdetermine the content of said revelation. Barth refers to Luther as his ally whose dialectical approach, as conditioned by the *theologia crucis*, provides the possibility of provisional though genuine theological claims. On the surface it may seem that, since Barth refers intentionally to Luther and since Bonhoeffer specifically introduces Heidegger to push back against Barth, Bonhoeffer is less interested in Luther than Barth. The truth, however, is that Bonhoeffer's use of Heidegger helps him to ground his theology in Luther in a way that exposes weaknesses in Barth. I will attempt to show this later.

This brings me to the differences between Barth's *Fate and Idea* and *Act and Being*. Barth eschews the idea of a synthesis ("The art of theology cannot be the art of synthesis").[43] If theology does that it tries to do what philosophy does; it then closes the gap of divine transcendence and reduces divine reality to a human concept. Bonhoeffer for his part is entirely unencumbered in his attempt to unify the two: "This entire study is an attempt to *unify* (my emphasis) the concern of true transcendentalism and the concern of true ontology …"[44]

41 DBWE 2:25.
42 DBWE 2:26.
43 Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 53.
44 DBWE 2:32.

Later, evaluating Heidegger's ontology, he writes: "From the perspective of the problem of act and being, it would seem that here a genuine *coordination* (my emphasis) of the two has been reached."[45] While Heidegger's synthesis cannot simply be applied to theology (after all *Dasein* finds itself in a closed system of methodological atheism where it cannot allow itself to be addressed by something exterior), Bonhoeffer still muses: "It must be highly instructive for theology to see worked out in philosophy a metaphysical definition of the interrelationship of act and being."[46] Bonhoeffer is indeed after a synthesis as will become clear below.

As such he does not make an effort to delineate or frame the complex relationship between philosophy and theology. For Bonhoeffer, these are certainly separate discourses with their own rationality, content, and object, but both make use of conceptual frameworks. Concepts in philosophy can be made to good use in theology, provided its proper subject matter (revelation as an address from outside) is honored and guaranteed. As a result, the boundary between philosophy and theology is porous even when the two are treated under separate headings.

Another interesting difference is that though Barth starts with the realistic approach (since it is more natural for humanity to do so) and then moves on to treat the idealistic approaches, Bonhoeffer prefers to begin with idealism. He has a good reason to do so. He foregrounds Barth's dialectical act approach (which in Bonhoeffer's understanding has strong idealistic tendencies) in order to frame the problem and then proceeds to find the elements of a solution (as he sees it) in the ontological approach of Heidegger.

The similarities between *Fate and Idea* and *Act and Being* are simply too significant to ignore. Their proximity to each other in time and space and the way Bonhoeffer's criticism of Barth is carried out in *Act and Being* make it very likely that Bonhoeffer consciously patterned his *Habilitationsschrift* after Barth's lecture series. The differences between the two documents make it only more plausible that there is a genetic connection between them. The differences are illustrative of a number of important theological decisions Bonhoeffer makes with regard to theological method and Luther. I will turn to these now.

2.5 Drawing Conclusions

Had the similarity between *Fate and Idea* and *Act and Being* merely been a curiosity, a historical oddity, there would have been no need for a paper. Trivialities do not serve the cause of theology. In this case, however, the similari-

[45] DBWE 2:71.
[46] DBWE 2:72.

ties and the differences tell an important story. They provide evidence for certain features emerging in *Act and Being* that are far from trivial. They show how Bonhoeffer was indeed deeply influenced by Barth, but that this influence spurred Bonhoeffer into new directions and toward new solutions. Bonhoeffer is, it turns out no Barthian. And that is what the connection between the two texts reveal. If *Act and Being* in its structure is indeed a careful tracing of the argument of *Fate and Idea* then it is also clear that Bonhoeffer takes the argument concerning the nonobjectivity of God into a totally different direction. More specifically, Bonhoeffer replaces dialectic with synthesis, rejects Barth's notion that Luther essentially pursues a dialectical approach, and comes with an altogether different take on the *theologia crucis* – so different in fact, that one tends to simply overlook it.

2.5.1 Influence and Disagreement

If Bonhoeffer patterned his *Act and Being* after *Fate and Idea*, then it certainly shows that Bonhoeffer was influenced by Barth. In the end, however, the similarity provides support, not for the idea that Bonhoeffer is closer to Barth than one would think or that *Act and Being* is secretly a Barthian project, but something quite different. To make this clear, I will take a step back to see what Barth has to say about the dangers of fate and idea. On the one hand, Barth sees fate/realism and idea/idealism as unavoidable.

> Therefore, it cannot fail that those two boundaries of human existence, the basic problem of all philosophy, will also arise in theology and play a decisive role. Even in theology, one will not be able to get around this two-fold aspect of reality.[47]

On the other hand, the two are, in their unavoidability, a great temptation for theology. Speaking of how philosophy can so easily encroach on theology with its two modes of thought, Barth says, "At no time is theology ever *not* in danger, ever *not* in temptation. Theology stands under the insufferable pressure of a situation where it can speak only humanly and where this occurs so much better in philosophy."[48] As his solution to the conundrum of the temptation and the unavoidability of realism and idealism, Barth proposes – albeit with reservation – the dialectic.[49] This is the only way one can speak of God since theology "can-

[47] Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 32.

[48] Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 30.

[49] Since here one sees Barth, by way of his choice for a dialectic that conceptualizes God but also counters that same conceptualization, expressing a reserved and careful but distinct preference for a method that aligns itself with *idea* in his *fate and idea* dialectic, and since Barth equals *idea* with other concepts among which *nominalism*, one finds here some corroboration for my suggestion in chapter 5 that Barth could be seen as a crypto-nominalist in his emphasis on God's formal freedom.

not evade the task of conceptualizing God."[50] In this way, Barth speaks of the "necessity and possibility of theological dialectic."[51]

Bonhoeffer's take on this problem of theological claims is radically different: "At the heart of the problem is the struggle with the formulation of the question that Kant and idealism have posed for theology. It is a matter of the formation of genuine theological concepts …"[52] Bonhoeffer is not simply rejecting Kant here, though one would almost get the impression that transcendentalism has caused the problems. What he means is that it is hard to do theology in the climate of his day. It is hard to formulate theological concepts and make them "work," so to speak after Kant's philosophy. In his analysis, Bonhoeffer too points out, time and again, for both philosophy and theology, how both act and being approaches fail to do justice to the character of the object of theology, God. It is interesting to see how Bonhoeffer treats act approaches first. Even more interesting, however, is the fact that he places Barth in the category of idealism. Discussing Barth's emphasis on God's formal freedom in *Fate and Idea* Bonhoeffer writes: "The consequent assumption is confirmed, namely that transcendentalism is lurking here. God is made known only in acts that God freely initiates."[53] And later: "Thus the problem of transcendental philosophy, discussed at the beginning, presents itself anew. God recedes into the nonobjective, into what is beyond our disposition."[54] And again: "God is always the God who 'comes' and never the God who 'is there.'"[55] Barth, who thought to steer clear of the temptation of fate and idea is seen as failing on the side of idea or act. For Bonhoeffer, the solution is not to work toward a dialectical method but a synthesis.

2.5.2 *Act and Being* as Alternative

The synthesis Bonhoeffer proposes is the coordination of act and being, indeed, a bringing together of fate and idea. He proposes to do the very thing Barth labels as a falling into the trap of philosophy, what for Barth is the undoing of theology as theology and thus leads to the objectification of God. Of course, Bonhoeffer does not propose to take the best version of realism in order to combine it with the most promising idea in idealism. What he does propose, though, is that consciousness can only make meaningful theological claims when it already participates (in terms of being, in terms of reality) in what it speaks about. The epistemology Bonhoeffer is about to propose has a hermeneutical dimension.

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[50] Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 56.
[51] Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 57.
[52] DBWE 2:27.
[53] DBWE 2:83.
[54] DBWE 2:85.
[55] DBWE 2:85.

As Bonhoeffer proposes this, he already knows exactly where he is going. He writes in his introduction: "This entire study is an attempt to unify the concern of true transcendentalism and the concern of true ontology in an 'ecclesiological form of thinking.'"[56] He wants to use the church as an epistemological category. This is a truly novel approach. But those who have paid attention to Bonhoeffer's academic words can already see this coming. In *Sanctorum Communio*[57] Bonhoeffer elaborates a social ecclesiology in which the church is seen as *Christus als Gemeinde Existierend* (Christ existing as church community). In *Act and Being* Bonhoeffer applies this social concept of the church to the problem of religious epistemology, or theological method.

He gets his idea from Heidegger whose ontological phenomenology provides him with the initial idea as well as the basis for an analogy that allows for genuine theological concepts to come to fruition. Heidegger's *Being and Time* provides an important source of inspiration for Bonhoeffer. *Dasein* finds itself always already thrown into the world that it tries to understand. *Dasein* is the only form of being that makes its own being a problem or a question for itself. In a way, *Dasein* is already what it tries to know and participates always already in what it attempts to understand.

I will argue later that Bonhoeffer redirects and transposes this conceptuality of the philosophical discourse in *Being and Time* concerning being and *Dasein* to the question of theological method. I will later describe this act of transposing as making an analogical use of philosophy for theology. Pending that later elaboration, in essence, Bonhoeffer makes the following move. Within the sphere of theology (i. e., a *Christian* view of all reality), the human being can never ask the question of God apart from God. As sinful humanity, curved into itself, human beings do not long for God. When the human being trusts Christ, however, it is placed in Christ. As such, believing *Dasein* is in Christ and as such it always already participates in Christ as asks the question about Christ, God, and revelation from a participatory standpoint. Bonhoeffer talks about the being of revelation which is another way of talking about the church as Christ existing as community. Believing *Dasein* is suspended between knowing God and being in Christ (in the church), that is, between act and being. Theological claims are possible because believing *Dasein* asks about what it already participates in through faith.

There is only one big drawback with such claims: they can only be made to the extent that one *is* the claim, i. e., lives out the claim, conforms to the claim. Only to the extent that the church truly is (i. e., exists as, performs as) the Body of Christ are claims about God truthful and genuine and is there a genuine hermeneutical understanding of theology's object, God.

[56] DBWE 2:32.
[57] DBWE 1.

It needs to be noted that this being of revelation, as employed by Bonhoeffer, is still not given with creation. In this regard, Bonhoeffer heeds Barth's warning against the danger of realism: God is not given with creation because that would lead to the objectification of God and make salvation a human possibility. The being Bonhoeffer speaks of is the being of revelation. It may not be given with created reality but it is being nonetheless. The church as the Body of Christ is an ontological reality that the believer genuinely participates in through faith.

2.5.3 Developing a *Theologia Crucis*

Bonhoeffer's response to Barth is not merely restricted to the use of a modern philosopher. His interaction with *Fate and Idea* would then not make sense since Barth turns to Luther for help and finds in his *theologia crucis* the necessary support for his own dialectical method. If he had nothing more to offer, Bonhoeffer, the Lutheran, would turn out to be substantially less informed by Luther than the Reformed Barth.

As it turns out, however, Bonhoeffer continues the tracing of Barth's argument quite well. Like Barth, Bonhoeffer ends up with Luther; just not exactly in the way one would expect. At stake here are two rival conceptions of the theology of the cross. For Barth, the theology of the cross essentially entails a dialectical approach to theological claims. Bonhoeffer, deeply influenced by Luther, disagrees. Both agree that Luther shows the way forward in theology, but disagree as to what precisely this means. For Barth, the theology of the cross is about the epistemological non-availability of God. Hence his connecting the *theologia crucis* with his own dialectical method. God, as the Wholly Other, cannot be talked about unless this happens as the result of a divine act of grace. This is Barth's actualism. He considers Luther an ally precisely because the theology of the cross resists making claims about God and eschews creating systems that capture God in definitions. Indeed, the theology of the cross frees Luther to embrace a good number of theological paradoxes. But are paradox and dialectic identical? Does the Lutheran paradox run parallel to the Barthian dialectic?

Bonhoeffer's understanding of the theology of the cross takes him elsewhere. His emphasis on the *theologia crucis* is much more on presence, that is, the presence of God in Christ on the cross. It is not that Bonhoeffer denies the non-objectivity of God, he is simply aware that he is talking about the God who became flesh in Christ. That is why Bonhoeffer talks about revelation as "graspable, have-able."[58] The theology of the cross emphasizes the presence of God in the body of Christ. Now that Christ is risen and ascended, believers together

[58] DBWE 2:91.

make up the body of Christ. God is still present in Christ who is now the Christ existing as community.

This understanding of the theology of the cross is deeply connected with Luther's treatise called "The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ, and the Brotherhoods"[59] which Luther wrote just months after his *Heidelberg Disputation* in which he introduced his idea of the *theologia crucis*. In this treatise, Luther makes clear what *theologia crucis* means for Christian community. Christ is present in the community such that the community is the body of Christ. In this, the members are Christ toward one another, and the church, in turn, is Christ for the world. Bonhoeffer agrees. Assessing Barth's God who "remains utterly free, unconditioned,"[60] Bonhoeffer quotes in a footnote (preceded by a "But see" as the only commentary provided) Luther's words in "That These Words of Christ, 'This Is My Body,' Etc. Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics,"[61]: "It is the honor of our God, however, that, in giving the divine self for our sake in deeper condescension, entering into flesh and bread, into our mouth, heart and bowel and suffering for our sake, God be dishonorably handled, both on the altar and the cross." A clearer indication of Bonhoeffer's rejection of a Wholly Other God in favor of Luther's present God, is hardly imaginable.

Bonhoeffer disagrees with Barth in *how* (not *that*) Luther shows the way forward. He rejects the idea that the dialectical method as an epistemological figuring of the divine Other is the hallmark of Luther's thought. This is not to say that Luther did not know dialectical thought or did not maintain paradoxes – indeed Luther is known for that[62] – but they were not the epistemological heartbeat of Luther's methodological approach (insofar one can speak of theological method in the early sixteenth century). They were rather the consequence of the cross as the symbol of the present and hidden God. Presupposing a methodological antithetical dialectic is reading Kantianism back into Luther.

Bonhoeffer acknowledges that the way Barth emphasizes the nonobjectivity and formal freedom of God leads "Barth to develop the concept of the 'dialectical.'"[63] His own solution to the necessity of revelation's contingency, however, takes him eventually elsewhere. As it is, the theology of the cross actually emphasizes the presence of God in Christ. Its starting point is not the Wholly Other God or the unfathomable distance between us and that God, but the Christ child in the manger (which presents us with a certain hiddenness as well).

For Bonhoeffer, such an orientation then leads to conceiving of the church as the locus of genuine Christocentric revelation. Where Barth strongly cautions

[59] LW 35/1:49–73.
[60] DBWE 2:82.
[61] LW 37:72.
[62] Jennifer Hockenbery Dragseth, ed., *The Devil's Whore: Reason and Philosophy in the Lutheran Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011).
[63] DBWE 2:85.

against synthesis, Bonhoeffer actually achieves it by bringing the act of faith and the being of revelation together; through faith, the believer is in Christ. Just like Barth allows for his word pair to have multiple layers of meaning so Bonhoeffer allows act to double as both epistemology and trusting in faith. Likewise, being refers to realistic and ontological approaches but equally to a phenomenological attitude, while it also denotes the presence of divine revelation as manifested in the body of Christ which is the church.

The question of how theological claims are made (Bonhoeffer) or how theology needs to proceed (Barth) – those two things are very closely related indeed – is answered very differently by both theologians. It leads to different modes of existence: a speculative ever provisional speaking of God along epistemological lines versus a hermeneutical approach that equally leads to provisional statements about God while eschewing the speculative in favor of a participatory existence. It also leads to different uses of Luther and different conceptions of the *theologia crucis*.

Weighing the differences and similarities between Barth's lectures and Bonhoeffer's *Habilitationsschrift* there emerges a strong suggestion that Bonhoeffer's interaction with Barth pushed him to articulate his own version to the problem of idea and fate or act and being. It led him inadvertently to develop a method of making theological claims that is anchored in an understanding of the *theologia crucis* as divine embodied reality in the hiddenness of a human community. Its ontological aspect is emphasized. As far as Bonhoeffer is concerned, Luther's theology is quite unlike the one Barth proposes toward the end of his lecture.

For Barth, God's self-revelation in Christ leads to a Word theology in the sense that parallel to and in connection with the Word becoming flesh the spoken word of the Gospel is the verbal and cognitive object of our faith as it follows an epistemological trajectory. On this trajectory, God as the Wholly Other can never become an object of knowledge, but must nevertheless be approached by way of thinking (epistemology). And thus one gets involved in an unending dialectical process in which speaking of God is done in faith and through grace.

In Bonhoeffer's opinion, the self-revealing God of Luther is present in the person of Christ and as such the Gospel is the promise of presence and not primarily a word of a Wholly Other God that needs to be gauged and assessed. It is this abiding presence that is manifested in the life of believers as the *Christusgemeinde* (community of Christ). Therefore one is not dealing with pure acts of God that fail to become historicized among human beings,[64] as Barth argues happens when critiquing realistic approaches,[65] but with a God who becomes part of human history in and through the Body of Christ.

[64] DBWE 2:83–84.
[65] Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 37.

If Bonhoeffer in his writing of *Act and Being* was indeed influenced by *Fate and Idea* there are quite a few interesting things that can be learned from a comparison of the two texts. It seems rather likely that Bonhoeffer was a rather subversive reader of Barth.

After setting the tone with the material evidence presented in this chapter, I am now ready to examine the relationship between Bonhoeffer and Barth from a wider angle. It will become clear, that there exists a sustained criticism by Bonhoeffer of Barth throughout Bonhoeffer's work. This critique is not carried out in animosity but will nonetheless have significant consequences theologically. After completing the investigation of this criticism I will proceed via Luther's theology of the cross to the meaning of Heidegger's influence on Bonhoeffer.

Chapter 3

Crucis or Crisis[1]: Bonhoeffer and Barth

3.1 Hermeneutical Preamble

This project is hermeneutically driven. It does not start with a clear definition of the *theologia crucis* which is then applied to the theologies of Bonhoeffer and Barth as an objective measuring rod to determine which of the two comes on top. In that case, another problem would have to be dealt with, namely, that Bonhoeffer nowhere claims that his *Act and Being* is, in fact, a theology of the cross. Rather, the project started with Barth's own claim in *Fate and Idea* that his dialectical theology is a *theologia crucis*. By establishing Bonhoeffer's *Act and Being* as a dialogue with and response to Barth's lecture, it can be safely suggested that Bonhoeffer is attempting to construct an alternative theology of the cross. One cannot speak of an objective standard of what *theologia crucis* means but is forced to deal with two rival conceptions of it. After analyzing the theological orientation behind these conceptions, I will examine Luther's original framing of the *theologia crucis* and ask in what way both twentieth-century theologians are rooted in this theology and how successful both were in applying this theology to their historical context.

By way of hermeneutical preamble, then, Barth sought to be a theologian of the cross. He says so in at least two places. The first occurrence, as noted in the previous chapter, is in that lecture from 1929 called *Fate and Idea*.[2] Discussing the two main modes of thinking in Western philosophy and theology – that of fate and idea, or realism and idealism – Barth concludes in his lecture that Luther shows the way forward with (as Barth saw it) a dialectical *theologia crucis*. A few years later, in the first volume of the *Church Dogmatics*, Barth reiterates his intention to work closely alongside the main thrust of Luther's *theologia crucis*. Commencing the labor on his immense *Church Dogmatics*, he quite bluntly states that "dogmatics is possible only as *theologia crucis*."[3] Barth un-

[1] The term crisis needs to be primarily understood in terms of the meaning of the Greek krisis which denotes divide or separation. God is separated from us because God is wholly other. At the same time, the breaking in of the Gospel of grace brings about a kind of crisis in that it upends our expectations and conventions. I will use both "crisis" and "krisis" but it should be noted that the Greek meaning of divide as Barth used it is intended.

[2] Karl Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 25–61.

[3] CD I/1, 13.

derstood the deconstructive (deconstructive *avant la lettre*) nature of Luther's theology well.

With Bonhoeffer, however, the situation is less pronounced. One does not see him announcing his attention to imitate, follow, or modernize Luther. He does not mention the theology of the cross in either his dissertation or his *Habilitationsschrift*. What one should not overlook, however, is his close proximity to the Barthian project. Bonhoeffer's biographer, Eberhard Bethge, details in various places his enthusiasm for Barth's dialectical theology. It is probably safe to say that to the extent that Bonhoeffer aligned himself with Barth he aligned himself with Barth's interest in Luther. Indirectly, then, there is proof of an affinity with the *theologia crucis*. More pronounced is the evidence from the previous chapter in which it becomes clear that Bonhoeffer's affinity with the dialectical movement from the very first moment also entails a critique and a distancing precisely on the claim that dialectics equals *theologia crucis*.

But quite apart from Barth, there is evidence of a deep engagement with Luther on Bonhoeffer's part. One can notice a growing interest in Luther's theology. So much so that in one lecture (of which only student notes are available) Bonhoeffer exclaims: "Who will show us Luther?"[4] Gaylon Barker's *The Cross of Reality: Luther's Theologia Crucis and Bonhoeffer's Christology* attempts to show how and where the theology of the cross influenced Bonhoeffer.[5] According to Barker, this influence is deep and pervasive. He writes:

> When this Christological orientation [in Bonhoeffer] is examined at its core, one key element emerges. Bonhoeffer's portrayal of Jesus is carried out in a consistent manner: Jesus is always the crucified Christ. In other words, the cross looms on the horizon, casting its shadow over Bonhoeffer's entire theological enterprise.[6]

Indeed, Bonhoeffer's dissertation and *Habilitationsschrift* are filled with references to Luther. What Bonhoeffer has to say about Luther is always positive and always functions to ground his own constructive work theologically even when he does not explicitly state his intention of advancing a Lutheran program in theology.

There is enough here to begin the journey of examining the two theological narratives. This, then, is the hermeneutical circle in which this study finds its place. As I read Barth and Bonhoeffer as theologians of the cross I intend to gradually build an understanding of what the *theologia crucis* entails and in what ways Barth and Bonhoeffer give expression to it.

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[4] DBWE 11:244.
[5] Barker, *The Cross of Reality*.
[6] Barker, *The Cross of Reality*, 3.

3.2 Different Readings of a Relationship

Whoever makes her acquaintance with Bonhoeffer and Barth, and particularly the relationship between the two, cannot escape the impression of ambiguity. On the one hand, Bonhoeffer had an affectionate admiration for Barth and saw himself closely aligned to Barth's theological project. On the other hand, perhaps because of the passionate commitment to very similar goals, Bonhoeffer repeatedly criticized Barth and ultimately expressed disappointment and rather strong disagreement. Whoever listens closely, can simultaneously hear a "Yes" and a "No" from below. The issue at stake is one of *crisis* and *crucis*.

Faced with the challenges of the modern times and the perceived inadequacy of German liberal theology, Barth sought to develop a theology of crisis that he later modified into a dialectical theology. He was confident that he was executing a *theologia crucis*.[7] Bonhoeffer, the Lutheran, was on board with the Barthian objectives, but he was not so sure, that in the end *crisis* and *crucis* line up with each other.

The ambiguity in Bonhoeffer's appraisal of Barth has allowed some to endorse the thesis that Bonhoeffer is squarely in the Barthian camp,[8] something that stands immediately at odds with the simple fact that Bonhoeffer's report of his first encounter with Barth makes special mention of his dislike for the Barthians that flocked around Barth.[9] Pangritz sees absolutely no problem in relegating both Barth and Bonhoeffer to essentially the same theological project.[10] In his essay on this topic, Pangritz sketches a thorough and useful portrait of the ways Bonhoeffer and Barth cross paths, converse, and interact. What lacks is a convincing argument how therefore the respective theologies of both articulate the same message or how these theologies exhibit a similar methodology. This lack is also felt in Pangritz's book on the same subject.[11] He speaks of a "co-opting of Bonhoeffer for the Lutheran party against Barth with the assistance of the 'positivism of revelation' charge," and considers it "too hasty."[12] In his eyes the differences between Barth and Bonhoeffer on the so-called *capax* and the *extra-Calvinisticum*[13] were minimal and both Bonhoeffer and Barth would

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[7] Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 60.

[8] See, for instance the title of the previously referenced essay by Andreas Pangritz, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "Within, Not Outside, the Barthian Movement.*"

[9] Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologian, Christian, Man for His Times: A Biography*, trans. Victoria Barnett (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 176.

[10] The title of his essay contains the phrase "Within, Not Outside, the Barthian Movement."

[11] Andreas Pangritz, *Karl Barth in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

[12] Pangritz, *Karl Barth*, 10.

[13] See my discussion of these terms later in this chapter in the section "Bonhoeffer's Critique of Barth."

later have been able to agree in principle on statements made by the other. And therefore Pangritz prefers to speak of a "critical movement within the Barthian movement,"[14] while preferring to explain theological differences away with Bethge's suggestion that theological changes occurred in Barth and Bonhoeffer at different times.[15] Toward the end of his book, Pangritz engages in an innovative and well-researched comparison of Barth's doctrine of election with Bonhoeffer's charge against Barth of the "positivism of revelation" and his revolutionary ideas of the arcane discipline, religionless Christianity, and a world come of age. He concludes that:

> In the light of the foregoing, our hypothesis in connection with Bonhoeffer's charge of "positivism of revelation" against Barth and the Confessing Church is this: in this world "positivism of revelation," Bonhoeffer's protest against the "Christian pathos of final time, truth and judgment" …, as it still manifests itself also in Barth's doctrine of Israel, has found a preliminary expression that is quite open to misunderstanding. Bonhoeffer raises this protest in the name of the "world come of age" and its "religionlessness" in face of a "church on the defensive" that is no longer prepared to "taking risks for others and has become "guilty of cowardly silence … when she should have cried out …"[16]

Pangritz minimizes Bonhoeffer's criticism by turning it into something having to do with an ethical stance during the war. This solution is both ingenious and artificial. I cannot follow the minimization of the problem as Pangritz suggests since it doesn't follow from a natural reading of the text. But there are more reasons and they will emerge in this investigation and speak for themselves.

On the other end of the spectrum, others have suggested that Bonhoeffer and Barth are diametrically opposed. Even, when his attempt is to be moderate in terms of distinguishing Bonhoeffer from Barth, Godsey's indictment of Barth is strong: Barth's theology is a theology of glory, while Bonhoeffer's is a theology of the cross.[17] Even though Godsey is hinting at something very important – and it is remarkable that since then not many have taken up this theme of the *theologia crucis*[18] as the point on which the difference between the two can be clarified – he is undoubtedly overstating the matter a bit. Barth's theology, as

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[14] Pangritz, *Karl Barth*, 11.

[15] Pangritz, *Karl Barth*, 13.

[16] Pangritz, *Karl Barth*, 131.

[17] See John D. Godsey, "Barth and Bonhoeffer: The Basic Difference," *Quarterly Review* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 9–27.

[18] One person who came close (six years before Godsey) was James Burtness, professor of systematic theology at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, from 1955 to 1998. While not employing the terminology of "*theologia crucis*," he relates the *finitum capax infiniti* (a concept explored in this chapter as well as chapter 5 and must be seen as central to Luther's concept of the theology of the cross) with Bonhoeffer's suggestion that Christians need to live in the world as though God were not given (*etsi Deus non daretur*, see DBWE 8:476), thereby pushing back against notions of Calvinistic formal freedom and an emphasis on a Christology of radical presence. See James H. Burtness, "As Though God Were Not Given: Barth, Bonhoeffer and the Finitum Capax Infiniti," *Dialog 19* (1980): 249–255.

confirmed by Barth's own writing, is intended as a *theologia crucis* as much as any. He is quite convinced himself that this is the case (as became clear earlier). Though unorthodox in his assimilation of Luther, he remains faithful to a central theme of Luther's *theologia crucis*: God speaks and human beings listen; theological discourse is based on the obedience of faith. Thinking God is not a human possibility.

Now, there are good reasons why Godsey would still accuse Barth of a *theologia gloriae* and later in this chapter, when I examine Barth, material will be unearthed that would explain such a stance. I will do so, however, by way of Bonhoeffer's own critique of Barth.

In this chapter, I will first take a closer look at some biographical aspects of the relationship between Bonhoeffer and Barth. I will then delve into Bonhoeffer's criticism of Barth in a selection of texts that represent a few important moments in Barth's career (up to the first volume of the *Church Dogmatics*). After that, an attempt will be made to support the results of Bonhoeffer's critique with my own analysis of the epistemology Barth employs. I will claim that this epistemology is marked by distance. By way of spatial metaphors, I will then seek to characterize the approaches of Bonhoeffer and Barth. I will focus on two emphases that stand out in Barth's theology: epistemological distance and divine sovereignty. A concluding section on the answer of both theologians to the challenge Kant and idealism have posed for theological method functions as preparation for the chapters that follow.

3.3 Encounter and Dialogue

The best starting point is probably the account of Bonhoeffer's life by Eberhard Bethge,[19] where he addresses the relationship between Bonhoeffer and Barth. Bethge identifies four distinct phases in the relationship. The first stage is the unilateral knowledge of Barth by Bonhoeffer. The second phase consists of a series of meetings between 1931 and 1933 in which Bonhoeffer tries to align himself with Barth and seeks support from Barth for his own theology. The third phase is marked by theological differences on the topics of justification and salvation accompanied by "a very close alliance in church politics."[20] The fourth phase is labeled by Bethge as one "of indirect new questions." This of course refers to certain remarks in Bonhoeffer's letters and papers written in prison. Assessing Bonhoeffer's differing views, Bethge writes: "Whatever the implications of Bonhoeffer's criticism of Barth, throughout these four phases Bonhoeffer viewed these criticisms as coming from within, not without, the

[19] Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 175–186.
[20] Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 178.

Barthian movement."[21] While this seems to be a ringing endorsement for Pangritz who uses it as the title for his essay,[22] on this topic, Bethge goes on to state that "for all their mutual liking, however, each was at a different phase of his development. One had just arrived at the point that his companion was trying to reach."[23] Bethge talks about different phases of development and thus different time periods. Could it be that Bethge refers to the fact that Barth interacted with a philosophy that was already *passé* for Bonhoeffer (a neo-Kantian framing of theology), or should one follow Godsey's thesis that Bonhoeffer was going to accomplish with a *theologia crucis* what, in his eyes, Barth tried to accomplish with a *theologia gloriae*? Even if one takes Bethge to be the standard-bearer of orthodoxy in Bonhoeffer interpretation, Godsey's thesis is not necessarily off the table, though it would widen the gap between the two. While, I do not subscribe to Godsey's thesis, Bethge's relegation of differences between the two as arising out of different contexts seems to be a rather soft statement. Working from within the Barthian movement does not necessarily mean there can be no radical critique stemming from a radically different source. And it does not exclude the possibility that Bonhoeffer's project eventually landed him in different territory.

I do believe that something of this order is indeed true; that Bonhoeffer indeed tried to accomplish more or less the same objective as Barth, i. e., a renewal in theology by means of making revelation a valid category for theology and by insisting on the nonobjectivity of God. New times, however, brought new insights and different tools and these insights and tools, in turn, allowed Bonhoeffer to accomplish this objective in radically different ways. The new insights not only pertain to the new Luther scholarship of Bonhoeffer's time that was shedding a new light on an old source, i. e., the theology of the cross, but also to developments in philosophy. Bonhoeffer particularly underwent the influence of phenomenology in contrast to Barth's idiosyncratic assimilation of Luther into a framework with (neo-)Kantian underpinnings. In Bonhoeffer's thought we see the development of a new articulation of Luther's *theologia crucis* through an overcoming of a modernist Kantian epistemology by means of personalism and Hegelian Geist (in *Sanctorum Communio*) and Heidegger's ontological phenomenology (in *Act and Being*). This consequently means that Bonhoeffer is working with different sources (or at least different interpretations of the same old source) and different methodologies (or at least a quite different attitude to and appropriation of philosophical concepts).

Pangritz uses nine different phases to describe the relationship between Bonhoeffer and Barth. They are more specific and incorporate Bonhoeffer's en-

[21] Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*.
[22] Pangritz, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*.
[23] Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 179.

counter with Barth's works before the two met in 1931. More interesting for my purposes perhaps, is Pangritz's evaluation of the relationship and his assessment of the literature on the subject. He dismisses any model that seeks to elucidate a "basic difference."[24] He is dismissive of the differences that others see. Regin Prenter's suggestion of a difference between eternity (Barth) and temporality (Bonhoeffer),[25] Heinrich Ott's assertion of a difference in method between Bonhoeffer and Barth,[26] and James Burtness's suggestion that Bonhoeffer and Barth divide on the Lutheran/Calvinist distinction of *capax*/*noncapax*[27] are all deemed as missing "the decisive point: the basic agreement between Bonhoeffer and Barth."[28] Pangritz parades a whole sleuth of theologians in favor of his conclusion of congruence.[29] Among them is the same Godsey who, as noted above, calls Barth's theology a *theologia gloriae* and thus actually points to exactly that which Pangritz wants to avoid: a basic difference.

There is, in fact, a basic difference, I believe. It may indeed be true that "there can be no doubt that among Dietrich Bonhoeffer's contemporaries Karl Barth was the theologian of the highest importance for him,"[30] but Luther still superseded in the eyes of the man who exclaimed "Who will show us Luther!"[31] precisely when he is dealing with the subject of modern theology in the twentieth century. His alignment with the Barthian movement may have prevented Bonhoeffer from charting rather different trajectories, like, say, Bultmann. Yet, this did not stop Bonhoeffer, writing letters in prison without the restraints of public scrutiny, from assessing precisely Bultmann as largely correct while at the same time being rather critical of Barth.[32] On the whole, whether working within or from without the Barthian movement, Bonhoeffer's tendency to criticize Barth in his work may be because their theologies have so much in common. But simply stating without any qualification that Bonhoeffer is "within, not outside, the Barthian movement,"[33] thereby implying that Bonhoeffer is merely an extension of Barth or did not radically diverge from Barth, is simply incorrect. This basic difference needs to be elucidated. Not in order to transform these two theologians into each other's opposites, but for the purpose of doing justice to both similarity and difference and, most of all, in order to understand

[24] Pangritz, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 279.

[25] Regin Prenter, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Karl Barth's Positivism of Revelation," in *World Come of Age: A Symposium on Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. Ronald Gregor Smith, (London: Collins, 1967), 125–128.

[26] Heinrich Ott, *Reality and Faith: The Theological Legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1971), 129, 136.

[27] Burtness, *As Though God Were Not Given*, 250.

[28] Pangritz, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 280.

[29] Pangritz mentions Eberhard Bethge, Heinz Eduard Tödt, Paul Lehmann, and Godsey.

[30] Pangritz, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: 'Within, Not Outside, the Barthian Movement,'* 245.

[31] DBWE 11:24.

[32] DBWE 8:373.

[33] Pangritz, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: 'Within, Not Outside, the Barthian Movement,'* 245.

Bonhoeffer's theology as a particular *theologia crucis*. Printer, Ott, Godsey, and Burtness all in different ways point to a basic difference that must be explored.

The presence of a *theologia crucis* in Bonhoeffer's theology would explain Bonhoeffer's emphasis on temporality (Prenter), his different method (Ott), as well as the use of the Lutheran *capax* (Burtness). Luther's *theologia crucis* emphasized the body of Jesus on the cross as the presence of God in temporal reality. Hence one notices a corresponding positive evaluation of the body and embodied reality in Bonhoeffer. In the self-revelation of God in Christ, Jesus's flesh is graspable, touchable, and 'edible' if you will. Hence the use of the Lutheran *capax*: the full reality of God is tangibly present in the body of Jesus. And this body is what Christians together are. The finite is capable of grasping the divine because the grasping is not a human lording it over revelation by means of a human system (as Barth tried to avoid dialectically) but faith in the grace of God leading to participation in Christ (together with the other members of the body). This, in turn, makes clear that already at the fundamental notion of revelation, i. e. the starting point of making theological claims, Bonhoeffer deviates from Barth. The basic difference is a methodological one; it cuts at the heart of their respective theologies.

In this chapter, I will investigate the dynamics of the relationship between Bonhoeffer and Barth and in particular the critical assessment of Barth's theology by Bonhoeffer. This critical assessment has strong affinities with the deconstructive moment in Luther's *theologia crucis*. The question concerning the confusing and ambiguous difference between Bonhoeffer and Barth, then, leads me to explore the *theologia crucis* as developed by Luther and its rediscovery in the eighteenth century and after. This I will do in chapter four. In this chapter, I will also prepare the way for Bonhoeffer's own constructive appropriation of Luther's *theologia crucis*. That constructive phase itself, however, is taken up in chapters five and six in which I look at Bonhoeffer's intellectual dialogue with the work of Martin Heidegger. Only then will I be able to perform a reading of *Act and Being* as *theologia crucis* that takes me beyond the initial though important comparison of *Act and Being* and *Fate and Idea*.

3.4 Bonhoeffer's Critique of Barth

Barth's self-proclaimed *theologia crucis* must now be compared with Bonhoeffer's critique of Barth. Time and again this critique will touch on crucial elements one finds in Luther's *theologia crucis*. Would Bonhoeffer have consciously worked with the nomenclature of *theologia crucis*, he would also have had to openly conclude that Barth's theology in his opinion does not line up with the *theologia crucis* as he had learned it from Luther. While Barth seeks to do justice to similar concerns as found in Luther's *theologia crucis*, the way

he does so violates that theology on its own terms. This, at least, seems to be the implicit conclusion of Bonhoeffer's analysis and critique. For Bonhoeffer, Barth's dialectical method does not provide an adequate way to proceed in the effort to develop a theological method that gives primacy to revelation in the twentieth century. Or if it does, it does not line-up with Luther's theology in spite of Barth's reference to it.

Bonhoeffer's sustained criticism of Barth throughout his oeuvre pertains to Barth's *Romans*, his *Christliche Dogmatik*,[34] the essay by Barth, *Schicksal und Idee in der Theologie*[35] (examined above under its English name *Fate and Idea*), and the first volume of Barth's *Church Dogmatics*. We know this because Bonhoeffer quotes from *Romans* and *Christliche Dogmatik* profusely. References to the *Church Dogmatics* are scarce but by the time Bonhoeffer discusses Barth's theology in the prison letters, he has had the opportunity to read the first volume of the *Church Dogmatics*.

Later in this chapter, I will look at two case studies from Barth, one from his *Romans* and one from *CD I/1* in order to show that even though there is development in Barth's thought, there is no change in the dialectic that underlies his theological project. I do this to show that Bonhoeffer's criticism is not irrelevant for the mature theology of Barth. Even though the diastasis from above versus below in *Romans* makes room for a methodological dialectic in the *Church Dogmatics*, the epistemological nature of the project remains the same. The *Christliche Dogmatik* must, therefore, be seen as an intermediary stage from diastasis to dialectic and therefore without implications for Bonhoeffer's sustained critique of Barth. Indeed McCormack says that the difference between these two dogmatics is negligible.[36] By giving attention to the *Church Dogmatics* in my analysis instead of the *Christliche Dogmatik* I allow "the latest possible Barth" in Bonhoeffer's life to have his say.

Bonhoeffer seems to agree with the idea that between *Romans* and the *Church Dogmatics* no change occurred that would give reason to change his stance on Barth's theological method. When he launches his *Offenbarungspositivismus* verdict over Barth's theology in the *Prison Letters* he clearly intends this to be his criticism against the whole Barth in spite of any methodological changes there may have been between *Romans* and the *Christliche Dogmatik* and between the latter and the *Church Dogmatics*.

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[34] Karl Barth, *Christliche Dogmatik*, vol. 14 in *Karl Barth: Gesamtausgabe* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1982).

[35] Karl Barth, "Schicksal und Idee in der Theologie," *Zwischen den Zeiten* 7 (1929): 309–348. English translation: Karl Barth, "Fate and Idea in Theology," in *The Way of Theology in Karl Barth: Essays and Comments*, ed. and trans. H. Martin Rumscheidt (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1986).

[36] Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909–1936* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 15.

There are multiple moments in Bonhoeffer's oeuvre where he engages the theology of Barth. *Act and Being* and the *Letters and Papers from Prison* being the most important ones; *Act and Being*, because I am arguing that this book contains Bonhoeffer's contemporary articulation of the *theologia crucis*; *Letters and Papers* because Bonhoeffer's critique of Barth has puzzled many and given rise to quite a bit of speculation. Integrating these various critiques into a comprehensive one becomes possible, I believe, when one looks at them from the perspective of the *theologia crucis*. In this overview, I will not just limit myself to *Act and Being* and the *Letters and Papers* but also look at Bonhoeffer's dissertation and his *Inaugural Speech* for the University of Berlin.

3.4.1 *Communio Sanctorum*

The first time Bonhoeffer critiques Barth is when he discusses Christian love. According to Bonhoeffer, Christian love "loves the real neighbor." He takes issue with Barth's understanding that "love for our neighbor is 'to hear in the other the voice of the One.'"[37] Given Barth's emphasis on the sovereignty of God in *Romans*, it makes sense that Barth relates all of reality back to God, that behind the other as the object of our love stands the One who is Wholly Other. Reality is but appearance; God is the Real. All that is solely serves the purpose of glorifying God. It is a typical characteristic of Calvinistic theology that shows itself here in the Reformed Barth. Bonhoeffer rejects such instrumentalization of the human subject. True Christian love does not instrumentalize. It is also not a human possibility,[38] since it is only possible through faith in Christ, and gives up all claims "on God or on our neighbor."[39] The "other is infinitely important as such, precisely because God takes the other person seriously." Therefore "we can take God's will seriously only in the concrete form of the other."[40] One observes here the consequences of an overemphasis on God's sovereign otherness in Barth which results in a reductive approach toward the created world. On Bonhoeffer's side, one notices the emphasis on the concreteness of embodied existence which takes reality with utter seriousness. The two are in conflict on this point. Barth's theology of crisis, because it resists the knowledge of God as a human possibility by means of an infinite distance, easily falls victim to venturing away from the world into the mysterious realm of the sovereign God at the expense of that world. For Bonhoeffer, the cross symbolizes an opposite movement into the world. It speaks about a God who in Christ has become concrete for the world, gone into the world, ultimately dying for the world. In Christ, God affirms the human being, each human being.

[37] DBWE 1:169.
[38] DBWE 1:167.
[39] DBWE 1:168.
[40] DBWE 1:170.

This is divine otherness vs embodied concreteness. It is not simply a contrast between emphasis on divinity vs emphasis on humanity, but ultimately a contrast between two conceptions of divine revelation. Bonhoeffer stays closer to Luther's *theologia crucis* in this regard and will eventually extend the emphasis on embodiment and concreteness. In Luther's *theologia crucis* there is certainly an awareness of a sovereign God who if different from us. But for Luther, this is the Hidden God, the *Deus Absconditus*, whose hiddenness is not expressed through distance but through presence. The focus in Luther is therefore much more on the givenness of God in Christ, a givenness that Bonhoeffer labels as "haveable" and "graspable."[41]

3.4.2 *Act and Being*

With *Act and Being*, Bonhoeffer's criticism becomes more sustained. It leaves its incidental skirmishing behind and addresses more than just Barth's *Romans*. There are a number of arguments launched against Barth in *Act and Being*. As an independent and modern *theologia crucis*, *Act and Being* reveals a mature engagement with Barth's theology. For Bonhoeffer, Barth provides a method that falls short of the very thing the theology of the cross attempts to achieve, namely to conceive of God as present.

Bonhoeffer opens *Act and Being* by saying that Barth seeks to provide a "foundation of human existence" by means of holding on "to the freedom of God's grace."[42] Lurking behind the observation is the question of theological method. Bonhoeffer's mentioning of Barth is part of a larger attempt to identify various theologies and philosophies as representing two different approaches, namely act (thought/idealism) or being (givenness/realism). Are there ways of constructing theology that do justice to both concerns, such that God is free and nonobjective while at the same time this God's revelation possesses the concreteness of the real? As will become clear, Bonhoeffer finds none. The fact that he places Barth right at the front of his discourse means Barth is clearly on his mind as a significant interlocutor. That Barth's divine freedom seems to overpower his theological schema such that human existence is subordinated to it, does not bode well.

The first critique Bonhoeffer launches at Barth is on this very point of *formal* freedom. Formal freedom means that God "remains utterly free, unconditioned"[43] such that even in the relation between God and the human being in which revelation takes place, "God is free to suspend the relation at any moment."[44]

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41 DBWE 2:91.
42 DBWE 2:25.
43 DBWE 2:82.
44 DBWE 2:83.

That is because even in this "free favor"[45] God is the majestic lord. Relation and revelation are mere act unable to acquire lasting historical reality. Both are unilateral and conditioned upon God's formal freedom. Bonhoeffer captures Barth's theology as follows:

> But this is where the transcendental approach becomes apparent. (…) God's being is only act and, therefore, is in human beings also only as act, in such a way that all reflection upon the accomplished act takes place at a distance from it, with the result that the act cannot be grasped in conceptual form or become part of systematic thought.[46]

This could be paraphrased as: Here is where Barth's epistemology, infused as it is with Kantian and idealist overtones, shines through. God is only available to the human subject as long as God makes Godself available. Therefore, on the human side, it is a knowledge-consciousness that operates at a distance from God. This knowledge is but a momentary touching of human consciousness and not something that can actually become an object of knowledge.

From the objection against formal freedom I now move to Bonhoeffer's objection against Barth's use of the *finitum incapax infiniti*. (Critique 2) Just as God in God's freedom is beyond human reality, the human mind or consciousness is not capable (*incapax*) of containing, grasping, or understanding the infinite. Thus even faith and obedience, one could say the affective side of the relationship between human being and God, can never become historically concrete, concludes Bonhoeffer, because such things are contingent upon an act that has no historical reality. This is so because Barth brings an epistemology rooted in Kantian principles and the Calvinistic *incapax infiniti* together.

Why can there be no historical reality to God's act? Because then God becomes something remembered and reflected upon and thus objectified, an object of human knowledge. And that is not allowed according to Barth, who, according to his claim in *Fate and Idea*, summons the *theologia crucis* to support it. What is wrong here, then, according to Bonhoeffer, is the fact that the process of divine self-revelation is framed *transcendentally*, i. e., as an epistemological trajectory in Kantian fashion. The *finitum incapax infiniti*, aligned with the *extra-calvinisticum* (the Calvinistic insistence that Christ's divine nature is operative outside the historical and spatial limitations of Christ's human nature), stipulates that the finite (particularly the human being) is not capable of bearing the infinite (i. e., God). If such a capacity is not in Christ's human nature, then it is certainly not present in the believer. Barth's idealism-derived epistemology takes care of that demand as it places the reality of God beyond human epistemological apprehension, just like Kant had done.

The Lutherans, for their turn, however, were firm in their conviction that the *finitum capax infiniti*, i. e., that the finite *is*, in fact, capable of the infinite.

[45] Bonhoeffer refers here to Barth's *Christliche Dogmatik*. Cf. DBWE 2:83.
[46] DBWE 2:84.

The whole God is present in Christ and as such grasped by human beings. It might seem that this Lutheran position flies in the face of the deconstruction of rational approaches that the *theologia crucis* demands until one takes a closer look at what exactly that infiniti entails in the Lutheran understanding. This divine infinity does not refer to the fullness of God's hidden glory, but the concrete reality of God's humility in Christ. Similarly, one could also rethink the *capax*, this "being able to bear." For Barth, *capax* means the reflective act (Bonhoeffer's terminology) of intellectual understanding. Bonhoeffer, however, seeks the solution in a different direction, away from the cognitive toward the relational and the participatory nature of the *capax*. Bonhoeffer has, following Luther and Lutheran theology, a completely different concept of both the grasping and the content of what is being grasped. It is the self-giving of God in the body of Christ that is the object of this "grasping." The hidden glorious God fades to the background in the theology of the cross, a fading that was quite effectively and radically completed precisely by Kant (albeit for different reasons).

Bonhoeffer continues his critique of Barth, now specifically against the dialectical method (Critique 3), saying that the nonobjective conception of God that is safeguarded by it is "the necessary consequence of the formal conception of God's freedom."[47] For "whoever claims to have God as an object no longer has *God* [italics by Bonhoeffer]."[48] In line with my suggestion above that an epistemological approach that does justice to God's otherness will have to move beyond the diastasis of *Romans*, Bonhoeffer observes that "such a formal understanding of God's contingent activity could not but lead Barth to develop the concept of the 'dialectical.'"[49] Such a theological dialectic is only genuine if it serves this concept of God's formal freedom, for "the freedom of God's Word

[47] It is important to add one explanatory note to the use of the concept of dialectical thought here. Dialectical thought is as old as Plato. It is Hegel who inscribes the idea of dialectics into the historical. This dialectic dissolves or sublates into a synthesis and then evolves into a new dialectic. Dialectical methods of thinking are everywhere. Not only Barth or the members of the dialectical theology employ dialectics. Luther and Bonhoeffer too use dialectical forms of thinking. And sometimes different forms of dialectic can be found in one and the same thinker. When applying the term dialectical theology to Barth, however, it refers specifically to Barth's theological method of thinking that dialectically approaches but never fully captures the truth of revelation. This method safeguards God but at the same time allows for the human project of theology. Even with regard to this dialectical method in Barth, however, McCormack identifies at least two phases: the diastasis of the early period (*Romans*, edition 1 and 2) and the Christological dialectic of the later period (*Church Dogmatics*). It is important to note, however, that when I have Bonhoeffer criticize Barth's dialectic this does not entail that in Bonhoeffer one finds absolutely no dialectical tensions or movements. In fact there are many. Even the coordination (or synthesis) between act and being that I will discuss later never relinquishes the notion of dialectical tension. As a good Lutheran, he is no stranger to paradoxical tension and oppositional pairs.

[48] DBWE 2:85.

[49] DBWE 2:85.

cannot be captured in univocal theological statements."[50] Theological statements are always under a "critical proviso."[51] Therefore even dialectical theology does not give us a "'systematic' formula."[52]

While Bonhoeffer is happy enough to subscribe to the importance of a non-systemic approach, he nonetheless identifies a problem. Indeed, he is not a dialectical theologian! On a dialectical approach, theological thought "seems (…) destined to remain essentially profane."[53] It is forever in need of justification by faith, as Barth says. Bonhoeffer believes that one must be placed into the truth by God, for "pure actualism in thinking about revelation must, on the basis of its formalistic understanding of God's freedom, deny the possibility of a distinction between profane and theological or (…) ecclesial" thinking. One should take note of Bonhoeffer's mentioning of the word "ecclesial." It is the harbinger of Bonhoeffer's non-idealistic solution – non-systemic in an entirely different way – to the problem.

This leads Bonhoeffer to pose the question of whether the concept of formal freedom "is to be made the foundation of theological thought."[54] For one thing, the Bible talks rather about God's freedom as one in which "God freely chose to be bound to historical human beings and to be placed at their disposal. God is free not *from* human beings but *for* them."[55] As such, in Christ "God *is* present "'haveable,' graspable in the Word within the church." The formal freedom has become a "substantial one."[56] Bonhoeffer touches here on a central theme of the *theologia crucis*. God's formal freedom as an axiomatic beginning point that stipulates that God is not available for human thought is only right insofar as it functions as a deconstructive critique of rationalistic approaches to revelation. The moment it becomes itself the basis for doing theology it becomes its own subversion that can only be solved by a certain irrationality as, for instance, evidenced in a dialectical system. Bonhoeffer's theology is not dialectical, for he has no need to use dialectics as a way to safeguard God's formal freedom or God's epistemological unavailability. Bonhoeffer's solution – the foundation of which I will examine more deeply in the next chapter – aligns itself more closely with Luther's *theologia crucis* where God's availability in Christ is of prime importance. The claim that God's freedom is a freedom *for* us is fulfilled in the body of Jesus on the cross. In Christ, God is present and graspable – *with* us, *for* us. Of course, not available epistemologically in the form of an objectification of God, but in God's givenness to us, God's being bound to our earthly concrete existence.

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50 DBWE 2:85.
51 DBWE 2:85n9, 85n[9].
52 DBWE 2:86.
53 DBWE 2:90.
54 DBWE 2:90.
55 DBWE 2:91. Emphasis in the original.
56 DBWE 2:91.

There are additional problems, however. These concern the continuity of the believing subject (critique 4) and that subject's act of faith and knowledge of revelation (critique 5). These must be examined as well even when they are elaborations or variations of the previous critiques.

For Bonhoeffer, Barth's view of the transformation from the old self to the new self in Christian spirituality is highly problematic. Since "Barth's view is that he can think of revelation only as 'non-revelation,'"[57] (for indeed any objectification of God needs to be avoided at all cost), "the new I is presented formally as the 'non-being' of the old I. The new I is initially clearly 'not I.'"[58] The problem is one of continuity of the person who is transformed in the encounter with Christ. The continuity of creation is annulled in order to do justice to the epistemological discontinuity in Barth's understanding of revelation and soteriology. The diastasis of above and below ruptures the reality of creation and even the dialectical method cannot stem its demise. Bonhoeffer's criticism is as insightful as it is devastating. He wonders "Is the new I to be thought of in unity with the empirical total-I, or does it remain its 'heavenly double'?"[59] In other words, is there a unity in the creaturely existence of the human being or is there a new, detached, and epistemologically unavailable counterpart with a "supratemporal" existence? It is here that Bonhoeffer attacks Barth's "act concept,"[60] as something that is upheld at "the expense of the historicity of human beings." Creaturely existence is denied its reality. But not only that, the "existential character of act," i. e., the act of knowing or the act of believing lacks reality too. Bonhoeffer concludes: "In face of this we maintain that the essence of the *actus directus* does not lie in its timelessness, but in its intentionality towards Christ …"[61]

This touches once again on the *theologia crucis*. The point of encounter between God and human being is not the fathoming of the divine Other, that is indirect, out of an epistemological perspective that has affinities with Kant and idealism. It only results in a sterile and abstract new self that is, like God, equally unavailable. No, it lies in the promise of God's self-giving in Christ to us and for us. "Its essence (…) lies in the way Christ touches upon existence, in its historical, temporal totality."[62] Indeed, in Christ, God participates in human history, partakes of human flesh, and on the cross undergoes the death experience of all creaturely existence. The cross is the contact point between God and us which results in the new life of God becoming embodied through Jesus in our own historical lives. There is, in Bonhoeffer's opinion only a way for-

[57] DBWE 2:99.
[58] DBWE 2:98.
[59] DBWE 2:99.
[60] DBWE 2:99.
[61] DBWE 2:100.
[62] DBWE 2:100.

ward for dogmatics if it seeks the continuity of a faith that "knows only an outward-going direction toward cross and resurrection," and "knows itself, as an act of the empirical total I, to be affected together with it by those events."[63] The act of faith should not focus on the relation between the old-I and a presumed not-I but on Christ, cross, and resurrection. How Bonhoeffer's emphasis on creaturely existence is related to the *theologia crucis* will be explored in chapter 4, but it should be clear at this point that the theology of the cross is vital in undergirding an embodied spirituality.

The sixth moment of criticism of Barth is where Bonhoeffer takes issue with Barth's dialectical method. Notice the overlap with the third critique above. The difference is that above, the emphasis is on logical inconsistency, whereas here it will be a critique of Barth's failure to conceive of God as person.[64] As noticed earlier, the dialectical method is necessary, in Barth's opinion, to safeguard the freedom of God who "remains in each instance the subject."[65] Barth uses a "nonobjective concept of knowledge" which is consistently maintained in his dialectical method. In this method, God is always conceived of as subject "in the existential act of faith."[66] Bonhoeffer sees the following problems here:

(1) Barth's epistemology is individualistic, while Bonhoeffer, on the contrary, brings epistemology and ecclesiology (and thus communality instead of individualism) together. This will become increasingly clear in the next two chapters, where the connection between ecclesiology, relationality, epistemology, and the *theologia crucis* will be examined.

(2) The dialectic conceives of God's freedom as being "beyond the occurrence of salvation."[67] But this results in the formalization or rationalization of this freedom. Suddenly, entirely against its intended use, this freedom turns into a concept that is under the control of human thought, for it is human thought that employs the concept in the first place.

(3) Instead of having a dialectic of knowing and not-knowing, it is much better to speak of a "knowing in faith, that is, in the community of faith."[68] Again, this anticipates Bonhoeffer's own solution to the problem of the knowledge of revelation.

(4) Barth talks about God as subject instead of creator and lord. This is "fateful" in Bonhoeffer's eyes.[69] Instead of "direct attention to Christ there is the ongoing reflection of dialectical theology on one's own faith."[70] In the terminology of the *theologia crucis*, there is here a "peeking" behind the cross. There is a

[63] DBWE 2:99.
[64] DBWE 2:124.
[65] DBWE 2:124.
[66] DBWE 2:124.
[67] DBWE 2:124.
[68] DBWE 2:125.
[69] DBWE 2:125.
[70] DBWE 2:125.

degree of theological speculation that has more in common with certain forms of scholastic theology than with the actual theology of the cross Barth claims to articulate, which would rather have us fix our eyes on the crucified Christ.

Bonhoeffer is clearly critiquing Barth with reference to Luther's *theologia crucis*. For Bonhoeffer, Barth defines "God virtually as the subject of my new existence, of my theological thinking, instead of as the creator and lord of both."[71] This virtual reality approach finds its origin in that Barth's theology "fails to understand God as person."[72] An "inadequate concept of the being of revelation" results in an "inadequate concept of knowledge."

Toward the end of *Act and Being*, Bonhoeffer addresses Barth's epistemology once more. This is the seventh critique which concerns the concepts of faith and speculation. He insists that the danger in Barth is that reflection is incorporated into the act of faith such that "faith and 'credulity' lie together in the same act."[73] Bonhoeffer here reiterates his rejection of the speculative aspect in Barth since it runs the risk of becoming works righteousness. Indeed such speculation risks the danger of becoming a work: "it is Christ who justifies and not faith as *opus*."[74] Here too, by placing the cognitive aspect very close to the fiduciary, Barth's theology employs strategies that are alien to Luther's *theologia crucis* thereby bringing itself dangerously close to a denial of it.

3.4.3 *Inaugural Speech*

Bonhoeffer's inaugural address as a lecturer at the University of Berlin has a lot in common with *Act and Being*. In it Bonhoeffer does not focus on the question of method and revelation but more on anthropology (which already emerged in *Act and Being*). Here too, Bonhoeffer engages the work of Barth. The context is probably not entirely irrelevant as Bonhoeffer addresses members of the very bastion of German liberalism in Berlin that Barth so vehemently attacked. Philosophy addresses the anthropological question either from humanity's works and capabilities or from humanity's limits and failures.[75] Theology is sympathetic to such endeavors but will always look at it from the lens of the *cor curvum in se*; humanity is in sin,[76] in its *status corruptionis*. This means that humanity can find its unity and foundation only in God.[77] Importantly, Bonhoeffer attributes this insight that seems to be emerging as a consensus in "contemporary theology" to a renewed interest in Luther: "To this extent, contemporary

[71] DBWE 2:125.
[72] DBWE 2:125.
[73] DBWE 2:154.
[74] DBWE 2:154.
[75] DBWE 10:389.
[76] DBWE 10:399.
[77] DBWE 10:402.

theology is agreed since its latest reorientation toward Luther."[78] This is a clear indication that Bonhoeffer was consciously building the framework of his theology upon the foundation Luther had built even when the actual concept of *theologia crucis* is not mentioned.

It is in this context that Bonhoeffer starts addressing Barth's theology. This is the eighth critique of Bonhoeffer and concerns Barth's concepts of boundary and potentiality. Barth attempts to express the above-mentioned consensus in "contemporary theology" by amplifying "these ideas from the perspective of the Kantian idea of the person who exists (*ist*) only in relation to transcendence …"[79] Bonhoeffer concludes that neither Barth, nor Bultmann, nor Gogarten provide fruitful attempts. Bultmann's approach from potentiality for being is based on possibility, but so are Gogarten's and Barth's limit attempts. After all, the human being who determines the boundary or imposes one on herself still functions on the basis of her human possibility. The boundary is dependent upon the possibility of acknowledging the impossibility. And any theological anthropology based on possibility ignores the *cor curvum in se* and never more so than when it tries to do justice to it by means of human resources. The reasons Bonhoeffer offers are the following:

(1) possibility is a form of self-reflection whereas the truth of the human being can only come from outside (namely, God);

(2) "The concept of possibility rationalizes reality."[80]

(3) The concept is inadequate because any *a priori* "fixed *finitum incapax*"[81] is determined outside of revelation and is hence a rational and human construct.

(4) The concept of possibility is therefore semi-Pelagian and

(5) allows for "an understanding of the human being in continuity,"[82] which flies in the face of Barth's own theology (see the critiques above).

Bonhoeffer's important point is that a concept of the *Grenze* (boundary) such as Barth's "occurs simultaneously with the concept of possibility."[83] Barth receives here another significant critique. Barth's attempt to do justice to the axiom of the theology of the cross in claiming that the human being can only understand herself from the perspective of God, collapses into itself. Why? The very strategy to honor this axiom, namely to think God, revelation, and humanity from an idealist perspective as removed from and inaccessible to the human subject, thereby establishing an a priori boundary between the human being and the transcendent, is itself a human lording over that process. In the end, there-

[78] DBWE 10:400.
[79] DBWE 10:402.
[80] DBWE 10:403.
[81] DBWE 10:403.
[82] DBWE 10:404.
[83] DBWE 10:404.

fore, Barth's anthropology is still based on human rationality (in an attempt to safeguard God's transcendence and formal freedom) and not on revelation established in the moment of the relationality of God's-being-free-for-us. Again, the refrain sounds: Barth's crisis theology is the theological reworking of idealist and Kantian influence for theological method that in the end subverts the very intention of its own project as *theologia crucis*.

3.4.4 *Letters and Papers from Prison*

One doesn't hear much coming from Bonhoeffer by way of criticism of Barth in the period after the inaugural address. But unexpectedly, the polemic rears its head again from the prison letters. This time the criticism is not intended for a large audience (and even less for Barth) but for his friend and brother in arms, Bethge. In these letters, Bonhoeffer is himself, not the man who decides to wear a particular hat – be it academic, pastoral, or political. He does not filter his speech in order to avoid offending his mentor. Here is the honest Bonhoeffer, wholly unmediated.

Therefore the ninth critique, that of *Offenbarungspositivismus*, i. e., positivism of revelation,[84] addressed at Barth's theology is at once marked by innocence and seriousness, honesty and depth. The critique of *Offenbarungspositivismus* cannot be treated lightly, therefore. The following considerations should help in taking Bonhoeffer utterly seriously here.

(1) Bonhoeffer does not present his critique of Barth as something new. Though he has new thoughts (e. g., religionless Christianity) he seems to bring his critique of Barth into the discussion as something that he has always held. It sounds like a reiteration of a sustained critique that never had changed in the intermediate years. As Charles Marsh says, in *Letters and Papers from Prison*, Bonhoeffer was wrestling with "a conflict in Barth's theology which he had begun to detect as early as *Act and Being*, namely, the tension between revelation and temporality."[85] Where in *Act and Being* Barth's epistemological approach provides the wrong foundation for theology, here it results in a lack of "temporality" or embodiment. The old critique is simply applied to a new context, namely the question of how a Christianity can be conceptualized and developed that overcomes religiousness.

(2) His critique still comes out of the Lutheran framework that was at the heart of his theology, basically a *theologia crucis* with its emphasis on Christ, cross, and resurrection.[86] As such the criticism follows the same pattern as before.

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[84] DBWE 8:364, 373.
[85] Marsh, *Reclaiming Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 27.
[86] DBWE 8:373.

(3) By implication, Bonhoeffer never changed his opinion on Barth and if he did, the change was not significant in scope. The Barth of the *Church Dogmatics* is not much different than the Barth of the *Christliche Dogmatik* or even the Barth of *Romans* with regard to its epistemological orientation of a Kantian nature.

(4) This is an indication, too, that there is much more unity in Bonhoeffer's thought than sometimes is assumed. Linking the criticism of Barth in the *Letters and Papers from Prison* to the criticism in *Act and Being* will help one understand once again that Bonhoeffer works with an implicit *theologia crucis*, even at this stage. It forms the backbone of all his critique.

To unpack this a little further, one needs to look at the context of the discussion Bonhoeffer is having with Bethge. In prison, Bonhoeffer had begun to reflect deeply on the modern age and the fate and task of the church in an increasingly secularized context. Religion, or probably better, religiousness has become a problem for itself: "It is not only 'mythological' concepts like miracles, ascension, and so on (which in principle cannot be separated from concepts of God, faith, etc.) that are problematic, but 'religious' concepts as such."[87] The assault against religion earlier initiated by Barth takes on a new form here. Barth merely sought to expose religion as a human attempt to fathom God. This is not possible, says Barth, because God is Wholly Other. Religion is wrong in that it becomes a human possibility. It becomes a human endeavor of works righteousness. As such the content of what is said in and by religions about God is not based on God's self-revelation. For Barth, the content of religion is the problem; not the fact of religiousness per se, i. e. the religious form of Christianity.

Bonhoeffer, however, had begun to consider the religious form of Christianity, i. e. its religiousness, problematic when he writes on the topic of a world come of age. A next step needs to be taken, in his view, in which the concrete embodiment of revelation (as represented in the person and body of Christ) also rids itself of the outward forms of religiosity. Bonhoeffer seeks a religionless Christianity for a world come of age in which, instead of a movement from the world into the religious (e. g., concepts like "saving one's soul,"[88] or "the individual doctrine of salvation"),[89] theological concepts are to be integrated with (or perhaps sublimated into) a Christological understanding of the world ("Isn't God's righteousness and kingdom on earth the center of everything?"). Bonhoeffer says, "What matters is not the beyond of this world, but how it is created and preserved, is given laws, reconciled, and renewed."[90]

[87] DBWE 8:372.
[88] DBWE 8:373.
[89] DBWE 8:373.
[90] DBWE 8:373.

Bonhoeffer is not just responding to trends; he is trying to revamp theology as a whole from its core. He is reorienting theology toward the world. It is the culmination of a trend that marks Bonhoeffer's entire career. While he applauds Barth as the "first theologian – to his great and lasting credit – to begin the critique of religion," he also evaluates Barth's theology in the light of such a project. If Barth is the one who started the deconstruction of German theological liberalism in order to let God speak afresh to humanity, then his entire theological project also needs to be evaluated in the light of that endeavor. And that is where Barth, i. e. the Barth Bonhoeffer knew, – Barth's later work is not under consideration here – failed.[91] Not only must revelation be heard afresh; revelation must also be clothed anew.

Bonhoeffer's critique of Barth is summarized in the word *Offenbarungspositivismus*. The term was later to be met with confusion by Barth. Bonhoeffer literature too has not been necessarily unanimous about what Bonhoeffer meant by it.[92] However, because Bonhoeffer's letter does not seem to suggest that he is saying something radically new about Barth, it is best to "fill" the notion of "positivism of revelation" with the understanding and the conceptual reach of his critical arguments uttered in his previous academic work. The arguments are now expressed in a new context. Is there a connection between "positivism of revelation" on the one hand and terminology such as "formal freedom of God" (*Sanctorum Communio* and *Act and Being*), God's being as "act only" with the human "reflection upon the accomplished act [taking] place at a distance from it" (*Act and Being*) such that revelation, because of the "*incapax infinitum*," does not become a "historical reality" (*Act and Being*), or the impossibility of the "new I" to become an "actual historical reality" (*Act and Being*), and terms like "non-objectivity of knowledge" and "individualistic epistemology"? I would suggest there is. Once again, the *theologia crucis* provides the structure of the critique.

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[91] It is important to point out that for Bonhoeffer scholar, Marsh, Bonhoeffer's earlier critique had already been adequately answered by Barth in his CD II/1 (Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of God*, vol. II.1 of *Church Dogmatics* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2010)). Barth did so with his newly developed axiom "God's being is in God's act." Marsh says: "It is important that after the study of Anselm one finds in Barth an objectification in human language of the game reality that dialectically jumps the gap between the positive and the negative. This objectification in the meaning contained in the language which is the narrating of the word God, an objectification grounded in the analogia fidei" [16]. Why was Bonhoeffer not satisfied? Marsh thinks this is to be found in the fact that "Barth's God overwhelms the world in the passion of eternal coming, albeit not as the divine emptying of self-negating kenosis but in filling and overfilling the world in the gracious event of Jesus Christ. (…) In the unending event of God's coming into and overcoming the world, the world's freedom to be in its otherness to God is crushed" [24]. Charles Marsh, *Reclaiming Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 27. I add that precisely this overwhelming from above is very much unlike the *theologia crucis* Bonhoeffer sought to elucidate.

[92] Pangritz, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: 'Within, Not Outside, the Barthian Movement,'* 278.

Within the passages in *Letters and Papers from Prison* where *Offenbarungspositivismus* is found it functions as a critique of three things:

(1) Positivism of revelation is not very helpful for the nonreligious person;[93]

(2) it functions as a law of faith that tears up the gift given in Christ's becoming flesh;[94]

(3) it gives no guidance in the nonreligious interpretation of theological concepts.[95]

Offenbarungspositivismus is thus an all-encompassing term as it touches on the believer, the nonbeliever, and the communication between the two, but also impinges on the world, revelation, and the theological interaction between the two. In the *Letters and Papers from Prison* the term is specifically oriented toward the relationship between Christianity and the world and the way theology gives shape to it. But let there be no mistake; the critique is essentially the same as in Bonhoeffer's academic work. If in *Letters and Papers from Prison*, Bonhoeffer looks at the consequences of Barth's theology, in *Sanctorum Communio, Act and Being, and the Inaugural Address*, he critiques the foundation and methodology of Barth's theology. If in his academic work, Bonhoeffer takes aim at where theology begins, i. e., its starting point, in *Letters and Papers from Prison* he points out what its consequences are. What brings the two critiques together is the fact that Barth's theology fails both in its methodology and application in the modern world. Theology needs to be done anew; a new theology is needed for a modern world that longs to hear God speak afresh in Jesus Christ. Barth is commended for his attempt to initiate this process but chided for carrying it out in the wrong way.

With this in mind, it becomes easy to pair *Offenbarungspositivismus* with elements of criticism in Bonhoeffer's academic work.

(1) Positivism of revelation does not help nonbelievers because it is an outgrowth of the "formal freedom of God" in which God comes to us as "act only" such that revelation cannot take on "historical reality." Confronted with the "Wholly Other God" it is "like it or lump it"[96] for the nonreligious person in a secular context. The way of theology moves along an epistemological axis in honor of an idealist schema and there is little opportunity for a nonbeliever to join the bandwagon of revelation in its religious appearance, except by a reckless abandoning of the way the world makes sense. Barth may have said no to religion as a human effort; he has not overcome the religiosity of religious concepts that he simply demands to be accepted.

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93 DBWE 8:364.
94 DBWE 8:373.
95 DBWE 8:429, 431.
96 DBWE 8:373.

(2) Bonhoeffer uses the term because revelation, as conceived by Barth, framed epistemologically and idealistically, is posited as a whole that you either cognitively accept or not. Revelation is not embedded in the practice of being church (or at least such a theology does little by way of facilitating that). It thus lacks embodied concreteness and historical realization. For Bonhoeffer this is a tearing up of the gift given in Christ's becoming flesh. This makes sense if one realizes (and this will be elaborated in the next chapter) that for Bonhoeffer (and according to Luther's *theologia crucis*) revelation has more than just a cognitive aspect. The cognitive is primarily embodied (through God's *pro me*) in Christ, made visible (and materially graspable) on the cross, and is then "grasped" in the form of an *actus directus*, the non-reflective acceptance in faith. An all too epistemologically driven method forgoes embodiment in the church, which, as the Body of Christ, is closely linked to the gift of the body of Christ on the cross. That gift, that body, is thus torn up through what now has become a "law of faith" that is positively posited without having become contingent, historicized, lived out, or embodied.

(3) Therefore, as *Offenbarungspositivismus*, Barth's theology gives "no concrete guidance" in "the nonreligious interpretation of theological concepts."[97] One might counter that it is not Barth's intention to develop such nonreligious interpretations. While this may be true, in Bonhoeffer's view, his new project and Barth's older project that Bonhoeffer committed himself to, are of the same cloth. Just as revelation has to be allowed to speak anew (such that our modern world may be addressed by God in Jesus Christ), so a secular world needs to be encountered with nonreligious interpretations of theological concepts (in order for our world to understand that very address of the God who speaks through Jesus Christ).

Ultimately, if your theology is going to be epistemological in nature, that is to say, initiated by the neurotic drive of the modern dispassionate human being to possess control over the world by means of knowledge even when this takes place in its opposite form, namely a neurotic denial (i. e., dialectical theology); and if you achieve this epistemological goal by way of an idealist boundary and a God conceptualized as Wholly Other, you will get a theology that lacks embodiment and peeks behind the cross to conceptualize a non-objective God. You are then forced to make claims about God dialectically. You then posit these theological elaborations on God's ways with the world as provisional, that is, positively. But all you achieve, then, is that you hang revelation out to dry. It is a positivism of revelation.

With the close connection between the criticism of positivism of revelation and the criticism leveled in the areas of epistemology, anthropology, Christology, and theology proper, Bonhoeffer's criticism continues to be very closely

[97] DBWE 8:429.

aligned with Luther's *theologia crucis*. *Offenbarungspositivismus* is Bonhoeffer's way of saying that Barth's theology lacks the proper grounding in reality or concreteness. Ultimately, it is still based on human thinking about a transcendent reality and thus positivistic in nature. It is fideistic without properly curbing human thought and therefore not sufficiently a *theologia crucis*. The theology of the Barth Bonhoeffer knew spends a lot of time speculating about theological concepts and doctrines but stops short of touching the ground. It has a bit of a hard time taking on flesh in, with, and after Christ.

Luther's *theologia crucis* begins on the ground, or better, on a cross firmly planted in the soil of this earth. Revelation may be originating from a Wholly Other God, but its location, i. e., the place where it emerges, as well its starting point for human reflection begins on the cross. The God thus revealed is hidden, but hidden in presence. When faith starts there, it lingers before the cross and refuses to peek behind it, for it is pointless to speculate on the inner workings of a hidden God. It does not suspend this cross in midair. Instead, it follows after Christ and manifests itself in the embodied reality of the church as the Body of Christ. Those who are of the opinion that with the new motif of religionless Christianity Bonhoeffer is initiating a break with his previous theology and believe that Bonhoeffer embarks on a form of radical theology away from its grounding in Luther, are mistaken.

Bonhoeffer makes it very clear that his new ideas are not intended in the "anthropocentric sense of liberal, mystical, pietistic, ethical theology,"[98] i. e., as a theology that moves away from the priority of revelation with its beginning point in Christ as God's free gift of love to humanity. On the contrary, Bonhoeffer wants to develop an embodied theology "in the biblical sense of the creation and the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ."[99] Bonhoeffer's affirmation of a world come of age is shaped by a doctrine of creation illuminated by the incarnation (which includes crucifixion and resurrection) in which God comes to and is present in and with the world. In *Letters and Papers from Prison* Bonhoeffer is apparently still working on his interpretation of Luther's *theologia crucis*.

On the one hand, Bonhoeffer is deeply influenced by Barth and clearly seeks him out. On the other hand, Bonhoeffer criticizes Barth at a fundamental level. This begins before they ever meet (*Sanctorum Communio* and *Act and Being*) and continues when Bonhoeffer is in prison, long after their last encounter. The answer is found, I suggest, in a divergent understanding of how Luther's theology of the cross must proceed in the modern world.

[98] DBWE 8:373.
[99] DBWE 8:373.

3.5 The *Theologia Crucis* in Barth

While the literature on Barth is generally not used to talking about Barth's theology as a *theologia crucis*, Barth makes it clear that theology can only be done as a *theologia crucis*[100] and it may, therefore, be safely assumed that he consciously intended for his theology to be seen as just that, a theology of the cross. For Barth his theology of crisis, his dialectical theology, is in his own thinking, if not synonymous with, strongly influenced by and affiliated with, Luther's *theologia crucis*. Both seek to demolish systems of human thought that lord it over revelation and both seek to let revelation be God's word about God-self instead of an anthropological possibility. As will become evident, however, though there is a small difference between *crucis* and *crisis* in terms of spelling, as concepts these two terms present two opposites almost worthy of a Kantian divide, if not in Barth's eyes, then certainly for Bonhoeffer.

3.5.1. Bradbury's Claim

Rosalene Bradbury is not of that opinion, however. After tracing the theology of the cross throughout the history of the church and surveying the entire landscape of theologies of the cross in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Bradbury[101] draws the conclusion that Karl Barth's theology can be properly called a "cross theology," as she terms it. Her main argument is that Barth's theology fulfills the requirements of providing a comprehensive systematic system which combines soteriological and epistemological concerns in one approach. She writes:

> From the Apostle Paul and the earliest period of the Christian tradition, through Athanasius and then a defined group of medieval mystics, up to and including the Reformer Martin Luther, a thin line of theologians collate, relate, and convey the crucicentric idea – or in strict theological terms they relay it from the cross. For this idea is that the cross itself proclaims a self-disclosing and a saving Word, each dimension paralleling the other, each of equal theological significance. Luther, uncovering and codifying the ancient system predicated on this idea, retrospectively calls it what it is: *theologia crucis*. In turn this Word from the cross and the system conveying it provide a guiding foundation within the modern evangelical theology of Karl Barth.[102]

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[100] CD I/1, 13. Cf. Barth, *Fate and Idea*, 60.

[101] For my investigation into the *theologia crucis* in Barth, I prefer to work with Bradbury rather than Hunsinger since the latter has a typically narrow definition of the *theologia crucis*. He appears to connect the *theologia crucis* primarily with the notion of a "God of suffering love," which is not untrue, but given Barth's theology and its emphasis on the epistemological, unsatisfactory. See George Hunsinger, "What Barth Learned From Martin Luther," in *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 279–304.

[102] Rosalene Bradbury, *Cross Theology: The Classical Theologia Crucis and Karl Barth's Modern Theology of the Cross* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011), 293.

Consonant with Barth's own words that "Dogmatics is possible only as a *theologia crucis*,"[103] Bradbury says further that

> … the crucicentric system provides a pervasive, pivotal, and generative influence in the twentieth-century orthodox theology of Karl Barth, who crucially recovers, reshapes, and reasserts it as a peculiarly modern instrument – in so doing further advancing the system itself."[104]

There is no need to contest Bradbury's claim that Barth's theology belongs to the crucicentric tradition in the broad understanding of the term that she proposes. Her arguments are thorough enough. I do take issue, however, with a few strategic moves she makes that have consequences for her conclusions which in turn fly in the face of my own findings in the current research project.

The first move consists of presenting the *theologia crucis* as a tradition that goes all the way back to Paul (correct assessment), with Luther being merely one (though important) instantiation of that tradition (doubtful assessment). Luther is no longer the one who discovers the *theologia crucis* (albeit under the influence of others), but the one ("up to and including"[105]) who merely makes this strand of theological thinking explicit by giving it its name. Luther is now merely "uncovering and codifying the ancient system."[106] This makes it easier – and this is the second strategic move by Bradbury – to regard the differences between Luther and Barth as not pertaining to the heart of the matter. Both Luther and Barth are now two equally valid approaches within the same theological strategy. Luther no longer has the normative function on the basis of being the root or source of theologies of the cross.

This makes sense for Bradbury who attempts to portray Barth as a theologian of the cross *pur sang*, or, what is more, to label him as one who champions its cause. The problem is only that my assessment of Bonhoeffer's *Act and Being* as a cross theology in its own right, closely patterned after Luther, forces me to consider Bonhoeffer's criticism of Barth. This criticism leads to rather different conclusions and compels me to move closer to the question of what constitutes a proper *theologia crucis*.

For my purposes, it does not matter that Bradbury presents Barth as a theologian of the cross. Barth certainly thought he was but in the end that may be Bradbury's only trump card. Others may want to further evaluate Bradbury's thesis. It may well be that Bradbury properly identifies elements in Barth that are thoroughly consonant with Luther. It seems, however, that Bradbury is not fully aware of the particularity of Luther's *theologia crucis* and its momentous and decisive impact on Western thought. She places Luther on a continuum of

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[103] CD I/1, 13.
[104] Bradbury, *Cross Theology*, 295.
[105] Bradbury, *Cross Theology*, 293.
[106] Bradbury, *Cross Theology*.

a tradition of the theology of the cross that starts with St. Paul and ends with Barth. Along this continuum, Luther is positioned as merely one of the players. Of course, it has been well attested that Luther was influenced by Paul as well as Athanasius, Augustine, Bernard, and the crucicentric medieval mystics. But Luther was the first one to come up with the term and thinkers who use or allude to the term after Luther, pattern their thought after what Luther did (even Barth does this!). Luther's theology of the cross opened the way for the Reformation and in doing so completely changed the intellectual and political landscape of his time. With Luther, the medieval period and its unified European Christianity come to an end opening the way for the modern era.

For Bradbury, Luther is but one of many. This is why she fails to recognize the particularity of Luther's theology of the cross. Perhaps she has somewhat uncritically adopted Barth's own insistence that his theology is patterned after Luther as her starting point. In any case, her definition of the theology of the cross certainly has more in common with Barth than with Luther if only for the way it is worded (this in spite of the otherwise thorough research). In addition, Bradbury sets up what looks like her own criteria for what constitutes a *theologia crucis* and in the process shows omissions. For her, cross theology is "this idea that the cross itself proclaims a self-disclosing and a saving Word."[107] The problem is not what is included in this definition, but what is omitted. The definition is sufficiently broad, it seems, so as to embrace many theologies otherwise not recognized as cross theologies. Since for Bradbury, Luther is not the one to provide an original articulation of the *theologia crucis* but rather an exemplification, she can afford to neglect a few characteristics and implications of Luther's theology of the cross even when these are essential to it.

Luther's theology of the cross, however, sets itself up against human reason. It is a critique that not only pertains to the starting point of theology but also the ways theology progresses. In Barth, one notices a strict adherence to the primacy of revelation in theology's starting point but not always in the way his theology progresses. There is a measure of speculation in Barth's theology, since the dialectical approach emphasizes the cognitive aspect and draws the boundary itself.

The second difference between Barth and Luther is that Luther's *theologia crucis* shows a strong movement into the world. If Christ on the cross is God's self-revelation, then God is present in Jesus's flesh. This speaks to God's presence *in* the world and *for* the world. There is a movement from God into the world. A consequence of this is a certain antipathy toward an overbearing metaphysics and a tendency to affirm the world. God is in the world and not in human speculation (or dialectics). This, however, does not deter Barth at all from pursuing a movement back to God. Of course, this movement always takes

[107] Bradbury, *Cross Theology*, 293.

the epistemological gap in account between human understanding and God's being, but the focus is nonetheless on that gap and the divine reality that hides behind that gap. Jesus is for Barth an *indirect* reference to the sovereign God who is Wholly Other. Bradbury is not wrong in saying that a theology of the cross is marked by comprehensiveness and a bringing together of both soteriology and epistemology. However, the way soteriology and epistemology are related to each other and what role they play is equally of significance for a proper *theologia crucis*. She seems not sufficiently aware of these differences. In Barth, the epistemological idealism continues to dominate the theological project, whereas, in Luther, the critique of reason is simply to clear the way for the present Christ. For Barth, the Hidden God is far removed while in Luther the hiddenness is found precisely in the embodied presence of God in Christ.

Again, I grant Bradbury her thesis. But what is interesting for my project, is that it seems that right at the very point of these omissions concerning hiddenness, epistemology, and deconstruction, Bonhoeffer critiques Barth. Since Bradbury's study on Barth deals with the *theologia crucis* in Barth and is a recent major systematic investigation into Barth's theology, it was necessary to take a closer look at her study. As I continue the investigation of the theologies of both Bonhoeffer and Barth, I will now move on to a few case studies.

3.5.2 Case Studies in Barth

The next step is to simply let Barth speak from two of his important writings. The analysis presented here has its merit in that it attempts to highlight one specific dimension of Bonhoeffer's critiques of Barth, namely the distance that undergirds the theological method Barth employs. This distance exists as a result of the influence of Kantian idealism and exists to do justice to Barth's concept of the non-objectivity of God.

I will proceed as follows. (1) I will examine two cases from Barth's oeuvre, excerpts from the 2nd edition of *The Epistle to the Romans*[108] (hereafter *Romans*) and select passages from Barth's *Church Dogmatics I/1*[109] in order to characterize Barth's theology with Luther's theology of the cross in mind. I will then attempt to confirm and provide warrant for the results of my hermeneutics of Barth with the help of Barth scholar George Hunsinger. After that, I will compare the results with Bonhoeffer's critique of Barth and arrange the resulting assemblage around the concept of *distance* in preparation for some necessary work on the *theologia crucis*. In this way, I will both characterize the difference between Bonhoeffer and Barth as resulting from different interpretations of the

[108] Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 6th ed., trans. Edwyn C. Hoskins (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).
[109] CD I/1, 13.

theology of the cross and begin to appreciate the direction Bonhoeffer's interpretation and original constructive work is taking.

Barth's Epistle to the Romans, 2nd Edition. In the introduction to his *Romans*, Karl Barth speaks of the power of God as "being completely different." He writes:

> It is the KRISIS of all power, that by which all power is measured, and by which it is pronounced to be both something and – nothing, nothing, and – something. (…) The power of God stands neither at the side of nor above – supernatural! – these limited and limiting powers.[110]

What Barth aims to achieve is to open up an infinite chasm between God and humanity in order to preserve the reality of God.

While Bradbury may be formally correct that Barth's theology is a *theologia crucis*, the main operative word in *Romans* is *krisis*, an irreducible diastasis between God and humanity which refers to a difference that is not quantitative but qualitative in nature. This diastasis, or static dialectic, emphasizes over and over again that God is *there* and we *here*, and that whatever we are and whatever we can comprehend, God is always other than us human beings with our human understanding. This diastasis is later transformed into the dialectical movement of the *Church Dogmatics* in which many theological statements once elaborated are complemented by paradoxical opposites that attempt to aim with human words at the unspeakable reality of God.

For now, I will take a more in-depth look at Barth's attempt in his *Romans* to create distance between us and God. This is a random sampling from the overwhelming presence of the Barthian diastasis. I will first look at Chapter Three "The Righteousness of God." When speaking about God's righteousness, one needs to keep in mind that "God is known as the Unknown God …,"[111] according to Barth. Whether there is law or no law, God speaks if God so wants because "God is free."[112] Though Barth speaks, like Luther, of a *iustitia aliena* (alien righteousness), it is for Barth not so much a righteousness that is not ours (that is, alien to the *cur curvum in se*), but it is a righteousness according to God's sovereignty.[113]

Similarly, when speaking about Jesus as the final fulfillment of the promise of a faithful God, Barth emphasizes the hidden character of this revelation as a "most profound secrecy."[114] This notion goes well beyond the indirectness that Luther alludes to when God's revelation in Christ is called *sub contrario*. To be sure, for Luther God is hidden, but all you need to do, as far as Luther is con-

[110] Romans, 36.
[111] Romans, 91.
[112] Romans, 92.
[113] Romans, 93.
[114] Romans, 98.

cerned, is to look at Christ and you see the love of God poured out in the body of Christ in all its concreteness.

In *Romans*, God's decision to bring justice to humanity is a declaration that is *creatio ex nihilo*, "uttered by God from his tribunal."[115] Its only necessity is the "majestic pre-eminence of grace."[116] As such "the 'Moment' of the movement of men by God is beyond men, it cannot be enclosed in a system or a 'way.' It rests in the good pleasure of God …"[117] Therefore "the Being and Action of God are and remain wholly different from the being and action of men. The line which separates here from there cannot be crossed (…) it is the 'No,' which is, nevertheless, the 'Yes.'"[118] The aforementioned 'Moment' "does not belong in any causal or temporal or logical sequence" because "it is always and everywhere wholly new …"[119] Barth's "majestic pre-eminence of grace" is markedly different from Luther's idea of grace in which God freely chooses to be trampled and abused on our behalf.

Next in the survey of chapter four of *Romans* "The Voice of History," is Abraham who believed in God. This placed him on the other side of the line of death, where one finds "God, the Sustainer Himself unsustained, substantial but without substance, known in his unknowableness, showing mercy in his unapproachable holiness, demand[ing] the obedient recognition of his authority."[120] This Abrahamic faith is contrasted with the "visible concreteness of religion"; it is marked by a true "other-worldliness."[121] This is because its point of reference is "Revelation itself, which lies beyond actual reality."[122] For that reason "The distinction between the moral and actual content of religion and the divine form by which it is given character and meaning is absolute and final."[123] Therefore, Abraham's circumcision is only an indirect reference to the "divine form." At the same time, though with a remarkable deviation from the language of exaltation, one hears Barth say, "God must not be sought as though He sat enthroned upon the summit of religious attainment. He is to be found on the plain where men suffer and sin."[124] This paradox signals how "the knowledge of [grace] remains always a dialectical knowledge."[125] The grace Abraham received "cuts down vertically, from above, through every particular human status."[126] Though Barth

115 Romans, 102.
116 Romans, 103.
117 Romans, 110.
118 Romans, 111.
119 Romans, 112.
120 Romans, 120.
121 Romans, 126.
122 Romans, 129.
123 Romans, 129.
124 Romans, 132.
125 Romans, 135.
126 Romans, 139.

uses the language of "suffering and sin" the concept of grace is still intimately connected to the divine dimension of otherness that is above.

While there is use of language and thematic material reminiscent of Luther (the hiddenness of God, an alien justice, God's presence with the suffering, and paradox, etc.) the whole is very persistently framed in terms of distance between God and humanity, with a strong emphasis on the sovereignty and majesty of a Mighty God. Barth's deconstructive moment is epistemological, just like the *theologia crucis*, while his constructive moment, unlike the *theologia crucis*, continues along a path that is deeply indebted to a Kantian and idealist epistemology. The focal point lies beyond the cross, the material content of revelation is indirect.[127] Indeed, revelation is always indirect for Barth and refers to a point where human understanding cannot reach. This is to preserve the epistemological distance that idealism demands between God and humanity which in turn preserves the exalted otherness of God.

Church Dogmatics I. 1. Diastasis in Barth continues throughout his oeuvre and is not overcome by an *analogia entis*, as von Balthasar suggests.[128] McCormack is right in his classic study "Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology." For him, it is not the case that Barth's study of Anselm resulted in an *analogia entis*. Rather,

> it was Barth's adoption of the ancient anhypostatic-enhypostatic model of Christology in May 1924 (together with his elaboration of a doctrine of the immanent Trinity) which provided the material conditions needed to set free the elaboration of the analogia fidei.[129]

The *analogia fidei* methodologically progressed in a dialectical way and was thus a "dialectical theology in the shadow of the anhypostatic-enhypostatic Christology."[130] Arguing this, admittedly works well in the development of my thesis (at heart, the diastasis remains intact but as method, it is replaced by a dialectical approach). The alternative, however, namely an actual *analogia entis*, would naturally be devastating for any position that would argue in favor of Barth's theology as a *theologia crucis*. The closest one gets to an equation of Barth and the *theologia crucis* in Barthian scholarship, Bradbury aside, is indeed the conceptual framework for understanding Barth provided by McCormack.

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[127] The indirectness intended here means that for Barth revelation is always mediated. Because God and God's truth are identical, having direct access to God's truth would entail the objectification of God by the human subject. This is not possible since God, for Barth, is the Wholly Other. This argument of the epistemological impossibility of directness based on the ontological reality of God is further empowered by Barth's rhetoric against German liberal theology that had thoroughly turned revelation into an anthropological possibility. Indirectness, then, points to the limits of human being, the otherness of God, and the graceful mediation of God through the person of Jesus Christ.

[128] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation* (San Francisco: Communio Books, Ignatius Press, 1992), 86.

[129] McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 19–20.

[130] McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 22.

Barth's adoption of an anhypostatic-enhypostatic Christology[131] is closely related to the question concerning Barth's alleged idealism. For Barth God must be at a distance and this distance is preserved in the anhypostatic-enhypostatic Christology.

Enhypostatic means that the human nature of Jesus Christ is joined to the second person of the Trinity. The Word has become flesh. The Son of God is born as a human person. Immanuel; God with us. The incarnation is truly God's self-revelation. At the same time, however, this Christology demands that one understands the incarnation to be anhypostatic. That is to say that the human nature that is taken on by the second person of the Trinity is not personal (i. e., there is no human person involved); it is merely human nature that is assumed. McCormack notes

> The proximity to Barth's dialectic of veiling and unveiling was obvious. In that God takes to God's Self a human nature, God veils God's Self in a creaturely medium. He enters "the divine incognito" – a situation of unrecognizability. Outwardly (and inwardly!), He is a human being like any other. But the Subject of this human life – we may liken this to Kant's conception of an unintuitable, noumenal self – was at every point the Second Person of the Trinity; a Subject who, because of the veil of human flesh, remains unintuitable. Because of His unintuitability, God can only be known in Jesus where He condescends to grant faith to the would-be human knower; where He unveils Himself in and through the veil of human flesh.[132]

With this in mind, I will parse a few passages in Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics I/1*. Barth says that "dogmatics is only possible as *theologia crucis,*"[133] thereby implying that his theology is precisely that: a theology of the cross. It is, as such, "an act of obedience which is certain in faith."[134] In the preceding sentences, we learn that "it is in faith that the truth is presupposed to be the known measure of all things meaning that the truth is in no sense assumed to be to hand."[135] In conformity to a proper *theologia crucis*, theology begins with the truth not being at hand but only available on its own terms. Unlike Luther's *theologia crucis*, Barth's theological endeavor continues to be defined epistemologically as the truth coming "in the faith in which we begin to *know* (italics mine), and cease, and begin again."[136] One notices a similar subtle shift in the very first pages of

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[131] The notion of the anhypostatic-enhypostatic Christology is derived from classical Chalcedonian theology in which the anhypostatic element refers to the fact that in the incarnation there was no human person involved, only a human nature, while the enhypostatic aspect entails that the divine nature truly joined the human nature, i. e., that both divine and human nature are present in the incarnation. This no (no human person) and yes (divine and human nature) functioned as a classical echo or backdrop to Barth's own dialectical method.

[132] McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 327.

[133] CD I/1, 13.

[134] CD I/1, 13.

[135] CD I/1, 13.

[136] CD I/1, 13.

CD I/1. While theology "would be meaningless without justifying grace," this justifying grace corrects "what man [sic] as such does badly," namely, "to put to itself the question of *truth* (italics mine)."[137] Again, its beginning point is very much in accordance with the *theologia crucis* but its progression is quite different. To put oneself to "the question of truth" is not quite the same as Luther's "telling a thing like it is."[138] The latter statement, part of Luther's introduction of his theologian of the cross in his *Heidelberg Disputation*, assumes an available directness *vis-à-vis* the cross and a realism with regard to the state of the human being. No dialectical speculation.

Barth assumes that even though God is epistemologically unavailable, our speculative speech, searching for the things of God, is able to approximate that truth indirectly. Of course, Barth is not so naive as to assume that this is failproof. On the contrary, he stresses repeatedly that theology is a human and therefore fallible affair. But he also believes divine mercy comes to the aid of such God-talk. Indeed, "theology accompanies the utterance of the Church to the extent that it is itself no more than human 'talk about God,'" but it is also given in "obedience to grace if it is to be done well."[139]

Because Barth conceives of theology to a large extent as an epistemological endeavor that honors the barrier erected by a Kantian idealism[140] (in which the aim is to make comprehensive, coherent, and hopefully true statements about God), and since he is well aware that God is not epistemologically available, he resorts to the dialectical method. True, this is not the diastasis of the *crisis* theology of *Romans*, which is more a statement of where things are at in their unmoving and unyielding opposites, or better, a discourse about two utterly disconnected planes of reality. Yet, the diastasis is ultimately still preserved as informing and driving the dialectical approach that came about after 1924. The dialectical method is, therefore, an epistemological-idealist approach that seeks to refrain from making absolute claims about God while it still, in spite of its intentions, probes the depths of God.

In Barth's section on the knowability of God,[141] it becomes clear that the theology of *CD I/1*, in spite of its transformation from the diastasis of *Romans* into the dialectics of the *Church Dogmatics*, continues to fuel an idealistic project. Even though all sorts of claims about God are made in *Romans*, they are not warranted so long as it is not made clear how one is to proceed with thinking about God. The *Church Dogmatics* solves this problem, but at a price. The ide-

137 CD I/1, 2.
138 LW 31:40.
139 CD I/1, 2.
140 I treat Barth's epistemology here only insofar it pertains to his dialectical method. His sophisticated hermeneutics is not of primary relevance here as we are dealing with the scaffolding of a priori philosophical assumptions and commitments.
141 CD I/1, 184 ff.

alistic trajectory is not abandoned but is continued in the form of a dialectic. It leads Barth to pose the question of the knowability of God. Barth maintains fidelity to his axiomatic diastasis: "The reality of the Word of God in all its three forms is grounded only in itself." Of course, if one is to speak of God, such claims must be possible. Therefore, Barth says,

> …the knowledge of [the Word of God] by man can consist only in its acknowledgment, and this acknowledgement can become real only through itself [i. e., the Word] …[142]

For Barth, this Word of God comes to us as proclamation, Scripture, and incarnation. It is fascinating to see that in Barth's conception the notion of the "Word of God" has a strong verbal connotation. Both proclamation and Scripture come to the hearer in the form of words, spoken or written, and both proclamation and Scripture contain this dual nature of divinity and humanity, in analogy to the incarnation, that needs to be unpacked dialectically. It is about knowledge. It is about epistemology. My main point here is that it is not important *how* Barth goes about solving the epistemological conundrum but the fact that his theology always already *is* an interrogation of – and in a way an obsession with – the epistemological question. And this question persists because of Barth's idealism (as it undergirds his theological realism). His theology is influenced by and develops along both Kantianism thought and Reformed theology. The emphasis of the latter on the Word is combined with the emphasis on the epistemological chasm in the former. Barth's theology is in many ways still a modern project, even though he is all too aware of that project's shortcomings, notably in liberal theology.

3.5.3 Hunsinger's Motifs

In order to support the findings of the foregoing hermeneutics, I will now resort to Barth scholar Hunsinger to see how this epistemological orientation works itself out in Barth's theology. Doing this is somewhat risky since Hunsinger speaks from the whole of Barth's *Church Dogmatics* which naturally includes not only the early and mature but also (and perhaps especially) the later Barth, who made adjustments in his theology precisely where Bonhoeffer critiques him. The Barth Bonhoeffer knew does not extend beyond *Church Dogmatics II/2 The Doctrine Of God*.[143]

Hunsinger proposes a set of motifs he has discovered to be operating in Barth's theology as a way to describe his theology: actualism, particularism, objectivism, personalism, realism,[144] and rationalism.[145] I will try to lay bare

[142] CD I/1, 184.
[143] Cf. DBWE 8:232.
[144] The fact that Hunsinger here uses the word "realism" to characterize Barth's theology is not in conflict with my characterization of Barth as working within a framework of idealism.

the epistemological concern in these motifs, thereby remaining as close as possible to Bonhoeffer's concerns about Barth's theology.

The motif of actualism

> is present whenever Barth speaks, as he constantly does, in the language of occurrence, happening, event, history, decisions, and act. At the most general level, it means that he thinks primarily in terms of events and relationships rather than monadic or self-contained substances.[146]

When God is an event, there is no lasting or objective epistemological knowledge of God. There is engagement with the event as it unfolds but only there and then. For all its conceptual richness, there is really only one thing this motif tries to highlight, namely, an understanding of how God can be known without God becoming an object of human knowledge.

On the motif of particularism, Hunsinger writes: "Barth's theology makes a concerted attempt always to move from the particular to the general rather than from the general to the particular" …[147] Here too, the emphasis on the particular functions as a critique of rationalism that tries to master reality by means of pre-defined categories and generalizations.

Hunsinger's motif of objectivism is in part directly related to the notion of "knowledge of God." Revelation is objective "in the sense that its basis lies not in human subjectivity but in God."[148] This motif is most closely linked to my discussion and survey of Barth above in that God cannot be known but by God's knowledge of Godself in us.

In the motif of personalism, we see the epistemological notion recede into the background. In Barth, the notion of "our human encounter with God as confessed by faith"[149] is certainly not absent.[150] Yet, with regard to the Barth Bonhoeffer knew, the personalism is understood as mediated and based on God's formal freedom.[151] Earlier it became clear how Bonhoeffer critiques such a conception of relationship and encounter.

In fact, his realism can only function in dependence on the idealism. It is only because of the idealistic chasm that opens up between us and God that Barth, in defiance of those voices that reject revelation in favor of anthropocentric conceptions of God, can speak of an actual and real God. He can do so because this real God is simply not available to human knowledge.

[145] George Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 1–26.

[146] Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 32.

[147] Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 32.

[148] Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 35.

[149] Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 40.

[150] Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 40 ff.

[151] Indeed, the relationship is "mediated, not immediate" (Hunsinger, 40), and is "not given to humanity by nature (as, for example, in the depths of human self-consciousness) but only by God's free decision of grace (as, for example, in the event of pretemporal election, in which God graciously determined to be our God, and to make us be God's people, in Jesus Christ) …," (Hunsinger, 41).

The motif of realism

… designates the way Barth interprets theological language. Theological language as represented by Scripture (or based on it), is understood to refer to its subject matter by way of analogy, to address its subject matter to the whole person, to convey its subject matter with certainty, and to narrate its subject matter in the form of legendary witness."[152]

Here theological language is carefully crafted in order to avoid the extremes of both literalism and expressivism, both fundamentalism and theological liberalism. As a theological motif, it avoids absolute claims while still facilitating the making of claims.

Lastly, the motif of rationalism refers to "faith's critical understanding of itself through rational reflection"[153] in which there is no knowledge without faith and no faith without knowledge. Epistemology is strongly present here, especially when one looks at the "rationalist" procedures Barth uses (according to Hunsinger) with the rubric of "no faith without knowledge": deriving, grounding, ordering, testing, and assimilating.[154] Hunsinger notes that Barth's theological language combines two notions of truth: coherence and correspondence. Hunsinger proceeds to combine these motifs in order to clarify important aspects of Barth's theology. He states for instance that the absolutely hidden God takes form objectively without dissolving God's hiddenness. This way, God becomes an object of our knowledge.[155]

While no self-respecting theology can leave the epistemological question unanswered, it seems that the role epistemology plays in the theology of Barth is disproportionately large. It must be since Barth's idealism creates a chasm that is a question for human knowledge. Hunsinger's motifs, presented as a way to characterize Barth's theology, with the exception perhaps of the motif of personalism, seem to confirm this. Interestingly, though Hunsinger interprets the whole oeuvre of Barth, the epistemological overtones remain discernible in his characterization.

3.6 Spatial Metaphors

In order to make the transition to the next chapter and a discussion of Luther's theology of the cross, I will now conclude with a few preliminary spatial metaphors to describe the difference between Bonhoeffer's theology and Barth's. It is fairly easy to redescribe the above analysis of Barth and Bonhoeffer in terms

[152] Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 42.
[153] Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 49.
[154] This is what Bonhoeffer refers to as faith in the form of credulity. Cf. DBWE 2:154.
[155] Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 76 ff.

of their relation or attitude toward the cross. Even though up to this point Bonhoeffer has mainly been seen to critique Barth, necessitating an advance on the analysis of Bonhoeffer's own constructive proposal in the coming chapters, I am already able to say at least a few things. The spatial metaphors I have in mind are connected with how I think these theologians differ in their assimilation of the theology of the cross. They also align with the terminology used in this chapter of *crisis* versus *crucis*. There are three spatial metaphors in regard to which Barth and Bonhoeffer seem to diverge. They are the following:

1. We observe two different orientations to conceptualize revelation and "locate" God: *God-on-the-Cross* and *God-from-above*. In Barth, we find a strong emphasis on the distance of God while we can already see an emerging preference for God's proximity in Bonhoeffer's critique.[156] I come to this conclusion after coming to an understanding of Barth's theology as a project with an idealistic source resulting in epistemological concerns and Bonhoeffer's as a project that seems to be more relational in orientation. It will become clear that this relationality is accompanied by a particular kind of ontology. In short, the solutions both theologians bring to bear on the question of revelation are to be found in these respective locations of "cross" and "above." It is the difference between the overpowering presence of the absence of the sovereign One versus the tactile reality of God's enfleshed presence in the sufferings of Jesus.

2. We notice a *theology-in-front-of-the-cross* and a *theology-located-behind-the-cross*. Theology in front of the cross looks no further than what is given from God in Christ. Bonhoeffer's approach seems to follow this line of thinking but without surrendering the nonobjectivity of God. Barth's theology, however, is to a large extent located behind the cross, whereby the cross is a mediating event that discloses a hidden God indirectly. It is still based upon God's self-revelation as available only on God's terms, i. e., in Christ, but as such, it comes from across a divide and is understood to be indirect in order to preserve the formal freedom of God. Indirect revelation, once acknowledged as such, does not prevent us from peeking behind the cross into mysteries of God such as predestination, formal freedom, or sovereignty.

3. Lastly, we notice a *movement-from-the-cross-into-the-realm-of-the-divine* in Barth over against a *movement-from-the-cross-into-the-world* in Bonhoeffer. To be sure, the movement from the cross into the world is definitely present in Barth (think for instance of the later Barth's theme of God traveling into "the far country"), but methodologically and systematically Barth's theology moves from cross toward the impossible possibility of knowing the Wholly Other God. In Bonhoeffer emerges a movement from cross into the world. Behind the other,

156 Ironically, where Barth attempts to counter the hubris of our Promethean modern times by means of distance, he seems to rely on the assumed and very Promethean ability to delineate and demarcate this distance.

we do not see the One, but we see the One in Christ emphasizing the other in her embodied existence.

It is not possible to treat these spatial metaphors separately. They overlap and intersect of course. They pertain to the two main differences between Bonhoeffer and Barth in the areas of epistemology and Christology as they work themselves out with regard to the basic difference of realism versus idealism. Barth's two main concerns are to treat God as epistemologically not available to us in order to then find a way of doing theology that lingers with an epistemological orientation. He seizes upon Kantian idealism to brush aside the whole breadth of German liberal theology in order to clear space for a speaking God. In doing so he portrays God as Wholly Other and places God at an unfathomable distance from us in order to begin with and uphold the nonobjectivity of God, in which both "beginning" and "upholding" are done dialectically.

Bonhoeffer's concerns are to do justice to the very same epistemological unavailability of God that marks Barth's theology. He proceeds differently, however, and rejects the idealistic intonation of Barth's theology in favor of relationality, self-involvement, and presence (i. e. the presence of a certain form of being). Bonhoeffer locates revelation, not far away, beyond a wide chasm, but present in all its fullness amidst humanity in this world. Barth works out of a formal epistemological understanding of the *theologia crucis*, while Bonhoeffer, without adversity toward the epistemological implications of a *theologia crucis,* considers other relevant and crucial aspects of the *theologia crucis* that are fundamentally important for the articulation of such a theology for today. *Krisis* and distance in Barth are pitted over against *crucis* and presence. It is with the terms of distance and presence that I turn to the development and analysis of Luther's *theologia crucis*.

3.7 Scaling the Distance

The objective in this chapter was to clarify Bonhoeffer's criticism of Barth in order to begin discovering that it touches on core aspects of the *theologia crucis* as it was encountered in the second chapter. What will come at a later stage is the elucidation of the presence of the *theologia crucis* in Bonhoeffer and the particular way it is implemented. The "No" issued against Barthian theology, whether that is from within or from outside the Barthian movement is a "No" against a progression in Barth's theology that in spite of its intentions eventually violates its own conditions. Where epistemological discourse is useful in its deconstructive mode by exposing the failure of grand theological edifices and rationalistic systems, such discourse becomes a liability when used as an approach to divine revelation. Eventually, it is going to rear its modernistic head

either in an obsession with the modern quest for epistemological certainty, or in an obsession with its denial. In either situation, reason continues to be in control during such a positivistic approach, even when it is carried out in terms of indirectness and with the *diastasis* between God and human being embedded in a dialectical method. As Bonhoeffer says, the I still draws the boundary and is therefore in control of God.

Living during and rooted in the modern period, Barth sought to answer the question of revelation on the basis of a Kantian idealism, which, on the one hand, resulted in a critique of modernity, but, on the other hand, was not able to escape it. As I hope to argue in what follows, Bonhoeffer thought that was an ill-advised approach.[157]

As much as the contexts of Luther, on the one hand, and Barth and Bonhoeffer, on the other, show parallels, there are differences too. One was that for Luther revelation had not yet become a problematic concept whereas for Barth and Bonhoeffer that was the default position from where they began. Luther's struggle was against a scholasticism infused with Aristotelian thought not an anthropocized concept of revelation. Where Luther in his *theologia crucis* makes a deconstructive step that entails an epistemological argument against scholastic theology, he neither refrains from nor attempts, a nominalist epistemological grounding of revelation. Epistemology is not the problem here; subjecting revelation to a human system such that it does the opposite of what it is supposed to do, *that* is the problem for Luther. Revelation is grounded theologically as the free act of a gracious God. For a pre-modern thinker like Luther, understanding revelation this way is possible without too many complications. With the deconstructive push-back against what Luther considered an over-rationalization in scholasticism, all Luther henceforth needed to do was think after the cross (and return to the Scriptures). Of course, his theological revolution is monumental and certainly the product of a genius, but it is not burdened yet with the problems of modern epistemology. In modern eyes, Luther's move might even come across as a positivistic approach and certainly not adequate for the questions of today. One should not forget, however, that Luther's thought is largely responsible for the very questions surrounding epistemology and revelation that were to haunt later theologians. It stands to reason, then, that paying close attention to Luther, as both Barth and Bonhoeffer realized, might also provide clues as how to overcome the deep chasms between revelation and reason, God and humanity.

It is precisely in the area of such paying attention that issues arise, however. The work is not finished for a person living in modernity (or the late modern period, for that matter) because the questions of *how* revelation comes to us and

[157] It is significant that Barth seems to have addressed that criticism himself, as Bonhoeffer scholar Charles Marsh points out. Cf. Charles Marsh, *Reclaiming Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 23.

how our knowledge of it becomes a reality still needs to be answered for today. It cannot be answered with a simple reference to Scripture or the Christ-event. Both Barth and Bonhoeffer understand that they needs to work through the problem modernity has created for theology and which has led German liberal theology off the right track ever since Schleiermacher redescribed the revelatory moment as the human consciousness of Absolute Dependence.

It for this reason that Barth's method speaks of revelation in a way that is akin to the Kantian divide between noumena and phenomena. For him, the first thing that needs to be accomplished is to place revelation and knowledge of God outside of the reach of human consciousness. This is a necessary condition for Barth's theological realism. That Barth sees this as a *theologia crucis* is not entirely without warrant, since Kant's philosophy is clearly influenced by Luther, as I will discuss later. The Kantian and idealist influence brings Barth to the formulation of his dialectic method in which everything that is said about revelation is also paradoxically paired with its opposite. This is how Barth works through Luther's problem with the help of a Kantian reworking of Luther.

Bonhoeffer, working closely within the realm of Lutheran thought as well, makes use of diferent aspects of Luther's thought and different reinterpretations of Luther. As a theologian in the modern period he too is required to face the challenges of modernity, but as a child of his time, having read – among others – the new phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger, he can sideline the idealistic solution Barth offers without surrendering either Luther or the very concern of nonobjectivity that got Barth's project started in the first place. Idealism only serves to put God at a distance rather than that it helps to see God as the One present in Jesus Christ. Just like Luther and Barth, Bonhoeffer critiques the philosophical and theological approaches of his own time as expressions of the human attempt to control revelation, otherness, and transcendence. In order to theologically affirm and prioritize revelation, Bonhoeffer resorts to a methodology of grounding revelation that reserves a special place for realism, or ontology. The strategy Bonhoeffer takes to achieve his goal brings us to the following chapter on the theology of the cross.

Chapter 4

Distance or Presence: Exploring the *Theologia Crucis*

Two terms were explored in the previous chapter: *crisis* and *crucis*. *Krisis* is the term used to characterize the theological movement that Barth set in motion, whereas *crucis* is the term I seek to connect with Bonhoeffer through Luther at a systematic-theological level. I uncovered an unresolved gap between Barth and Bonhoeffer that opens the question as to whether Bonhoeffer needs to be considered part of the Barthian camp. The conundrum with which I was left at the end of the last chapter is taken up in this one. I do so with two terms in the back of my mind: distance and presence. These terms have already come up in my use of spatial metaphors and run parallel to the themes of *crisis* and *crucis* respectively.

In the previous chapter, it was established that *crisis* and *crucis* are not the same thing. The former creates distance in order to do justice to the glory and nonobjectivity of God while the latter emphasizes presence as the most adequate expression of God's glorious and tactile humiliation. It will be clear, that both *crisis* and distance have strong epistemological connotations, while *crucis* and presence are connected with the concepts of relationality (and thus community) and being. These connections will be elaborated in the next chapters. For now, I will in this chapter continue to use the spatial metaphors of distance and presence[1] to aid the search for the *theologia crucis*.

4.1 Background of the *Theologia Crucis*

Crosses come in many shapes and forms. Similarly, when one speaks of the *theologia crucis*, one is compelled to notice its manifold appearance. Like the various shapes and forms that represent the cross today, its shapes and forms are

[1] Because *presence* is an ambiguous term, it needs to be clarified which role it plays at this point in the investigation and what is meant by it. Presence primarily serves as a provisional concept as an antithetical response to the concept of distance in Barth's act-theology. It serves as a corrective to Barth's reductive interpretation of the *theologia crucis*. Presence is a placeholder here and will later be superseded by the notion of promise, being, and community. The reader should refrain from reading any notion of Christian mysticism into this word. Any notion of experience of absence in the presence of Christ, as in Nicholas of Cusa, is not intended. I also do not intend to conceptually problematize the idea of the present by the concept of nonpresence. I merely intend to reject the idea of distance. What replaces distance will later prove to be not just presence, but promise answered by trust. In Christ, then, God is present as the promising One who draws us into Christ's being.

influenced by contexts and histories as well as theological agendas. They exhibit different emphases and structures that distinguish them from each other. My work on Bonhoeffer is a case in point.

I have already discussed Bradbury's distinction between fully developed cross theologies, exhibiting both the soteriological and the epistemological structures, with the cross proclaiming both "a self-disclosing and a saving Word,"[2] and cross theologies that overemphasize just one of these two. Though Bradbury believes that Barth's cross theology represents a fully developed one, Bonhoeffer's critique of Barth seems to indicate that it suffers from a one-sidedness emphasis on the epistemological trajectory, that is, in terms of idealism.

But there are other typologies. More sensitive to Lutheran scholarship, especially coming out of the Luther Renaissance in the beginning of the twentieth century, Ruge-Jones offers a typology that distinguishes three types of theologies of the cross: (a) crisis or conflictive theologies, (b) proclamation theologies, and (c) mystical/sacramental theologies of the cross.[3] The first type lines up well with my assessment in this chapter of the interpretations of Loewenich and McGrath. Proclamation theologies are represented, according to Ruge-Jones, by Ebeling and Forde for whom the preaching of the cross as a process of driving home law and gospel to the hearer is the way of justification by faith. The last type is placed in the context of the dialogue between Finnish Lutheran theologians and the Eastern Orthodox Church.

A third typology is provided by Anna Madsen. In her impressive historical study of the theology of the cross from St. Paul to today, looking at the current debate, she sees a strong division between those theologies of the cross that emphasize the cross for the sinner and not so much the victims of sin, on the one hand, and those theologies that consciously include both perpetrators and victims, sinners and those sinned against, on the other hand.[4] The strength of all these typologies is at the same time – with regard to their usefulness for the current project – their weakness. Bradbury appears to be taking Barth's comprehensive, all-encompassing theological method as the measurement of authenticity. Ruge-Jones recognizes and evaluates three different strands using theologies emerging from the Luther Renaissance as the material to work on. Madsen attempts to mediate between the cross theologies of conviction and cross theologies of liberation, thereby placing herself in a late twentieth-century context. All these typologies provide strong analyses but are not entirely helpful in the current investigation into Bonhoeffer as a theologian of the cross. All these typologies allow for is an assessment of which category Bonhoeffer belongs to in the context of twentieth-century theologies of the cross. This is revealing but

[2] Bradbury, *Cross Theology*, 293.

[3] Philip Ruge-Jones, *Cross in Tensions: Luther's Theology of the Cross as Theologico-Social Critique*, Princeton Theological Monograph (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2008).

[4] Madsen, *The Theology of the Cross in Historical Perspective*, 240.

does not help one to understand the specific character of Bonhoeffer's indebtedness to Luther. I will return to these typologies in my concluding chapter, but must now leave them behind in order to take a close look at Luther's theology in its own context. I am not completely departing from the twentieth century, however, because the normative principle in my hermeneutical endeavor is still the dynamic of the relationship between Bonhoeffer and Barth. How do Barth's distancing idealism and Bonhoeffer's "presencing" realism relate to Luther's *theologia crucis*?

With this in mind, one could at least say that all cross theologies in the twentieth century have one thing in common; they all derive their inspiration from, and have their origin in, Luther's theology of the cross. However differently the theology of the cross is applied, when executed well, it shares with Luther's *theologia crucis* one important characteristic: the manner of "doing theology." Luther's theology of the cross stands for a basic approach to doing theology; it is doing theology out of a certain posture toward God (trust) based on God's posture toward us in Christ (faithfulness). It requires participation or self-involvement. Because of this, the theology of the cross is not only an all-encompassing theological method[5] but also an existential reality within which the work is carried out. It touches on the full range of systematic loci and modes of human existence. One cannot practice the *theologia crucis* without *being* a theologian of the cross. This is easily overlooked but becomes an important and decisive feature of Bonhoeffer's specific version of the theology of the cross.

The varieties of the *theologia crucis* today find their origin in Luther just as Luther is the funnel into which the early strands of the theology of the cross *avant la lettre* before him came together. To understand the basics of the *theologia crucis*, it is therefore essential to go back to Luther. I will do so by providing a brief sketch of the historical context within which Luther developed his *theologia crucis*. The binary of *crisis-crucis* has already predisposed me to look for specific things. My hermeneutic is somewhat colored by the notions of distance and presence. This deliberate focus will then help me in the next chapter to connect the *theologia crucis* with another binary: the notion of act and being.

4.1.1 Luther and Scholasticism

Luther's theology of the cross needs to be seen as developing against the background of the medieval period. Luther may signify a breakaway from the

[5] When I refer to the *theologia crucis* as a theological method, I mean initially the way that such a theology answers the questions of how theological claims can be made. Theological method also refers to how theology proceeds as a coherent narrative of claims and self-involvement. This narrative, however, is shaped by the first question as its initial condition. As this inquiry progresses, the latter meaning certainly comes into focus.

Middle Ages, but he "is not our contemporary."[6] While its origin can be traced to the theology of St. Paul, Athanasius, Augustine, as well as certain mystics whose thought centered on Christ and the cross,[7] Luther's theology takes on its specific characteristics in dialogue and confrontation with the medieval world. Says Theodor Dieter,

> Understanding Luther as late medieval theologian is anything but obvious since he has very often been seen as the founder of a totally new theological era. But Luther grew up, was educated, and lived in a late medieval context; thus he had to relate to it by receiving, rejecting, or transforming doctrines, ideas, theological and philosophical methods, practices, and institutions of the time.[8]

Would there have been a willingness on Luther's part to live with paradox and dialectical tension if it weren't for medieval nominalism's tearing apart of nature and grace, revelation and natural knowledge? Would Luther's *Sola Scriptura* have been articulated without the humanist return to the sources (*ad fontes*)? The centrality of the cross itself has an affinity with the crucicentric medieval mystics, while even Luther's important discovery of justification by faith can be traced back to Augustine via Bernard of Clairvaux. All of this is to say that Luther's *theologia crucis* does indeed have strong historical roots. In and of themselves, however, they cannot completely account for Luther's articulation of the *theologia crucis*. One notices, on the one hand, a rediscovery of important though obscured motifs in the Bible and the Church Fathers while, on the other hand, one witnesses a discovery of a principle that becomes the backbone of an entirely new theological approach. This approach preserves some of the roots and some of the methods but applies them comprehensively to the specific dynamics of faith and reason on the one hand, and soteriological questions on the other, of Luther's own time. Balancing continuity and discontinuity Hamm observes

> that the Reformation is both. It is a radical change, in that it rapidly broke from and re-evaluated tradition; it is a continuation in that it took up and developed crucial themes from within that tradition … the continuing and changing old is always combined with the abruptly unfolding new.[9]

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[6] Heiko Augustinus Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 61.

[7] Bradbury says about the *theologia crucis*: "… in its classical period it originates with the Apostle Paul and continues through a narrow line of theologians. Among these are Athanasius, and later a group of medieval mystics including: St Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), the anonymous writer of the Theologia Germanica (c. 1350), Johannes Tauler (c. 1300–1361), and Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464)." See Rosalene Bradbury, *Cross Theology*, 6.

[8] Theodor Dieter, "Luther as Late Medieval Theologian: His Positive and Negative Use of Nominalism and Realism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, ed. Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel, and Ľubomír Batka (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 31.

[9] Berndt Hamm, *The Reformation of Faith in the Context of Late Medieval Theology and Piety, Essays by Berndt Hamm*, ed. Robert J. Bast (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 177.

The situatedness of the *theologia crucis* in Luther's own time, then, is not simply one of continuity. The organic fit of Luther in the late medieval period should not obscure the fact that there is also a clear element of discontinuity. This discontinuity is what eventually led to the Reformation and the modern period. Even though the *theologia crucis* has roots in Luther's contemporary intellectual world, it is at the same time the unmistakable symbol of discontinuity with it and eventually becomes the clearest expression of that discontinuity. Luther's disagreement with scholastic realism is articulated through the theology of the cross, in which Luther presents his alternative to a theology that sought to express continuity between the natural world and divine revelation by means of an adoption of Aristotelian causation and virtue ethics. The scholastics (especially the realists) had built this into a theological system that provided an integrative description of reality and envisioned a gradual ascent from nature through grace to the beatific vision of God. Luther did not mince words about this Aristotelian influence in his theses 'Against Scholastic Theology' published in 1517:

> It is a fallacy to say that without Aristotle one cannot become a theologian … On the contrary, one only becomes a theologian without Aristotle … In short, the entirety of Aristotle relates to theology as darkness toward light.[10]

These scholastic realists had crafted a well-ordered unity of world and revelation. The theology of the cross says "No" to this so-called *via antiqua*, especially its idea of justification. According to Mark Mattes

> The medieval tradition assumed only an active righteousness, that is, that we are saved by developing our potential to become God-like, although most theologians taught that grace must initiate the *viator* or pilgrim on the journey towards the beatific vision, in which one becomes a *comprehensor*, finding ultimate favour in God in heaven.[11]

Mattes notes that it was especially the lack of "a standard in which one can know or be certain that one has indeed done one's best" that led Luther to

> scour the Scriptures, where, in his intense study of Paul and the Psalms, he believed he had discovered a passive righteousness, salvation through trusting God's word of promise of forgiveness, imparting a new status and, thereby, a new nature, a 'clean heart', for the believer.[12]

Even though Aquinas, the most important representative of this school, denied the possibility of knowing God's essence,[13] there was still an analogical rela-

[10] LW 31:14.

[11] Mark Mattes, "Luther on Justification as Forensic and Effective," in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, ed. Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel, and Ľubomír Batka (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 268.

[12] Mark Mattes, *Luther on Justification*, 269.

[13] Aquinas asserts the following at the beginning of his *Summa Theologica*: Although we cannot know in what consists the essence of God, nevertheless in this science we make use of His effects, either of nature or of grace, in place of a definition, in regard to whatever is treat-

tionship between God and the natural world. This is far too much for Luther's liking who for his part denies the possibility of access to knowledge of God via rational thought outside revelation and makes short shrift of an ethics that is based on humanly attainable goals. For Luther, God reveals *sub contrario* under God's opposite, or more precisely, under the opposite of what human beings on rational grounds would expect God to be like.

Luther's resistance to scholasticism was not only confined to the realism of the *via antiqua*. He likewise rejected the nominalism of Duns Scotus and William Ockham, the so-called *via moderna*. Here it was not so much an understanding of justification and sanctification as gradual or the proximity of nature and grace that caused Luther's dissatisfaction. Rather, the distance created between nature and grace implied a distance between a sinful humanity and a sovereign God. It was precisely in the way that this sovereign God was conceptualized that uncertainty was fostered regarding the faithfulness of God.[14] The so-called absolute powers of God as formulated by the nominalists necessitated a God who was free to be gracious but also free not to be so. The *theologia crucis* may indeed bar access to God based on human possibilities, but it refuses to do so at the expense of God's promise of faithfulness. While it was only in the twentieth century that dialectical theologians began to reject the notion of an *analogia entis*, we already find with Luther statements that move in this direction. Theses 18 and 19 in the Heidelberg Disputation read:

> It is certain that human beings must utterly despair of their own abilities before they are prepared to receive the grace of Christ. That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened [Rom. 1: 20].[15]

Without using the terminology of *analogia entis*, Luther too rejects the existence of anything within the human being or within creation that, because of its correspondence to the divine, provides a starting point for thinking about God and thus knowing God. In short, "scholasticism's great 'advance' was, in Luther's mind, a grandiose journey down the wrong path. A new direction was needed. His attack aimed at the entire discipline of philosophy."[16]

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ed of in this science concerning God; even as in some philosophical sciences we demonstrate something about a cause from its effect, by taking the effect in place of a definition of the cause. (*Summa Theologica*, I, Q. 1, Art. 7). While God cannot be known in God's essence, we are still able to understand God and world, and thus grace and nature, together, by understanding in what way the world speaks of and is related to God as God's effect.

[14] See Gary Simpson, "Luther as a Maverick Nominalist," in *The Ciceronian Impulse in Luther* (not yet published).

[15] LW 31:40.

[16] Gerhard Müller, "Luther's Transformation of Medieval Thought: Discontinuity and Continuity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, ed. Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel, and Ľubomír Batka (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 108.

This new direction is the *theologia crucis*. It bans any corresponding soteriological notion that affirms salvation as, if only in part, something in which the human being collaborates with a gracious God. It points to Christ as the sole locus of divine revelation, the sole ground of speaking about God, and the sole source of redeeming grace. It presents the cross as the symbol and epitome of that revelation in that God reveals Godself on the cross in weakness, sickness, affliction, and death. The cross is contrary to human reason; the cross is an offense and a stumbling block. In all of this, God is hidden, for God reveals *sub contrario*, i. e., under God's opposite. Because of this, God is still hidden in God's revelation. The theology of the cross, then, forces us to focus on what is given with the body of Christ on the cross. It admonishes us to leave all speculation behind and acknowledge that even in the encounter with revelation we stare into a profound and confounding mystery. Yet, its concreteness can be grasped, for it is found in and with the body of Christ. With reference to the aforementioned spatial metaphors, the *theologia crucis* acknowledges a certain distance in that the content of revelation is both unavailable and impossible, humanly speaking. At the same time, however (and ultimately), it emphasizes presence. What was unthinkable has happened in and with the cross: apart from the law, justification is granted as a gift by a God who is inextricably approximate in Jesus Christ. In this *Christus praesens*, God is hidden *sub contrario*, that is to say, is present in a form that human beings cannot fathom.

As a strong reaction against the reigning thought of the day, the *theologia crucis* expresses itself in a negative way: what and where God is *not*, and how God is *not* to be approached. God is neither in the Aristotelian syllogism that attempts to think God and world, nature and grace, together nor in the virtue that operates as an inherent potentiality in the human being toward salvation (i. e., virtue as the final cause of the human being). The negative moment, however, is complemented by a positive moment in its statement of a new theology that, after subverting the human thought system, allows fresh understandings about God to emerge from God's givenness in Jesus.

If our justification is to be found in our unity with Christ through Luther's famous "happy exchange,"[17] in which Christ takes our sin and death and we take Christ's righteousness and life, what does this unity imply for the life of the Christian in this world? What is to be said of our identity or our identification with those in need? How is the church to be understood if it is not merely

[17] The term "happy exchange" is usually thought to come from Luther's *The Freedom of a Christian*. However, the original Latin version does not have this term. The German "fröhlicher Wechsel," of which 'happy exchange' is the English translation, does appear at one place in Luther's writings: Luther, Martin. "Die Zwanzigste Predigt." In Part 3, volume 33 of *Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Karl Drescher (Weimar: Verlag Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1907), 278–293, 289.There are, however various similar sounding adjectives combined with "Wechsel" (exchange) such as *freundlich* (friendly), *köstlich* (exquisite), *wunderbar* (wondrous), *selig* (blissful), in other places in Luther's writings.

an episcopal system with Christ's representative as its institutional head, but rather an organic body composed of a community of saints one with Christ? I will eventually have to address these questions in the next two chapters, where I hope to show that it is along the trajectory of these questions that Bonhoeffer develops and articulates an independent *theologia crucis* that leans closer to Luther than Barth. First, however, I need to delve into the influence of Aristotle.

The background to the Aristotelian influence in scholasticism is to be found in the rediscovery (or rather retrieval via Islamic sources) in the thirteenth century of the works of Aristotle. Many of Aristotle's ideas seemed to be at odds, or at least in tension, with a worldview that had thoroughly synthesized Neoplatonism with Christianity. Aristotle, for instance, had dispensed with the Platonic ideas and preferred to conceptualize causes inherent in objects. This more earth-bound philosophy had to be brought in line with Christian theology (platonically conceived). In this regard, medieval theology was deeply indebted to Neoplatonism with its notion of divine emanation into reality and reality's being drawn back into the divine. Revelation and reason, grace and nature, were understood to be intricately linked, or better, woven into each other. They had to be integrated into one system or else it would all fall apart. Based on this unity, scholastic rationality ranged from proofs for God's existence (think of Aquinas's Five Ways) to the question of how many angels can fit on the head of a pin.

It was particularly Aristotle's concepts of justice and virtue that came to exert a tremendous influence on scholastic thought. Aristotle's virtue ethics came to form a core component of scholastic theology. Medieval theology and spirituality were from the earliest times characterized by a striving for the realization of virtues in the believer.[18]

In Aristotelian thought, a virtue was a character trait that could be achieved through discipline; diligent effort could bring about what was potentially present in the human being. A virtue can best be described as a character trait that avoids two extremes on both sides of an ideal median. Only by moderation and practice of habit could such a character trait be formed. The formation of a virtuous character, i. e., one exhibiting virtuous characteristics in all areas of life, was one's duty to society. One became a virtuous member of society by excelling in the virtues. As such, any given virtue is shaped by how it, through its exhibition in the character of an individual, contributes to the wellbeing of society. Virtuosity was thus achieved through practice and self-discipline. The goal of the virtuous man (Aristotelian virtue ethics did not apply to women and slaves or, rather, excluded them) was to contribute to the common good by achieving the full realization of manhood. In Aquinas's thought, God is the

[18] This is not only a matter of engendering virtues through self-discipline, but also a process of coming to discover one's place in the order and structure of society. To be virtuous was to know one's place in the great "chain of being."

object and goal of virtue. Applying this virtue ethics to theology, Aquinas says, "Our reason and will by nature go out to God in that he is the cause and the end of nature, and this in the measure of their innate capacity."[19] The common good of Aristotelian virtue ethics morphs here into the beatific vision, the apotheosis of human virtue and divine grace.

In Aquinas, who was the main architect of the grand synthesis between the Aristotelian and Platonic influences in Christian thought, the process of actualization of the virtue was at the same time an ascent (an idea taken from Neoplatonism) that was to lead to the beatific vision, the perfect contemplation of God as the highest good. This ascent moved from the natural to the spiritual and was itself a cooperative effort between nature and grace. Grace is that which aids the natural. Sanctification is that which completes justification. To a basic set of natural virtues, called cardinal virtues, derived from Aristotle,[20] were added a few specifically theological ones: hope, faith, and love.[21] These theological virtues bring the cardinal virtues to perfection and correspond to that final part of justification called sanctification. Hamm characterizes this medieval concept of salvation as follows:

> [The believer] assumes the aspect of an active subject before God, and only in this way can he win eternal life. The working of God as the autonomous first cause opens up to man [sic] the possibility of cooperation (*cooperatio*) in his own salvation through the outpouring of grace and perhaps in addition through the actual aid of God. Here we come to the understanding of the nature of existence characteristic of the medieval doctrine of salvation, an ontology of righteousness determining man's [sic] righteous conduct and relation to salvation from the viewpoint of his moral quality, and ideologically relating that morality in action to man's [sic] final acceptance into sanctification.[22]

Luther's criticism of the Aristotelian influence in scholasticism cuts at the heart of this joining of morality, cooperation, action, and conduct with the doctrine of salvation, because in Luther's analysis of scholastic thought, apart from and in addition to grace, nature has a role to play in salvation. Nature is naturally directed toward the good, toward God. To express this in Aristotelian causality: all things have a final cause. The plant is the final cause of the seed. The virtuous human being is the final cause of the human being. Causation needs to be understood teleologically here; it points to the goal, the final expression and realized potential of something. Instead of "final causation" one might say "potential" or "goal" (*telos*). When applied to ethical formation, the virtuous human being is present *in spe* in the unformed, untrained, un-virtuous person. Formation consists of bringing out the best in a person. This is important for how medieval

[19] Thomas Aquinas, *Virtue (1a2ae. 55–67)*, trans. John Fearon, vol. 23 of *Summa Theologiae* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1969), Question 62, Art. 1, 139.
[20] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Question 61, Art. 1, 117.
[21] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Question 61, Art. 3, 121.
[22] Hamm, *The Reformation of Faith*, 187.

theologians understood justification and sanctification. The question is whether the virtuous human is the *final* cause or whether justification is the *efficient* cause[23] (to remain with Aristotelian virtue ethics) of the human being, that is, whether virtue is a power innate to the human being or whether we are dealing with the divine impossibility imparted by a gracious God.

The scholastics thus blended virtue ethics with the Christian concepts of justification and sanctification. Justification, in their eyes, was the long process of perfection of which sanctification is the final part. One needed to strive to become a virtuous person (added were the Christian virtues of hope, faith, and love) so that based on the resulting merit, God would graciously look upon the believer and justify her. Aristotle's influence demanded that virtue ethics be seen as a human possibility. Sanctification and justification become, then, Christian descriptions of the Aristotelian idea of final cause applied to virtuous human development. The element of divine grace – or at least an understanding of its radical otherness and the radical way it manifests itself in the New Testament – tends to be diminished.

4.1.2 *Theologia Crucis* as Response to Scholasticism

Hamm notes it is important to ask, "what was so particular to the Reformation in its central doctrine of justification, and to answer the historical question by applying historical criteria."[24] His criteria for determining the "mold-breaking element of the Reformation"[25] are: (1) Whatever returns to the Bible and can no longer be seen as an extreme position within medieval thought, (2) whatever is commonly shared by the various Reformers, and (3) whatever the scholastic scholars of all varieties thought could no longer be integrated into Catholic theology must be decisive for the Reformation idea of justification. He then identifies the "mold-breaking elements" as follows:

> They are found in the understanding of sin and grace, and the way in which sin and righteousness can be regarded as simultaneous in Reformation thinking; they are found in the eschatological determination of justification, in the doctrine of the certainty of salvation and the understanding of freedom from the law; finally, they are found in the role of faith and the bond between the scriptural principle and the principle of grace … we shall see that the unconditional nature of salvation is the overriding theme: an abundance of righteousness and salvation is given to the godless man [sic] in his justification. His total unconditional acceptance by God for Christ's sake precedes any partial renewal of the still sinful man himself …[26]

[23] This is not how the discussion was framed, but I am playing off the two types of causation just to drive home how radically different Luther's proposal was from scholasticism.

[24] Hamm, *The Reformation of Faith*, 181.

[25] Hamm, *The Reformation of Faith*, 182.

[26] Hamm, *The Reformation of Faith*, 207.

It was thus soteriological disagreement on the issue of virtue ethics as it eradicated the radical nature of God's grace in Christ that became Luther's launching pad for a wholesale deconstruction of the scholastic system. Loewenich and McGrath argue that the discovery of justifying grace necessitated a complete overhaul of Luther's entire theological framework. Since this was a central doctrine of the Christian faith and more particularly because it impinged on Aristotelian virtue ethics, Aristotelian causation theory, and scholastic rationality, in the end very little could be left in place. Says McGrath, "… Luther's discovery of the new meaning of *iustitia Dei* necessitated a complete reexamination of his theology of justification, eventually forcing Luther to the theology of the cross."[27] (100). If the theology of the cross is the methodological outworking of Luther's central discovery of justification by faith, it goes without saying that the theology of the cross is more than just a fad, a fading trace from the past, or an incidental aspect of Luther's theology. But one should at the same time be careful not to see the theology of the cross as a purely methodological outworking for fear that one system replaces another. Luther, in his Heidelberg Disputation, preferred to speak of the "theologian of the cross," since the theology of the cross is about a mode of doing theology, a way of existing that begins with a certain posture toward God.

Part of the "reexamination" McGrath talks about is Luther's distinction between law and gospel. It functions as an interpretative tool to understand Scripture, helps to replace virtue ethics, and provides a further elaboration of the *theologia crucis* as a broader framework for doing theology.[28] Luther no longer places gospel after law on a historical trajectory of salvation history but maintains that both law and gospel are essential ingredients of good theology. They are dialectically related, cannot be mixed, and yet cannot do without each other. Luther distinguishes two uses of the law. The first use is the political use. Under this use, the law functions to foster a kind of natural righteousness and helps to bring order to the state. Under its second use, the law brings death and shows the human being that righteousness cannot be attained. This latter use brings one to the cross, which is a word of promise and of forgiveness. Yet, the law continues its relevance in the life of the Christian insofar as it reminds the Christian that he is always *simul iustus et peccator*, justified and sinner.

In the Heidelberg Disputation, where Luther introduces his "theologian of the cross" as an alternative to the theologian of glory, he embeds the *theologia crucis* in a law and gospel narrative. The first theological thesis, the one with which he starts the disputation, is, "The law of God, the most salutary doc-

[27] Alister E. McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther's Theological Breakthrough* 2nd ed. (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 100.

[28] Cf. Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 267–276.

trine of life, cannot advance persons on their way to righteousness, but rather hinders them."[29] The law of God acts contrary to how the demand of virtue is understood to function in the virtue ethics of scholasticism. Nature is *not* aided by grace. Rather, there is a radical break: grace needs to come to the rescue of nature. The 16th theological thesis of the disputation reads: "The person who believes that he can obtain grace by doing what is in him adds sin to sin so that he becomes doubly guilty."[30] Rather than a smooth progression in which our natural effort is seamlessly translated into and overtaken by God's grace, there is a fissure. Along with the fissure comes a lack of understanding of how God works (thesis 19):

> That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened.[31]

Representative, then, of this fissure, with its attendant invisibility and incomprehensibility of God's work, is the theology of the cross. As thesis 20 states, "He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross."[32]

At first glance, the first use of the law corresponds to the natural or cardinal virtues. The natural law teaches us what is right and how we should order human community by means of striving to excel in the virtues. The natural law teaches what serves character building. The spiritual or theological virtues, however, that in scholastic thought stand in a seamless continuum with the cardinal virtues, are replaced, in Luther's theology, with the second use of the law that accuses us and leaves us helpless in our inability to meet the demands of God. Nature and grace are sundered. In this tension, this gap, we encounter the cross as the promise of forgiveness through which the righteousness (*iustitia*) of Christ is bestowed on us sinners (justification). While in scholasticism the spiritual or theological virtues provide for a smooth process of imparting grace upon the natural, we encounter in Luther's thought the law as God's *alien* work (the law is good but cannot save us) and the gospel as God's *proper* work (the promise of salvation). The third use of the law, proposed later by Melanchthon, not Luther, and intended as a positive use of the law for the Christian life, seems to bear some similarity to the spiritual virtues in scholasticism.[33]

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29 LW 31:39.
30 LW 31:40.
31 LW 31:40.
32 LW 31:40.
33 Cf. Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 271, 276.

4.2 *Theologia Crucis* as Distance

As the theology of the cross is rediscovered in the late eighteenth century and beyond, after centuries of neglect, two things happen. On the one hand, there is a philosophical retrieval, notably by Kant, Hegel, and Kierkegaard that creatively picks up on elements in Luther but reworks these elements in unorthodox and idiosyncratic ways to give expression to the philosophical systems of these thinkers. On the other hand, there is also a renewed interest in theology which finally comes to fruition in the circle of students around Karl Holl to which Bonhoeffer and Loewenich can be counted (though Bonhoeffer did not want to be associated with Holl too much, it seems).[34] I will look at Loewenich's assessment of Luther's *theologia crucis* in his seminal *Luther's Theology of the Cross* together with McGrath's historical work by the same title as it focuses on the breakthrough Luther made in discovering the theology of the cross. Loewenich, for his part, is quite heavily influenced by the Neo-Kantianism of his time and consequently reads this back into his interpretation of Luther's *theologia crucis*. McGrath's position is very similar but focuses more on historical research. I will place Loewenich and McGrath under the metaphor of distance together with Kant and Kierkegaard in this section. In the next, the notion of *theologia crucis* understood through the metaphor of presence will be retrieved via Hegel, Simpson, and Jüngel.

4.2.1 Loewenich

It has been suggested that Luther's sharp distinction between reason and faith owes much to scholastic nominalism. Recent scholarship has done much work to show the strong ties between Luther and late medieval thought.[35] This is the strain of thought in Luther scholarship that stresses historical continuity. Yet, this should not obscure the truth that Luther's nominalism is quite different from scholastic nominalism. Simpson speaks of Luther as a "maverick nominalist," as I will discuss later.[36] Loewenich, the theologian who made the *theologia crucis* famous as a theological category for today, makes clear that because of Luther's training under teachers influenced by Gabriel Biel, it is only natural to see a sharp separation between faith and reason in Luther. Luther's position, however, is not merely derived from the nominalist attempt to be critical of the scholastic realist desire to integrate nature and grace into one comprehensive system. Rather, it strives to do justice to the nature of revelation as well as deal

[34] Charles Marsh, *Strange Glory: A Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (New York: Vintage Books, 2014), 50.

[35] See Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil* and Dieter, *Luther as Late Medieval Theologian*, 31 ff.

[36] Simpson, *The Ciceronian Impulse*.

with the problem of justification. If God is a justifying God, whose righteousness has become manifest and is bestowed upon us apart from the law,[37] this must be defended over against human reason that would speak to the contrary (or merely pay lip service to it). Therefore, "separation [i. e., separation of faith and reason] is not merely historical dependence but an important and integral part of Luther's theology."[38] Faith and reason are in tension because revelation as *theologia crucis* gives us a God whom we would not rationally conceive of. In this context, the focus is not on reason as a human faculty per se, but reason as a faculty *humanly* used.[39] Luther's theology of the cross is, therefore, an attempt to retrieve the basic insight of St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 1 and 2 where the cross is both foolishness and an offense to those who encounter it.[40] Loewenich's emphasis on the tension between faith and reason bears similarity to the notion of epistemological distance we encounter in Barth. Just as knowledge of God becomes only indirectly available (Loewenich)[41] so God is not available as an object for knowledge (Barth).

Loewenich characterizes Luther's theology of the cross with five brief statements:

> 1. The theology of the cross as a theology of revelation, stands in sharp antithesis to speculation. 2. God's revelation is an indirect, concealed revelation. 3. Hence God's revelation is recognized not in works but in suffering, and the double meaning of these terms is to be noted. 4. This knowledge of God who is hidden in his revelation is a matter of faith. 5. The manner in which God is known is reflected in the practical thought of suffering.[42]

Loewenich later elaborates on the antithetical element in his description of the *theologia crucis* that juxtaposes faith and reason:

> The doctrine of the cross has proved itself as a heuristic principle in the presentation of Luther's view of God. In connection with this doctrine we must attempt to see also the problem of reason and faith … The cross puts everything to the test. The cross is the judgment upon all of man's [sic] self-chosen thoughts and deeds.[43]

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[37] See Romans 3:21 as well as Philippians 3:7–9 "… not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith."

[38] Walther von Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, trans. Herbert Bouman (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1976), 70.

[39] Loewenich distinguishes a three-fold use of reason: logical, cultural, and metaphysical (relating to worldview). According to Loewenich, Luther's rejection of reason pertains only to the third use, but he also emphasizes that Luther sometimes rejects logical (deductive) conclusions when it pertains to matters of revelation. See Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 72.

[40] Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 22.

[41] Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 21.

[42] Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 22.

[43] Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 75.

4.2.2 McGrath

McGrath, like Loewenich, emphasizes the theme of distance over presence. He too sees the theology of the cross as something that is in many ways a reaction to and even a revolt against not only medieval realism but also the nominalism that he grew up with. McGrath points out that Luther began to develop more soteriological notions regarding the concept of justice.[44] The strand of scholasticism that Luther was trained in, the *via moderna*, worked out of a concept of justice that was very much informed by a Ciceronian understanding of justice, based on the principle "to each his own." McGrath explains it is based on a conventional causality: if we do what God demands from us then God will do what is promised to us. With our works we "cause," as it were, God's saving reaction. Gabriel Biel, for instance, taught that if we do what is possible from our side, God will add grace to our action from God's side.[45] This understanding is a basic form of *Werkgerechtigkeit*, works righteousness.

McGrath essentially agrees with Loewenich's interpretation. He too speaks of the *theologia crucis* as a theology of revelation that stands in sharp contrast to reason.[46] As such, revelation is "indirect and concealed," which means that although God is revealed in Christ on the cross, "he is not immediately recognizable as God," but can only be "discerned by the eye of faith." The *theologia crucis* is essentially a "radical critique of the analogical nature of theological language."[47] God can be discovered neither in human moral activity nor in creation, but in the sufferings and the cross of Christ alone.[48] Therefore, knowledge of God is a matter of faith.

Two things are noteworthy in McGrath's assessment. First, he points out that the theology of the cross is critical of metaphysical speculation. He even extents this critical function to human reason in general. Justification of the sinner goes directly against, not just Aristotelian concepts of justice and causation as prevalent in scholasticism, but human expectation in general. Says McGrath,

> For Luther, however, justification is totally contrary to reason, in that God justifies *sinners*. As the justification of sinful man is so evidently contrary to reason, Luther argued that the role of reason in matters of theology must be called into question.[49]

Secondly, McGrath, in assessing the function of suffering in the *theologia crucis*, concludes that:

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[44] McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 100.
[45] David M. Whitford, *Luther: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2011), 16.
[46] McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 149–151.
[47] McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 158.
[48] McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 150.
[49] McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 137.

God is particularly known through suffering. Although this is essentially a reference to the *passiones Christi*, a far deeper spiritual truth is involved: a fundamental contention of the *theologia crucis* is not merely that God is known through suffering (whether that of Christ or of the individual), but that God makes himself [sic] known through suffering.[50]

Perhaps the emphasis of both Loewenich and McGrath on the critique of human reason in the theology of the cross is best expressed by these words of Loewenich: "When we plunge into lack of understanding, then we go the way of the cross."[51]

4.3 The Theology of the Cross in Philosophy

From the late eighteenth century onward, philosophy prepared the way for a rediscovery of the theology of the cross, especially in the work of Kant, Hegel, and Kierkegaard.[52] There is a natural consonance between Luther's struggle against scholasticism (expressed in his theology of the cross) and the critical voices against Enlightenment rationalism that emerged in the wake of the failure of the Enlightenment project. In both instances, a rationalistic overdetermination is revolted against with arguments for the inability of human beings to have knowledge of ultimate reality. Some of the most important philosophers of the 18th and 19th centuries who broadly belong to the Lutheran tradition, Kant,[53] Hegel, and Kierkegaard, argued for new ways of thinking in philosophy. Each in his own way contributed elements that would become extremely important for the revival of a theology that looked to Luther's theology of the cross for inspiration. With regard to the spatial metaphors of distance and presence employed in this chapter, I will place Kant and Kierkegaard on the side of distance and Hegel on the side of presence. If I were to attempt to characterize these philosophers exhaustively with these metaphors I would do them a grave reductionistic disservice. Within the framework of the thesis of this study, however, and within their relatedness to the *theologia crucis*, such an oversimplification seems fruitful and warranted.

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[50] McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 151.

[51] Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 75.

[52] The characterizations of Kant, Hegel, and Kierkegaard provided on these pages are meant as brief sketches. They are not intended to be comprehensive but to offer the intellectual background against which Bonhoeffer developed his theology of the cross.

[53] I am presenting Kant here as a post-Enlightenment thinker. I realize this is reductionistic as Kant saw himself as completing the Enlightenment by synthesizing rationalism and empiricism. However, he also sought to safeguard religion and in this regard, he put a limit to the prying eyes of reason by means of the phenomenal noumenal dialectic and by relegating knowledge of God as mere postulate to the realm of practical thought. In this, one can see the beginnings of a turnaround.

4.3.1 Kant and Kierkegaard on Distance

The first of these thinkers, Kant, whom Bonhoeffer would later describe as "the epistemologist *par excellence* of Protestantism,"[54] revolutionized epistemology by claiming a distinction between the Noumenon, the thing in itself, *das Ding an Sich*, and the phenomenon, the experience of the thing as represented before consciousness. As an Enlightenment thinker *pur sang*, he is oddly the one who managed to set insurmountable limits on human knowing. Consciousness, or pure thought, becomes in Kant "an island, enclosed by nature itself within unalterable limits."[55] For Kant "the senses represent objects *as they appear*, and the understanding objects *as they are*," such that the "objects of pure understanding will always remain unknown to us."[56] He opened up an epistemological chasm between the observing consciousness and the observable world that cannot be traversed.

For Kant, who in the face of rationalism and empiricism wanted to create space for belief in God in the modern world, this gap was not big enough, however. He followed through on his *Critique of Pure Thought* to conclude that since God is not an object in the world that can be observed by the senses, God is not an object for pure thought. The epistemological gap between God and human beings is so radical that God is entirely absent as an observable entity in *pure* thought. However, God could still be *postulated*. In fact, Kant considered God a necesary outcome of *practical* thought. According to Kant, moral thought necessitates the postulation of God as the necessary means and incentive of moral goals.[57] After all, what is the point of moral objectives if the power to achieve them (i. e., God) is not present? Kant's indebtedness to Luther is shown in the fact that for Kant knowledge of God is not a human possibility. He deviates from Luther when it comes to God's self-revelation. As a thinker in a modern context, he could not allow for positive revelation and had to find another avenue of access to divine reality. Kant's radical critique of the possibility of human knowledge of God would find a theological outworking in the thought of Karl Barth. Kant's thought is for that reason alone highly relevant to the study of Bonhoeffer's theology since Bonhoeffer was influenced by Barth and critiqued Barth precisely on the Kantian boundary. Kant's epistemology thus found its way into the cross theology of the twentieth century.

The last philosophical precursor to the theology of the cross, who reworks the *theologia crucis* in terms of distance, is more of a philosophical-theologi-

[54] DBWE 2:34.

[55] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith, 2nd ed. (London: Palgrave McMillan, 2003), 257.

[56] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 274.

[57] Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Thomas Kingsmill Abbott (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004), 132.

cal hybrid. Kierkegaard responded to Hegel as Hegel had responded to Kant, though Kierkegaard seems to have been more obsessed with undoing certain characteristics of his own interpretation of Hegel. In Kierkegaard's understanding of Hegel, Hegel's "system" seemed to be the undoing of human individuality. Hegel's rationality was too all-encompassing for Kierkegaard, in that he felt there was no room for human subjectivity, human emotion, and both the ethical and religious dimensions of life. He, therefore, sought to break away from the totalizing embrace of Hegel's system, which I will address below. Kierkegaard is already a few steps removed from the Enlightenment and thus there is no return to a Kantian or even pre-Kantian rationality. Far from it. He develops a rationality that eclipses the transcendental idealism of Kant as well as the dialectical idealism of Hegel with its totalizing tendency.

For Kierkegaard, knowledge, and especially knowledge of truth, is something existential. There is a shift in focus from truth contained in objective facts – or knowledge as conceived in an abstract noumenal-phenomenal dualism, for that matter – to a view of truth that involves the self. The human self is a project, a goal to be attained. Something of the subject-object dialectic of Hegel lingers here. But rather than sublation, we have a dialectic that becomes strained to an existential breaking-point.

True selfhood consists of a passionate search for truth. It demands a serious inwardness, an introspective focus accompanied by intense honesty, with which one may hope to make truth one's own. Truth is subjectivity for Kierkegaard. To be sure, he is not an irrationalist. There is objective truth outside the human mind and science certainly has its own objective character and method. Knowledge of truth, however, is only possessed in a relationality that involves both object and subject. This is particularly true when it comes to religious truth and the dimension of authentic selfhood. In this realm, truth becomes something beyond the propositional, beyond mere cognitive fact. It is something that needs to be appropriated by means of self-involvement. It follows a path that leads through despair, where the self is forced to confront itself and its own uncertainties. The self is forced to make a decision, a decision to open up to the truth that is embodied in a person not a system of thought. The Truth as a person is none other than Christ, the Teacher who is the Truth embodied, in whom we discover a historical point of salvation beyond human wisdom. Attaining this Truth requires a leap of faith, in which a person with the deepest passion of inwardness, gives up on her own possibilities, and trusts Christ, the Absolute Paradox.

Kierkegaard's idiosyncratic version of the *theologia crucis* consists in the obvious assault on reason as an expression of human self-sufficiency. Whether it is a totalizing system or a grasping of the essence of the divine being, reason falls short of the required self-involvement (i. e., as per Luther's *theologia crucis*) in the encounter with truth. God is hidden behind the leap of faith. Salvation is gained when the self is lost. In Kierkegaard, God's hiddenness is seen in the

incognito nature of Christ[58] and the historical (and thus unverifiable) nature of revelation.[59] Luther's hidden Christian life under the cross has its Kierkegaardian analogy in the existential self-involvement that belongs to Kierkegaard's concept of Religiousness B.[60] It involves the leap of faith.

Is there a link between this Kierkegaardian form of self-involvement and Bonhoeffer's use of the concept of *actus directus* and his articulation of the *theologia crucis* by means of participation in the being of revelation through the act of faith (*Act and Being*), as well as his insistence that the Christian life is a being-for-others? This question would be worth pursuing. Here I only note the new aspect of existential self-involvement introduced by a nineteenth-century romantic and (proto-existentialist) thinker in its particular elaboration of the hiddenness of the Christian life. I'd also like to point to the fact that Kierkegaard's thought has exerted a considerable influence on other theologians who worked out of a *theologia crucis*, with Barth and Tillich as prime examples.[61] It is also worth noting that by emphasizing relationality, Kierkegaard made an important advance beyond Kant's epistemological dichotomy. This relationality points to a certain embodiment as the location of knowing. In other words, there is an ontological aspect to Kierkegaard's thought as well though I've used him here to highlight the notion of distance. Again, the connection with Bonhoeffer on this point is worth pursuing.

The strong epistemological barrier erected by Kant's idealistic ditch and Kierkegaard's existential notion of knowledge each resurface in important ways in twentieth-century theologies of the cross, and consequently appear, in a modified form, in the theology of Bonhoeffer. Having looked at the theologies of Loewenich and McGrath, and the philosophies of Kant and Kierkegaard, concerning the emphasis on epistemological distance in the theology of the cross, I will now turn to thinkers who uncover the notion of presence. Theologians Simpson and Jüngel and philosopher Hegel will be of assistance here. Kierkegaard's notion of truth and self-involvement will resurface later in Bonhoeffer's dialogue with Heidegger.

4.3.2 Hegel on Presence

From the above it may seem that the dichotomy between us and God necessitated by human hubris, exacerbated by the epistemological divide as outlined by

[58] Søren Kierkegaard, *Training in Christianity, and the Edifying Discourse Which "Accompanied" It*, trans. Walter Lowrie, in *Vintage Spiritual Classics* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004), 112 ff.

[59] See C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 150–151.

[60] Evans, *Kierkegaard*, 139.

[61] For Tillich see: Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought, From Its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism*, ed. Carl E. Braaten (Norwich: S. C. M. Press, 1968), 162.

Kant, is at the heart of the theology of the cross. This is not the case, however. I will look at Hegel's philosophy and the work of two Luther scholars, Simpson and Jüngel, to show that the notion of presence is ultimately of greater significance for the *theologia crucis*. By putting these thinkers into one category, I am in no way suggesting that they are part of the same school or project, but in their own ways, they each bring out something that is specific to the aspect of presence in the *theologia crucis*.

Hegel elaborated on the philosophy of Kant but also subverted it by portraying Kant's epistemology as beholden to the tendency of Greek (Aristotelian) rationality to separate things. His dialectical approach allowed him to see the Kantian divide as just one moment in an ongoing process in which dichotomies are always sublated into syntheses that themselves give rise to new dialectical opposites to be sublated again. This process is not simply a timeless and purely logical process of higher organization and insight of the mind. Rather, dialectical thought develops over time. As such, time, thought, and community need to be seen as belonging together. History evolves dialectically. This insight allowed Hegel to overcome the perceived tension between human knowing and divine being. Hegel proposed that Kant's epistemology is but a moment in the historical dialectical process of the unfolding of all reality within Godself, in which every antithesis is eventually sublated into a higher synthesis of conceptual reality and understanding. This process continues until the full self-realization and self-recognition of God is completed over time in human consciousness.

With Hegel, we have moved from an epistemological-idealistic approach to an ontological-realistic one, according to which all of reality is taken up in one conceptual idea. The focus is not on how the human subject relates to and can know the world (the question about knowledge), but how humanity, world, and God can be conceptualized together in one grand metaphysical system. Hegel's idealism, therefore, has implications not only for epistemology but also for how God is understood. This time, it is not by excluding God from human knowing, but by including this human dimension within God's own being. Hegel conceives of reality (which is encompassed by and exists in God) as a historical unfolding of Godself (the Absolute) into God's Other (Nature) in which Spirit dialectically comes to self-realization and self-recognition. In the end, representational religion (of which Christianity is the highest expression) is itself sublated into pure logic and understanding.

One very important moment in the self-unfolding of God is the cross. It represents the death of God. It is the moment in which God as the Other, over against the world, is sublated and overcome. It is the emptying of Godself *into* the world after which resurrection represents the being of God *with* the world. It is to Hegel's credit that he has given the notion of the death of God cosmic significance in the sense of being a structural feature of reality. We find here an

important precursor to a re-articulation of the theology of the cross, albeit in a rather heterodox and idiosyncratic manner.[62] Hegel's perhaps all too perfect system broke down soon after his death. His thought, however, has been extremely influential. We see, for instance, how Hegel makes a reappearance in Barth's objectivism[63] where human knowing of God is enveloped by, or folded into, God's knowing of Godself through humanity, and therefore included in God's being. Another example would be Pannenberg's concept of history as a dialectical process of divine revelation. In developing his early retrieval of the theology of the cross, Hegel had done ground-breaking work. It was going to bear fruit in theologies in the twentieth century that ended up countering modernist rationalism. It would also become an aid for theologians constructing theology in the face of the large-scale suffering of the twentieth century. These theologians spoke of a God who is present amidst and partakes in human suffering. God is not transcendentally and dispassionately detached from creation.

4.4 Presence Emphasized

From Hegel I turn to two contemporary theologians who interact in significant ways with Luther's theology and in whose work a notion of revelation as presence (*vis-à-vis* the *theologia crucis*) becomes apparent. As will become clear, this presence is characterized by promise and faithfulness (Simpson) and by relationality and radical grace (Jüngel).

4.4.1 Simpson

The distinction between faith and reason in Luther is not always easy to gauge. In all his criticism of nominalism, Luther is known to have continued the use of some of the thought categories of nominalism.[64] Gary Simpson prefers in light

[62] For all its idiosyncrasy, though, Hegel's concept of the death of God articulates well how the death of Christ understood as the death of God ("*God has died. God is dead* – this is the most frightful of all thoughts, that everything eternal and true *is not*, that negation itself is found in God") gives new meaning to the notion of the *sub contrario* – God's presence in God's absence– as the negation of Godself through God's death leads to God's reconciliation with humanity in Christ. As Hegel states: "It is out of infinite love that God has made himself [sic] identical with what is alien to him in order to put it to death. This is the meaning of the death of Christ. It means that Christ has borne the sins of the world and has reconciled God [with the world] (2Cor. 5:18–19)." See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: The Lectures of 1827*, trans. P. C. Hodgson R. F. Brown, J. M. Stewart., ed. Peter C. Hodgson (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 465–6n199.

[63] Timothy Bradshaw, *Trinity and Ontology a Comparative Study of the Theologies of Karl Barth and Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), 6.

[64] Dieter, *Luther as Late Medieval Theologian*.

of this to speak of Luther as a maverick nominalist.[65] In his upcoming *The Ciceronian Impulse in Luther*, he discusses a specific example from Luther's dispute with Erasmus on the freedom of the will. Simpson points out that Luther is still using the nominalist distinction between God's absolute and ordained powers, but also that he relegates the former to the background, emphasizing the need to refer to God only in and through Christ, in whom God has ordained Godself to be bound to the promise, i. e. to be faithful. Says Simpson,

> On the one hand, [Luther] acknowledges the nominalist distinction and acknowledges that on rare occasions God does work *potentia absoluta*, which can be seen in the Scriptures. On the other hand, he refuses to traffic in the *absoluta* zone, as many nominalists did, and he admonishes people when they place their hopes in the *potentia Dei absoluta*, since it's totally unpredictable, and in this sense, unreliable, untrustworthy, and the Devil's workshop, so to speak.[66]

The philosophical speculation that invents the distinction between God's absolute and ordained power entices the theologian to speculate about the realm of the absolute, which is outside of Christ and outside the promise. This is the God of the philosophers and the capricious God of predestination and whimsical unreliability.[67] Luther is a nominalist in his use of thought patterns and the theological apparatus of nominalism, but a maverick in his radical rejection of anything that would usurp the space that belongs to the free reign of God's grace and anything that would make that grace dependent on human effort. For Luther, faith stands antithetically against reason only where reason encroaches on grace. It's a specific kind of reason that Luther argues against: the attempt to subsume revelation under a human system, the Aristotelian emptying of the radical Gospel of its promise, where faith becomes a human possibility. Simpson's discussion of the *potentiae* here strikes at the heart of the theology of the cross. With his emphasis on the *ordained* power of God, Luther moves us away from theological philosophy into the arms of the cross where God has ordained and promised Godself to be present in and with Jesus. The Monster Uncertainty of the *absoluta*, as Simpson calls it (because the Absolute God presents us, on the basis of God's capriciously free will, with a monstrous uncertainty), is replaced by the presence of God in Jesus in the form of a promise. Since God cannot lie, the cross is the sure sign of God's faithful presence.

The Monster Uncertainty that Simpson says results from the *absoluta* is complemented by a Monster Uncertainty II. The nominalists taught the following principle: *facientibus quod in se est, Deus non denegat gratiam* (if you do

[65] Simpson, *The Ciceronian Impulse*.

[66] Simpson, *The Ciceronian Impulse*.

[67] In this light it is no wonder that Barth, for whom the formal freedom of God was so important, emphasizes election in his system, whereas in Luther it follows the promise of justification by faith. Barth is closer to the medieval nominalists in this regard than "maverick" Luther.

what is in you, God will not deny grace).[68] Salvation is granted by a gracious God, but only as this God looks upon your best efforts. This is adding to the Monster Uncertainty I of a capricious God an even worse uncertainty, namely the uncertainty concerning our own ability to give our best, after which we still don't know if the capricious God will show mercy. If God's grace is no longer dependent on the promise, but on our efforts in front of a whimsical God, we are basically doomed. Simpson quotes Luther on the nominalists who taught this:

> They have twisted it in such a way that they utterly destroyed the consciences of all with their torture. They completely extinguished the certainty of faith in Christ and all knowledge of Christ, teaching and inculcating nothing more religious upon suffering hearts than to tell them that they must be in doubt and uncertainty about the grace and love of God toward us, regardless of how blameless our lives may be.[69]

For my purposes, it could be said that although there is a break between human rationality and divine revelation, which would speak to the notion of distance, Simpson points out that this is far from the whole story. Whoever emphasizes the distance between us and God faces uncertainty concerning God's will and intentions. The distance brings the *absoluta* in view which throw us back on ourselves and our own efforts. We then have to deal with Simpson's Monster Uncertainty I and II, which, unfortunately, are not only Simpson's.

4.4.2 Jüngel

This is the point where Jüngel enters the conversation. Opposing the tendency to diminish the radical grace of God in Christ, Jüngel states:

> When justification takes place, there also occurs a divine "No" which reduces the sinner's actuality to nothingness, a "No" which is for the sake of the creative divine "Yes." Since the justified person owes his or her new being to the Word of God which reduces the actual to nothingness and creates *ex nihilo*, that person hopes in nothing other than God's Word …[70]

Without saying it with so many words, Jüngel, with his talk of "nothingness" and "new being," addresses the Aristotelian idea of final causation in terms of the scholastic perfectionist paradigm. This Aristotelian influence must be examined first. In his essay "The World as Possibility and Actuality," Jüngel, contrasting God's self-revelation in Christ in opposition to Aristotle's privileging of actuality as realized potentiality,[71] emphasizes how through Jesus's death and resurrection the believer is justified out of the nothingness of death and sin:

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[68] See Simpson, *Ciceronian Impulse*, 21.

[69] LW 15:3, 4.

[70] Eberhard Jüngel, "The Word as Possibility and Actuality" in *Theological Essays* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 114.

[71] Jüngel, *The Word as Possibility and Actuality*, 101.

And in this the death of Jesus comes to have its real meaning, namely, as the event of the love of God (Jn 3.16). Jesus's resurrection from the dead promises that we shall be made anew out of the nothingness of relationlessness, remade *ex nihilo*, if through faith in the creative Word of God we allow ourselves to participate in the love of God which occurs as the death of Jesus Christ. In this sense, Christian existence is *existence out of nothingness*, because it is all along the line existence out of the creative power of God who justifies.[72]

Jüngel too provides an important clue about the antithesis of distance and presence. When he describes Christian existence as *existence out of nothingness*, he describes something that becomes present as the result of the creative power of God who justifies. While there is an element of distance between us and God in the sense that justification does not belong to human potentiality, the creative power still results in our being remade *ex nihilo*. It results in a new presence, a new being participating in the love of God that is wholly the result of God's grace.

Even though Bonhoeffer prefers the dialectic of act and being for his own constructive proposal, he essentially agrees with – and works within the framework of – the idea of God's concrete presence with and for us in Christ as well as our participation in the being of Christ. In Christ "God is present," Bonhoeffer says, "Christ is the word of God's freedom. God is present, that is, not in eternal nonobjectivity but – to put it quite provisionally for now–'haveable,' graspable in the Word within the church."[73] As I hope to show later, this presence is worked out ecclesially by Bonhoeffer: "To believe means much the same as to find God, God's grace, the community of faith of Christ already present."[74] In *Sanctorum Communio* he writes: "Rather, God established the reality of the church, of humanity pardoned in Jesus Christ – not religion, but revelation, *not religious community, but church*."[75]

4.5 Elements of a *Theologia Crucis*

Without attempting to be exhaustive, orthodox – indeed my retrieval of Luther is inevitably colored by the twentieth-century revival of cross theology – or complete, a theology of the cross, whether in Luther's initial construction or later appropriations, embodies roughly five features summarized as follows.

1. The theology of the cross embodies the tension or ambiguous relationship between revelation and faith on the one hand and reason on the other. Some radicalize the tension, but it is better to say that in Luther, reason is only rejected

[72] Jüngel, *The Word as Possibility and Actuality*, 108.
[73] DBWE 2:91.
[74] DBWE 2: 117.
[75] DBWE 1:153.

insofar it becomes a system that sets the condition of the possibility of revelation, encroaches on revelation's own territory (by enlarging and/or relying on human potentiality), or more specifically, transforms the free gift of justification by faith into a human possibility. But there is definitely an epistemological dimension to the cross with an ambiguous attitude toward human knowing. It is important to see that this epistemological tension has its soteriological parallel. The soteriological and epistemological are inseparable in the one encounter with Christ on the cross. Berndt Hamm in his book *The Early Luther*, repeatedly points out that the encounter with Christ breaks into our lives in the form of judgment before He also becomes our salvation.[76] Elsewhere, assessing the intersection of method and soteriology, he writes:

> … the new central position of faith is directly connected with the fact that Luther rejects the medieval differentiation, indeed separation, between the objectifying way of teaching directed towards the cognitive capacity and the subjective way of life of an affected spiritual existence.[77]

2. The theology of the cross can be fruitfully described by spatial metaphors. There is initially a movement from God to humanity in Christ through the cross. The cross is here. It is present. God is present with and among us in Christ. There is no beyond, no groping in the darkness or beyond this darkness at noon.[78] God is here. The cross is the sign of a trustworthy promise by a faithful God.

3. There is a movement from the cross into the world. This is the second spatial metaphor. The movement that thinks its way from cross to God (i. e., the things that are above us) is not encouraged. Rather, Christ on the cross points us to a life in this world in light of the cross. With this, metaphysical speculation is discouraged and thinking *after* God and God's way into and with the world is fostered.[79] Outside the cross, *gibt es kein andere Gott*.[80] We will only talk about what God in the Crucified has revealed about God. If we don't, we venture into metaphysical speculation and, with it, we construct a God of the philosophers. The tendency not to speculate makes it relatively easy to connect the *theologia*

[76] Hamm writes: "Behind the judging wrath of God that appears in the humiliation of *Anfechtung*, Luther recognized the merciful God who makes his promise true." … "But under the form of opposites (*sub contrario*), the cross conceals the saving presence of God. When afflicted people recognize themselves in Christ's suffering, then they can also base their certainty of salvation on the Crucified One," (Berndt Hamm, *The Early Luther: Stages in a Reformation Reorientation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 47.

[77] Hamm, *The Reformation of Faith*, 173.

[78] With thanks to Gary Simpson for this poetic reference to the cross at Calvary.

[79] Cf. Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 57–63, where Jüngel discusses Bonhoeffer's concept of religionless Christianity and living in the world as though God is not given. He explains how the theology of the cross explodes traditional ideas of presence and absence and shatters metaphysical conceptions of God such as omnipresence.

[80] "No other God" as in the original German version of Luther's hymn *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*/*A Mighty Fortress is our God*.

crucis with post-metaphysical tendencies in the twentieth century, in particular with Heidegger's methodological atheism and his concept of *Dasein* as that form of being that asks about its own being. More on this in chapter 5.

4. In all this, the cross speaks of a *novum* that occurs with Christ on the cross that can neither be anticipated nor independently thought. It is what God does in Christ on behalf of humanity. Justification is a gift. It is this in its entirety. This is the soteriological dimension of the *theologia crucis*. It is important to note, however, that this salvific act of God is bound up with the incarnation of the Word of God. It is located in the body of Christ.

5. In anticipation of what will be developed in the fifth chapter, I point to the understanding of presence that is radicalized by Bonhoeffer on the basis of Luther's sacramental understanding of the body of Christ. He identifies the church (as Christ's body) with Christ, thereby naming the church as the place or being of revelation. Believers are one with the sufferings of Christ on the cross, not only in their *Anfechtungen* but also in their role as *Stellvertreter*. Here, the theology of the cross has implications for Christian existence in the world, an existence which Bonhoeffer refuses to equate with ethics.

On the basis of my research so far, I conclude that Bonhoeffer expresses a clear preference for the notion of presence over the notion of distance with reference to the *theologia crucis*. It is not that distance is unimportant or even irrelevant, but it is wrapped up in the encounter with the present Christ. It is found in the deconstructive aspect of the theology of the cross, which evidences an epistemological dimension when Luther sets it up as a rejection of scholasticism with its Aristotelian underpinnings, its bringing together of nature and grace (realism, *via antiqua*), and its speculation into the difference between *potentia absoluta* and *potentia ordinata* (nominalism, *via moderna*). This deconstruction, however, serves only as something that clears space for that which matters ultimately, namely the presence of God's revelation and the encounter with the person of Christ.

Reading the *theologia crucis* from the perspective of distance does not do justice to it. There is more to be said about the *theologia crucis*. What to think of a positive constructive pole in addition to the deconstructive one, which, when left on its own, continues to dominate with an epistemological and cognitive approach to the *theologia crucis*? What of the present body of Christ, which is available to us, or in Bonhoeffer's own words, "graspable and haveable?"[81] What of the movement into the world? How is a *theologia crucis* with a minimalist metaphysics performed in the world? That Bonhoeffer's *Act and Being* has not until today been recognized as a *theologia crucis* is, in part, the result of a lack of foregrounding these questions. There is an aspect of the *theologia crucis* that moves from encounter to embodiment and finds its expression in

[81] See DBWE 2:91.

the body of Christ. This is often overlooked and will be explored further in the coming chapters.

While it is not germane to the argument in this investigation whether or not Barth's theology ought to be called a theology of the cross and while it is true that it is impossible to maintain just one definition of the theology of the cross, the current study – it should by now be clear – does not merely occupy a neutral position. It may indeed be true that Luther brings different strands of pre-existing thought together in his theology of the cross, and it may be correct to say that Luther's theology of the cross has been interpreted in many different ways. It will not do, however, to simply abandon all normativity of Luther's *theologia crucis* for other theologies of the cross. My hermeneutical figuring of Bonhoeffer and Barth and the historical examination of Luther's theology lead me to offer the following points – without providing a definition or anything beyond the five characteristics given above – to suggest that Luther's *theologia crucis* continues to provide guidance, notably on the question of presence and absence.

(1) The first point was already mentioned in the previous chapter. The historical argument that sees Luther as both the funnel of previous themes and the starting point of a tradition that consciously works with the term "theology of the cross," is the most plausible.

(2) The second argument is biblical. For those who would prefer to locate the origin of cross theology in Paul's theology of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, the objection remains that presence rather than absence marks cross theology. The foolishness of God which confounds the wisdom of the world is characterized by a certain "thereness:" it is (a) Christ on the cross (1 Cor. 1:23) but at the same time (b) the lowly things *of* this world (1 Cor. 1:28). With his concept of *revelatio sub contrario*, which is a veiling through something present not through an absent indirectness, Luther gives expression to precisely this "thereness."

(3) The third argument is biblical as well. The typically Lutheran sacramental identification of Christ and the church as the Body of Christ, carried out with such consistency by Bonhoeffer in *Sanctorum Communio* and *Act and Being*, is also a characteristic of the primary passage for cross theology in 1 Corinthians 1. The foolishness of the cross (1 Cor. 1:18) through which believers are saved runs parallel to, if it is not synonymous with, the believers of v. 26, who were neither wise, influential, or of noble birth but rather the foolish things of this world. Though there is no sacramental, ontological, or pneumatological unity asserted here by Paul, we already find the idea that believers are identified with Christ precisely on the point of "foolishness." This identification is elaborated by Paul in many other places.

This concludes the brief excursus into the historical background of the theology of the cross in its development in Luther's theology, its rediscovery in eight-

eenth and nineteenth-century philosophy, and its reformulation in twentieth-century theology. I have done so under the interpretative guidelines of distance and presence. In the next chapter, I return to the question concerning the ambiguous divergence between Barth and Bonhoeffer in spite of the closeness of their theological programs. My engagement with the *theologia crucis* will continue, but now by means of the two concepts prominent in Bonhoeffer's *Habilitationsschrift*: *act* and *being*. These two, *act* and *being*, run parallel to the two other concepts used in my investigation in chapter two: *idealism* and *realism*. These concepts are also connected with those used in this chapter; *Act* and *idealism* line up with *distance*, while *realism* and *being* correspond to *presence*.

Chapter 5

Theologia Crucis as Act and Being

5.1 Act and Being

In this chapter, I remain close to the *theologia crucis*, but my task is now no longer only of a historical nature. I will be engaging in constructive work and, as I do, Bonhoeffer's *Act and Being* comes into focus again. Where in the previous chapter the metaphors of distance and presence were my guides, I will in this chapter attempt to connect these metaphors with the concepts of act and being as Bonhoeffer employs them in his *Habilitationsschrift*. Doing so will, in turn, reveal what, in the context of the theology of the cross, turns out to be the difference between Bonhoeffer and Barth. From this discussion, which is initially a consideration of the theology of the cross as act, I will move to a consideration of the theology of the cross as being.[1] This will first take me back to Luther, once again, before I will be able to consider Bonhoeffer's interaction with Heidegger in the next chapter.

If one wants to inscribe *distance* and *presence* onto *act* and *being*, one needs to know what Bonhoeffer means by these terms. Though the second chapter has brought a number of important things to light, it is now necessary to look closer at the *Habilitationsschrift*. Bonhoeffer starts *Act and Being* with the observation that "The most recent developments in theology appear to me to be an attempt to come to an agreement about the problem of act and being."[2] This is not exactly a trivial problem. The possibility of doing theology hinges on how this problem is solved. Bonhoeffer explains that this problem concerns the possibility of revelation as something that human beings can recognize and talk about:

> At the heart of the problem is the struggle with the formulation of the questions that Kant and idealism have posed for theology. It is a matter of the formation of genuine theological concepts, the decision one comes to between a transcendental-philosophical and an ontological interpretation of theological concepts. It is a question of the "objectivity" of the concept of God and an adequate concept of cognition, the issue of determining the relationship between "the being of God" and the mental act which grasps that being. In other words, the meaning of "the being of God in revelation" must be interpreted theo-

[1] This is ultimately an abstraction. In Bonhoeffer's thought, act and being are integrated and synthesized, or better, coordinated. There is no closure of meaning!

[2] DBWE 2:25.

logically, including how it is known, how faith, as act, and revelation as being, are related to one another and, correspondingly, *how human beings stand in light of revelation* [emphasis by Bonhoeffer]. Is revelation "given" to them only in each completed act; is there for human beings such a thing as "being" in revelation? What form does the concept of revelation have when it is interpreted in terms of act and when it is interpreted in terms of being?[3]

Kant had said that God cannot be an object of consciousness. God is relegated to the dubious status of necessary postulate in the realm of practical reason. Hence, there is no revelation as such. Bonhoeffer indicates here that a decision has to fall between such Kantian non-availability and a human affirmation of an ontological revelational reality. Such a decision involves an understanding of and, eventually, a synthesis of the concepts of act and being. In an attempt to hint at what he means by these concepts Bonhoeffer lists a number of theologians and philosophers as representatives of either concept. It should come as no surprise at this point that Bonhoeffer sees Barth and Heidegger as important representatives of act and being approaches respectively. Defining these concepts of act and being is hard, however, even for Bonhoeffer, since they are broad and cover many approaches. Yet Bonhoeffer does make an attempt in his introduction. He defines act and being as follows:

At this point only general and preliminary definitions should be given about the nature of act and being in light of which we can raise further questions. On the one hand, act is comprised of relationality, the infinitely-extensive, that which is bound to consciousness, discontinuity, and existentiality. (The term "existentiality" here should be taken to designate not the sphere of the "there is" [*es gibt*], but rather the central, potential engagement of a person.) On the other hand, being is comprised of confinement-to-the-self, the infinitely-intensive, that which transcends consciousness, continuity.[4]

This definition may yield more questions than answers. But, for the purpose of this research, one could say that in Bonhoeffer's thought the concept of act represents the relational, the engagement between consciousness and what is other than consciousness, i. e., objects, the world, others, God. This relationality can be expressed in different modes: objectification, encounter, trust, etc. Being, on the other hand, has more to do with what something or somebody is. It has continuity beyond someone's consciousness of it. Act is the exocentric dimension, being the ontological intrinsic dimension of human existence. As I have suggested in my previous comparison of Barth's *Fate and Idea* with *Act and Being*, one sees, without too much imagination, a certain overlap between idealism and act on the one hand and fate and realism on the other.

In addition to defining act and being so as to bring distance and presence in relation to act and being, it is necessary to understand how the concepts of act

[3] DBWE 2:28.
[4] DBWE 2:29.

and being function in *Act and Being*. In the chart below I attempt to give some structure to the way the two concepts function for Bonhoeffer.[5] While it is clear enough that act is a concept that is primarily to be associated with epistemology (because of the implied idealism), for Bonhoeffer both act and being cover attempts in philosophy and theology to *know* the object of inquiry. The difference is that under act, philosophy and theology attempt to know the world, the self, and revelation by way of taking the thinking subject as the point of reference. Under being, on the contrary, we find attempts that seek to know by taking the givenness of something as the point of reference. The operator under both act and being is consciousness. Bonhoeffer speaks of act when consciousness masters being and speaks of being when consciousness discovers itself in something given.

What I hope to show, eventually, is that act typically works with a Kantian epistemology (it lingers with a problematization of knowing by transcendental idealism, i. e. it is idealistic in nature), whereas being will turn out to be a largely hermeneutical endeavor that starts with the givenness of reality. In all fairness, I should probably say that for Bonhoeffer, who is eventually going to synthesize the two, both act and being are hermeneutically approached "Act can never be 'explained' but only 'understood' … just as being can never be 'proved' but only 'pointed out'").[6]

In explaining the purpose of *Act and Being*, Bonhoeffer writes, "This entire study is an attempt to unify the concern of true transcendentalism and the concern of true ontology in an 'ecclesiological form of thinking.'"[7] It seems that with a coordination of act and being, Bonhoeffer is pitting a modern theory of knowledge against a late modern way of knowing. Or, better, he is trying to overcome modernist epistemology by way of hermeneutics. He is one of the first theologians to do so (see Table 1).

What is important here is that there are corresponding faith dimensions to the more general and abstract philosophical act-being dialectic. Along the lines of Kantian thinking, act theologies need to emphasize the non-objectivity of revelation. It's a binary choice. Either you have God (but having God epistemologically is equal to having mastered God, which is not-God) or you do not have God ever because God cannot become an object for human knowledge. On the being side of the faith dimension, Bonhoeffer talks of the *actus directus* (i. e.

[5] The chart might give the impression that Bonhoeffer represents being-theologies only. This is only partially correct. In chapter six, it will become clear that Bonhoeffer attempts a coordination. In this coordination, however, being functions as the starting point and embodies the integrative moment. The chart is intended to properly characterize "act" and "being" and their related concepts.

[6] DBWE 2:29.

[7] DBWE 2:32.

	act	*being*
In *Act and Being*		
defining characteristic	relationality, egocentricity	I-ness of the I, being beyond consciousness
main philosophies	transcendentalism, idealism	ontological phenomenology
main theologies	dialectical theology	theology of the cross
point of departure	consciousness	what is given
activity	drawing boundaries	interpreting through the given
disciplines	from epistemology to ontology	from ontology to epistemology; hermeneutics
faith dimension	non-objectivity of revelation	faith in Jesus Christ, *actus directus*
In this study		
spatial metaphor	tendency toward distance	presence (as givenness)
theological method	*crisis*, diastasis, dialectical	*theologia crucis*
In Barth's *Fate and Idea*		
title	Idea (*Idee*)	Fate (*Schicksal*)
approach	idealism	realism

Table 1: Function and Characteristics of the Concepts of Act and Being in Bonhoeffer's Thought

non-reflexive relatedness) with regard to revelation,[8] this being of revelation *being* the ecclesial[9] reality of the church.

Bonhoeffer pits the transcendental approach against an ontological one that is social, hermeneutical, and relational. With this, I am ready to connect the metaphors of *distance* and *presence* with *act* and *being* respectively. Doing so will initiate the important process of connecting the concepts of act and being as Bonhoeffer employs them to articulate his *theologia crucis*. This is important insofar as it will bring to light what *Act and Being* is all about. Moreover, since Bonhoeffer considers "all of theology"[10] dependent on the interaction between act and being, I will actually get to the heart of Bonhoeffer's theology. As Bonhoeffer says,

> … it should already be apparent that all of theology, in its teaching concerning knowledge of God, of human beings, and of sin and grace, crucially depends on whether it begins with the concept of act or being.[11]

[8] See. DBWE 2:60.

[9] Bonhoeffer employs the more archaic "ecclesiological" which today has more dogmatic overtones instead of the communal idea intended.

[10] DBWE 2:29.

[11] DBWE 2:30.

5.2 *Theologia Crucis* as Act

Above, I have used the metaphor of revelation as distance in order to characterize Loewenich's and McGrath's interpretations of Luther's *theologia crucis*. Of course, this only came after I had discovered such a distance in the theology of Barth and noticed how he characterizes his own theology as a *theologia crucis* as well. This Barthian distance, as I have tried to point out, is due to the need for Barth to create an epistemological chasm between us and God such that God cannot become an object for human knowledge. Both problem and theological proposal are epistemologically formulated in Barth. Barth both pays homage to and utilizes the concept of nonobjectivity so characteristic of transcendental idealism. As such the distance that characterizes Barth's version of the theology of the cross is typical for the act typologies that Bonhoeffer summons to illustrate how philosophy and theology misfire when consciousness is in control of the boundary between the I and the transcendent (be that the other, the world, or God). Barth is basically the poster boy for all act attempts in *Act and Being*. Distance and act are therefore certainly connected.

It must be noted, though, that distance and act are not synonymous in Bonhoeffer's thought. Act also refers to other modes of exocentricity such as relationality, encounter, trust, and faith. Barth, however, exemplifies what Bonhoeffer sees as problematic in theologies that have a strong act orientation in a cognitive sense. What makes Barth's theology such a good example is the epistemological distance that characterizes it. I will now retrace my steps with regard to the theology of Karl Barth.

5.2.1 Epistemological Distance in Barth

Karl Barth was a student of Wilhelm Hermann who was deeply influenced by Neo-Kantianism. McCormack observes that "The Marburg 'neo-Kantianism' of Cohen and Natorp exercised a good deal of influence on Herrmann and through him on the young Barth."[12] Cohen, for example, occupied himself with the question of "establishing the epistemological foundations of modern science" as they had developed far beyond the Newtonian science of Kant's time.[13] He thus sought to critique Kant's idea of the *Ding an sich* as pre-critical. Says McCormack, "Cohen's epistemology was thus a far more radical idealism than anything envisioned by Kant. There is no being which does not have its origin in thought."[14] This resulted in the problem of neo-Kantianism: its idealism is not subjective but transcendental and as a result, sense experience cannot be the

[12] McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 42.
[13] McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 43.
[14] McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 44.

"source of the content of knowledge."[15] The concept of source (*Ursprung*) was an important aspect of Barth's early dialectical thought, notes McCormack who then concludes that "The net effect of Cohen's doctrine of *Ursprung* is that the ideal epistemological subject is credited with a kind of knowledge which traditionally had been attributed to God alone."[16] This consciousness is similar to Kant's *intuitivus originarius* which brings forth the human *intuitivus derivatus*. With Barth in mind, McCormack concludes that there is "nothing to prevent a later theological realist from taking up this description of originary thinking and using it to describe the creative functions of an objectively existing God."[17] The neo-Kantian influence thus permeates Barth's theology.

In addition to this in-depth genealogy of thought, other Kantian characteristics make themselves felt in Barth's theology. The idea of God as absolute idealist consciousness being the condition of possibility for human knowing is but one way to utilize the concept of transcendental consciousness. It has perhaps affinities with Bradshaw's description of Barth's trinitarianism.[18] Gary Dorrien refers to it in a section where he discusses Bonhoeffer's criticism of Barth. He shows that the Kantian influence was more pervasive than McCormack seems to suggest here. Describing Bonhoeffer's appreciation for Barth's dialectical theology Dorrien writes:

> Bonhoeffer recognized that this strategy [i. e. the dialectical method] was fundamental to Barth's attempt to get around the Kantian dictum that God cannot be an object of knowledge. Barth turned the tables on Kant by making God the knowing subject itself.[19]

The least one may deduce from this is that Barth was working within a paradigm that was unable to ignore Kant and thus had to find a way around the non-objectivity of God to enable realist claims about God. But there is more. Dorrien, in his study on *The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology*, makes it clear throughout that Kant became and remained a huge influence as the Barthian turn took shape. He writes: "Herrmann urged his students to see the Kantian revolution all the way through. As his student, Barth took this admonition to heart and, in his own way, remained true to it."[20] According to Dorrien, Barth used Kant for his theological realism. In his first edition of the Epistle to the Romans, Barth's "proposal contained echoes from Plato's theory of forms and Kant's appeal to the thing-in-itself … Like Plato and Kant, Barth thematized the notion of a 'real reality' that lies beyond the world of appearances."[21] Dorrien,

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15 McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 45.
16 McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 45.
17 McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 45.
18 Bradshaw, *Trinity and Ontology*, 132.
19 Gary Dorrien, *The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 151.
20 Dorrien, *The Barthian Revolt*, 170, see also 42, 61, 94.
21 Dorrien, *The Barthian Revolt*, 53.

commenting on Barth's lecture series *Fate and Idea*, which was under consideration in an earlier chapter, goes on to state:

> Barth gave idealism a softer work-over. He observed that the idealist tradition in philosophy is distinguished by its emphasis on critical reflection. From Plato to Descartes, Kant, and Hegel, the idealists always press the question of the nature of truth. "Idealism means the self-reflection of the spirit over against nature," he noted approvingly. "It discovers a correlation between thinking and truth." In its various forms, philosophical idealism always finds in the creative logos the source through which the dualism of subject and object can be overcome. Idealist thinking exalts reason or self-reflected spirit over the power of fate and thereby obtains mastery over the limitations that fate imposes on human life. In its essential character, idealism therefore has a deeper affinity with theology than realism, Barth acknowledged. This was a telling judgment, coming from the modern champion of doing theology as exegesis of an outside Word. Barth's insistence on the given reality of God and the necessity of beginning with God's revealed Word made his theology fundamentally realist, yet he allowed that "even realist theology cannot be theology without drawing heavily on idealism."[22]

For Barth, a realist theology was only possible with the help of a method that made heavy use of idealism. It is in this sense that one is compelled to speak of a Kantian or idealist influence in Barth as the necessary condition for his realist theology. Without it, his entire theological project fails. For this reason, whenever in this study Barth is called Kantian or idealist, or whenever there is talk of Barth's Kantian or idealist approach, what is meant is not the denial that Barth is at heart a theological realist but, rather, that the focus is on those idealist and Kantian aspects of Barth that are needed for his realist theology.[23] It is not the

[22] Dorrien, *The Barthian Revolt*, 94.

[23] It is evident that Barth does not adhere to Kant's philosophy of religion. In his treatment of Kant in his *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century* he is quite clear that he does not follow Kant's treatment of religion within the limits of reason. Barth is clearly in disagreement with Kant's Christology, ecclesiology, the notion that the God within us is the interpreter of the God who speaks through our own reason (287). One could go on. Barth does not even make an effort to state that he is in disagreement. But the essay, as it stands, is at the same time very revealing in what it tells us about the way Barth attempts to interpret Kant. Barth notes how Kant's pure religion within the limits of reason sits, as a kernel of truth, within the shell of positive religion (280). He then goes on to point out, how various aspects of Kant's philosophy of religion simply don't line up with Kant's own insistence on this kernel of true rational theology. The three examples Barth offers are (a) a positive historical evaluation of the empirical church, (b) Kant's insistence on an active principle of evil and the moral depravity of humanity, and (c) the fact that in spite of the idea of "atonement by one's own good deed" there seems to be, at its back, a hint of grace or forgiveness. Barth notes these discrepancies as part of his strategy to emphasize that even Kant seems to be aware of a split between the religious dimension of life and the possibility of a whole other reality, namely God and revelation. Barth writes: "It might be possible to object that with the problem conceived as 'religion within the limits of reason alone' only the one side of the problem, namely religion as a human function, is seen, and not the other side, the significant point to which this function is related and whence it springs, the dealings, namely, of a God who is not identical with the quintessence of human reason, with the 'God in ourselves' – thus restricting the validity of the enquiry in a manner which must also of necessity adversely affect the presentation of the first side, the interpre-

realism that is at stake in this inquiry or disputed by Bonhoeffer, but the idealism that attempts to facilitate it. It is on this idealist tendency that Bonhoeffer parts ways with Barth.

There is thus a strong critical epistemological orientation to Barth's theology. It is evident in both the *Epistle to the Romans* as well as the first volume of the *Church Dogmatics* (albeit in different ways). Barth's theology progresses along a cognitive trajectory and especially along the categorical claim that knowing God is not possible.

Barth makes it clear that he is in agreement here with Luther's theology of the cross, according to which knowledge of God is only possible on the basis of God's self-revelation in Christ. In order to achieve this theologically, Barth makes use of the Kantian gap in knowledge. In Kant there is an unbridgeable gap between noumena and phenomena such that if God were a noumenon, consciousness would only observe God as phenomenon. But since God is simply not an object for consciousness (after all, God is not a material *res exstensa*), God appears only *a posteriori* as a necessary postulate (and no more than that) of practical reason.

In Barth, there is likewise an unbridgeable chasm between God and human beings. For Kant the gap is an ontological reality. This is also the case for Barth; we simply cannot know God who is Wholly Other. We are not the kind of beings who can attain such knowledge. This idealism is to conceptualize the theological claim that God is sovereign while we are mere mortals bound to our creatureliness. Additionally, for Barth, the gap also has a moral dimension, since God is holy and we are sinful. Where the theology of the cross emphasizes God's epistemological unavailability at the point where salvation is in danger of becoming a human possibility instead of God's possibility, Barth places a categorical chasm between human knowing and God's reality that is maintained across his entire theological project from the early diastasis to the later dialectical method.

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tation of this human function. This … would, in a word, consist in theology resigning itself to stand on its own feet in relation to philosophy, in theology recognizing the point of departure for its method in revelation, just as decidedly as philosophy sees its point of departure in reason, and in theology conducting, therefore, a dialogue with philosophy, and not, wrapping itself up in the mantle of philosophy, a quasi-philosophical monologue" (Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (Valley Forge PA: Judson Press, 1973), 307). In his disagreement with Kant's philosophy of religion, Barth still makes use of Kant's concept of the non-objectivity of God. Unlike Kant, Barth also relegates the postulate of God in practical reason as useless for theology. He uses Kant's epistemological gap between humanity and God and attempts to widen the gap, so to speak, so as to create space for theology's engagement with revelation in contrast to philosophy and religion. In other words, Barth is both Kantian and non-Kantian. *With* Kant he drives a wedge between humanity and God and *unlike* Kant, he determines the region Kant has nothing to say about as the proper locus for theology. With Kant, Barth goes against Kant. In this the realist Barth is rather Kantian in demarcating the boundaries of his own labor.

It may be true that Barth makes God, as Luther does in the theology of the cross, available for us exclusively in and through Jesus. However, where in the *theologia crucis* this bridges the gap between us and God in and through the present body of Jesus, in Barth the gap stays firmly in place. Initially, for Barth, God was present only in God's act, i. e., only in the moment of encounter with God, for instance when someone is reading Scripture. Barth later amended this by stating that God's being is in God's act.[24] But what remained – and what is essential to Barth's dialectical theology – was the gap, the epistemological distance between God and humanity. God is not available epistemologically and when God reveals Godself, it is still always indirect. This is even the case in the incarnation in which the human nature of Christ is the hiddenness through which Christ's divine nature encounters us, but only indirectly so.

Over against this epistemological distance stands the embodied presence of God in Christ according to the theology of the cross. This presence is a real presence and an abiding one as it is anchored in the promise of a faithful God. It is real in the sense that, in Bonhoeffer's words, in Christ God is graspable and haveable.[25] We can, as it were, touch Christ's body on the cross and then know that we have taken hold of God. In the light of this presence, Barth's epistemological distance comes, once again, clearly in view as presenting a problematic approach. And this distance is upheld by the act.

5.2.2 Bonhoeffer's Critique of Barth Revisited[26]

In relation to the *theologia crucis*, one may speak of a *God-on-the-cross* vs. a *God-from-above*, a *theology-in-front-of-the-cross* vs. a *theology-that-peeks-behind-the-cross*, and a *movement-from-the-cross-into-the-world* vs. a *movement-through-the-cross-into-the-divine-mysteries*. In all these opposite pairs Luther is found on the left side and Barth on the right. When one examines Bonhoeffer's criticism of Barth both in his academic work and in *Letters and Papers from Prison*, the inescapable conclusion is that Bonhoeffer launches his criticism squarely from Luther's side of the divide. Barth's *God-from-above* never gets historicized and that particular "unhistoricized" God's revelation does not sufficiently take on the embodied concreteness that we know from the *God-on-the-cross*. Bonhoeffer's desire to develop a nonreligious interpretation of theological concepts comes directly from his *theology-in-front-of-the-cross*, that is the *theologia crucis* as a theology for the world. There is no point in peeking

[24] See Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* II.1, vol. 8 of *Church Dogmatics* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2010), 1–16, Marsh, *Reclaiming Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 15–20.

[25] DBWE 2:91.

[26] Once again, the reader should bear in mind, that this concerns the Barth Bonhoeffer knew.

behind the cross or engaging in the development of elaborate doctrines and ingenious constructs, for God is here in Christ and we need to figure out how the cross is a reality in us, and, through us to the world. Luther's *movement-from-the-cross-into-the-world* gets amplified in Bonhoeffer who emphasizes embodiment as a divinely affirmed gift. Therefore there's little patience with any speculation about the divine mysteries or revelatory positivism. In sum Bonhoeffer's criticism of Barth comes out of a deep affinity with and adoption of Luther's *theologia crucis*.

To clarify this, I must look once more at epistemology (with its attendant theology of revelation) and focus attention on Christology (with its attendant implications for theology proper). Breaking down the criticism of Bonhoeffer along the lines of these classical *loci* in Christian theology should yield a clearer picture of how his theology, albeit here in Bonhoeffer's negative appraisal of another theologian's work, is deeply anchored in the *theologia crucis*.

Epistemology. The best way to discuss Bonhoeffer's epistemological critique of Barth is by making use of important keywords that Bonhoeffer uses. Bonhoeffer is wary that Barth's method (which Barth would later elaborate and label as *analogia fidei*, analogy of faith) results in a collapse of an *actus directus* (i. e. faith) into an *actus reflexus* (reasoned reflection). He discusses the difference between *actus directus* and *actus reflexus* at various locations in *Act and Being*. At one point he writes:

> The movement of faith, understood as the concrete event of being taken hold of by Christ, in time ceased to occur; it cannot be pointed to in a here-and-there open for exhibit. God alone knows whether I have believed; this is not accessible to my reflection. Faith rests in itself as an *actus directus*.[27]

He continues:

> Nothing could be more mistaken than [thinking] that everything is accessible to reflection only in reflection and that, therefore, faith is accessible only as 'credulity' or 'religiosity …'"

Elsewhere, Bonhoeffer points out that this transformation of faith into credulity is the very thing he fears happens in Barth's theology.[28] How is this possible? It is because Barth's diastasis-turned-dialectical-approach is premised on Kantian transcendentalism. Subject and object are always only epistemologically related to one another (via reflection), whether in the affirmation or in the denial of the relationship. This is "old school" for Bonhoeffer. In *Sanctorum Communio* he initially works off a personalism turned ecclesiology. In *Act and Being* this method is enriched by an approach that has affinities with Heidegger's phenomenology of being (see chapter 6). Michael DeJonge labels this "Person theol-

[27] DBWE 2:128.
[28] DBWE 2:154.

ogy."[29] How this is linked to Heidegger, in DeJonge's view, I will have to examine in the next chapter. For now, I point to his term *person theology* in order to drive home the issue of where Bonhoeffer locates revelation *vis-à-vis* Barth, which is central to the discussion of the *theologia crucis* in this chapter. Revelation is located in the person of Christ: "Revelation is the person of Jesus Christ, God in history, the unity of transcendence and historical existence."[30] This is the theology of the cross for God is found in Christ on the cross, not in the impossible/possible speculation concerning a Wholly Other. Barth's theology continues to be a cognitive project that both denies the human possibility of knowledge of God and simultaneously affirms it on the basis of God's grace, for which then a dialectical method is called upon to facilitate this. The content of faith is always both a knowing and a non-knowing, a *both-and*. In Barth, faith is thus an *actus reflexus*. Faith is constantly worried about the content and extent of its own knowing. Faith is dependent on credulity. With regard to the *theologia crucis*, the mistake Barth makes, according to Bonhoeffer, is that he ignores the fact that Luther's theology of the cross begins with an epistemological critique but then moves beyond it toward a certain ontology in fear of creating a new system that encapsulates and masters the free love of God for us in Christ.

But there is one caveat. Luther's theology of the cross bears the marks of the innocence of the pre-modern period in which revelation and knowledge have not become a problem for human thought. All Luther needed to do, it seems, was to strip away the scholastic accrual of human thought. Luther overturned it by means of his theology of the cross thus at the same time providing a new scaffolding for theology. In the modern period, however, more work is needed to bridge deconstruction and reconstruction. When one has succeeded in deconstructing human thought as a barrier to revelation, the question is how this revelation is to be thought of. In the modern period, it is not enough to say that German theological liberalism has run aground and that God needs to be able to speak first. One needs to show how exactly this works, i. e., how the knowing gets "done," how idealism is overcome. Otherwise, the constructive effort amounts to no more than a pietistic or confessional act of self-delusion. Knowing is modernity's problem. In sum, Barth's Kantian-idealist influence infused by his Calvinistic roots[31] leads him to what Bonhoeffer calls an *actus reflexus*.

Another term that is helpful here is the word pair *capax-incapax*. Calvinism emphasizes that the finite cannot contain the infinite (*finitum non capax infinitum*). This is to safeguard the otherness and holiness of God. When Lutherans, on the other hand, say that the finite can contain the infinite, they do

[29] Michael P. DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation: Berlin, Barth & Protestant Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 143.

[30] DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation*, 143.

[31] Dorrien describes Barth as attempting to become a "neo(Calvinist)." (Dorrien, *The Barthian Revolt*, 3, 54).

not refer to the infinite as the wholly other God of Barth or the sovereign God of Calvinism. Rather, they refer to the fact that in the incarnation God is fully present without reserve. As such the infinite can be contained in finite namely, the unique finite form of Jesus Christ, which is the humility of God. In a way, in taking opposite sides, all Calvinists and Lutherans were doing was comparing apples and pears. This becomes clear with reference to both the content of the *capax* (what is grasped) and the mode of the *capax* (how the grasping is done). If indeed creator God, who stands behind all reality and indwells, as Paul says, an unapproachable light, is intended as object of the *capax*, it becomes self-evident that human knowing is too limited to even attempt to fathom the greatness of God.[32] In this the Calvinists and Barth are right. God is entirely beyond humanity's reach. Where they are wrong, however, is in the determination of the *object* of the grasping. It is not at all the case that God thus conceived is, can, or should be the object of our knowledge. Indeed, God does not reveal Godself to humanity that way at all. Rather, the person of Christ is the embodiment and location of that revelation. Any description, therefore, should refer to Christ; the glorious sovereign God is a product of human imagination. When Lutherans say that the infinite can be grasped, they do not refer to the Wholly Other God of Barth or the divine Sovereign of Calvinism elevated above all heavens. They refer to Jesus, to Jesus's body on the cross. They refer to what God has, in actual fact, revealed about Godself, in and through the humble servant Jesus of Nazareth. God is revealed as love. That humble love can be grasped by means of participation in Christ.

But the apples and pears analogy not only pertains to the *object* that is grasped, the *mode* of grasping is different too. It speaks for itself that human minds are incapable of conceptually grasping the infinite greatness of God. But just as we are told that we need to become as children in order to enter the Kingdom of God, so the grasping of God's revelation in Jesus is effected, according to Bonhoeffer, by entering into that divine reality that exists in humble and self-giving existence. The act of faith is not primarily cognitive, critical, reflective in nature but fiduciary, participatory, and existential. This is, once again, the *actus directus*. It is a deed of trust resulting in participation not an act of reflection resulting in conceptual clarity and epistemological exhaustiveness. In the end, though I still want to be generous toward Bradbury's claim that Barth's theology is a *theologia crucis*, I now must note that making this claim, either results from

[32] It is my understanding that the "non capax" initially referring to the human nature of Jesus being incapable of the divine reality shifted in the modern period and in Barth to include the epistemological impossibility on the part of the human beings to grasp the reality of God as an object of human knowledge. See Burtness (Burtness, *As Though God Were Not Given*) who expands the *capax* christologically to include all of reality. A further consideration is the extension of the notion of *capax* as found in the fact that for Bonhoeffer, the church, as the Body of Christ, is itself revelation in its unity with Christ. As such the *capax* question is always not only a question about the incarnation but also about humanity.

a misunderstanding of Luther's *theologia crucis* or requires a creative modification removed from the way it operates in Luther. In the end, such an attempt seems to partially subvert itself at the least. Barth's is indeed a *modern* theology of the cross, but when you put "modernity" and "theologia crucis" together you are never far away from a *contradictio in terminis*.

Christology. In the discussion of the *capax*, I already touched on the topic of Christology. Suffice it to say here that for Bonhoeffer and the theology of the cross revelation is not located in the inaccessible divine reality that, in order to become a subject for human knowledge, needs to be humanly conceptualized to begin with. Luther leaves the hidden God for what it is and instead concentrates on the concrete reality of God's self-revelation in Christ. This returns in Bonhoeffer. The fact that in Bonhoeffer, theology proper hinges on Christology is not a weakness. According to the theology of the cross, this is where you are supposed to begin. That notion is perhaps radicalized in Bonhoeffer when he is searching for new ways to prioritize revelation. In truth, it is essentially the theology of the cross, which tells us to look to Christ and Christ's body on the cross. It is the beginning of all theological thinking and every encounter with God in Christ.

Epistemology, then, is connected with Christology in that the knowability of the Word is an epistemological question. Even when this Word becomes flesh in Jesus, the epistemological aspect continues to linger for Barth. Since Barth's theology is structured along the three forms of the Word: the Word incarnate, written, and preached, Christology and epistemology are deeply connected in Barth. Just as his theological method is dialectical, so revelation is structured by way of an epistemological indirectness. This indirectness is absorbed into Christology by way of the anhypostatic-enhypostatic Christology.[33] Where Calvinists exulted in the *extra-Calvinisticum*,[34] which stipulates that the Son of God retained reality of presence outside of the incarnation[35] (again to safeguard

[33] Cf. DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation*, 47.

[34] See DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation*, 50 ff.

[35] The purpose of this doctrine was to stay close to the Christological formulation of Chalcedon and was an extension of the concern of the Church Fathers that the Son of God in his incarnation could not be bound to time and space and was developed within the context of the debate around the bodily presence of Christ in the sacraments. In using it in this context I follow DeJonge (DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation*, 50ff), though it is not entirely without its ambiguities since Barth also criticized it. This means, for instance that the confessional opposition here is not exhaustively identical to the difference between Barth and Bonhoeffer. Sumner notes that "over the course of his career Barth moves from enthusiastic affirmation of the *extra* in the Göttingen period, to voicing concerns about it in *Church Dogmatics* I/2, to a Christology that heavily qualifies its proper use in volume IV" (Darren O. Sumner, "The Twofold Life of the Word: Karl Barth's Critical Reception of the *Extra Calvinisticum*," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 15 no. 1 (January 2013): 42–57). Since *Act and Being* was published in 1931, a year before the first volume of the *Church Dogmatics* was published, the use of the term in this context is warranted, keeping the earlier qualification concerning confessional controversies in mind.

the majestic nature of God), the Lutherans insisted on the *communicatio idiomatum*, which states that all attributes of the Word are present in the person of Jesus Christ. Barth adopted an anhypostatic-enhypostatic Christology in order to anchor his dialectical method in one of the central *loci theologiae* of the theology of Chalcedon. In it, he found an affirmation of the presence of the Word with humanity (enhypostasis: the Word takes on human flesh) as well as the Barthian-Kantian insistence that this revelation is not available directly as object for human thought (anhypostasis: the humanity the Word took on is impersonal). Revelation is real, but it is indirect.

Bonhoeffer, on the other hand, has no need for such an approach as his Christology is not the basis for a theological system that attempts (*actus reflectus*) to fathom the depths of God (*capax*). Bonhoeffer's Christology demands the *actus directus* in which one abandons oneself (including one's reflective stance) and becomes a participant in the Christ-reality (i. e., the church). The epistemological question is here suspended. This is essentially the *theologia crucis*, which does not replace one deconstructed epistemology with another one that in turn requires deconstruction. It deconstructs human systems that master revelation in order to let revelation not just *speak* (cognitively) but *be* (existentially). Luther's claim that we become Christ's (genitive singular) as well as Christs (nominative plural) is safeguarded in the way Bonhoeffer executes his *theologia crucis*. As Joachim von Soosten says in the *Afterword* to *Sanctorum Communio*: "God's church is where the divine will becomes concrete, visible, and comprehensible."[36] I will take a closer look at this in the next chapter.

The difference between Bonhoeffer and Barth is, in the end, the difference between *crucis* and *crisis*. Barth's *crisis*, eventually turning into a dialectical method, is deeply epistemologically oriented in such a way that the diastasis between God and humanity is never overcome and the epistemological question never abandoned (while its fulfillment is always denied or postponed). The cross, for its turn, is deeply paradoxical because in it we see God revealed under God's opposite. However, it is neither dialectical in a Barthian sense nor does it contain an unending diastasis. In the body of Christ, God is with us *sub contrario* ("under its opposite," i. e., contrary to human expectation and philosophical conceptions), but yet fully, completely, and entirely at our disposal. This does not violate God's incomprehensibility nor does it turn God into a human project, for the way to God and the knowledge of God are not cognitively defined as objects for human knowledge or denied in obedience to some form of idealism. The way of God in Christ in the world is one of self-emptying and self-giving which can only be apprehended by the human subject by way of participation and self-involvement. The only knowledge of God is in the being of humility in which any mastering of the divine is cut off beforehand. The proof is in the pud-

[36] DBWE 1:292.

ding. The only crisis one should dare to speak of is that which results from our encounter with Christ our Judge and Savior. It takes place when the *cor curvum in se* turns in faith to Christ – a veritable leap of faith in frightening and reckless self-abandon – through which we are taken up in God's humiliation. In that humiliation, the whole of God is fully present and fully recognizable for humans who then go the way of Jesus in the world: being-for-others.[37] Earlier, I referred to the work of Prenter, Ott, and Burtness, who pointed out Bonhoeffer's emphasis on temporality (Prenter), the fact that Bonhoeffer's method is very different from Barth (Ott), and the role of the Lutheran capax (Burtness). It seems these theologians were right all along. Their observations come to rest in the conclusion that Bonhoeffer's critique of Barth is launched from the perspective of Luther's *theologia crucis*.[38]

5.2.3 Barth as Crypto Medieval Nominalist?

As much as Barth placed himself in the camp of those who articulate afresh the theology of the cross, in the end, it could be argued that in some ways his theology has more in common with the very medieval nominalism Luther tried to combat. Barth's notion of formal freedom that Bonhoeffer critiqued with the notion of God's freedom for us (*pro me*, *pro nobis*) has a lot in common with the God of the Monster Uncertainty I, that was discussed in Simpson's essay where he talks about the *potentia absoluta* and the *potentia ordinata* of God. The absolute and ordained powers of God line up with the formal freedom in Barth and the *pro me* freedom of Bonhoeffer respectively. They may not be synonymous, but it is clear that God has "ordained" Godself to be for us in Christ so that trust in the promising God is our only future. The formal freedom of the Barth Bonhoeffer knew indicates that God's absolute transcendence entails the possibility of God *not* choosing us, *not* loving us. This must be so because a sovereign divine being *per definition* must be able to choose anything it wants.

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[37] Here is a significant hint showing that "being-for-others" is not merely practical or ethical theology. It is anchored and embedded in the systematic theology of Bonhoeffer as articulated in *Act and Being*. The praxis of self-giving is the outcome and the only possible consequence of the execution of a *theologia crucis* the way Bonhoeffer did.

[38] Of course at this point one wonders whether Bonhoeffer ought to be placed "within the Barthian movement" or outside of it? This question is not one I seek to answer in this study. But if I were to speculate, I think it finally depends on what one defines as the "Barthian movement." If it means the movement that sought to do theology anew by prioritizing revelation and allowing God to speak on God's terms, the answer is "yes." If by it we mean that this movement was executed as an epistemological project in the form of a dialectical theology, the answer is "no." Barth's theological project was not the only one that had reoriented itself to Luther, as Bonhoeffer puts it in his Inaugural Address (DBWE 10:400). In fact there were a number of theologians who did so. And as far as this orientation to Luther was concerned, Bonhoeffer was definitely not on board with Barth.

This is, of course, scholastic slippage. It is evident that Barth is imposing a human understanding of freedom on God; for a brief moment the system takes over and philosophy has its way, right there where Barth seeks to avoid it most of all. It is hard to recognize in this Barthian God the God who is revealed as the one bound to our redemption in Christ. The formal freedom is a freedom cut loose from God's self-revelation to us in Christ. It is no wonder that just as the *absoluta* of scholasticism lead to Simpson's Monster Uncertainty I so Barth's formal freedom necessarily leads him to the doctrine of election. Luckily this is also where Barth deviates from a scholastic outworking of his thought (where the Calvinists did not). He inscribes election christocentrically: we are chosen *in Christ*!

It is important to note, once again, that Bonhoeffer makes a decision in favor of Luther, or more precisely, in favor of the interpretation of Luther that emphasizes presence rather than distance, i. e., presence in the form of the faithful promise of Christ's being *pro me*. Barth's idealistic act project, I conclude, must make room for an approach that favors being. The presence of the *pro me* God in Christ confronts us with the God who is freely bound by the promise.

There is another reading of the *theologia crucis* – as indeed there are no doubt many readings – but one, in particular, that makes quite the opposite move of Barth. As noted above, Barth consistently structures his theology as one of *crisis* based on an ontological diastasis that issues in an epistemological dialectic. Distance between God and humanity is the name of the game. Bonhoeffer, in virtually every point of criticism of Barth, struggles with that distance. While some notion of distance is undoubtedly involved in our encounter with God if only by virtue of the confrontation that ensues in our encounter with the *theologia crucis*, Bonhoeffer rejects distance as the formal principle of revelation. This is because, in his own close reading of Luther, he has come to quite the opposite understanding of revelation. Revelation is not to be described in terms of distance and epistemological indirectness alone but in terms of presence – or preferably – in terms of God's being for us and with us. The theology of the cross means that God is, in Bonhoeffer's words "graspable, haveable."[39] What this *haveability* and *graspability* mean for Bonhoeffer's specific version of the *theologia crucis* as it is developed in *Act and Being* is the topic of my next section. God is with us in Jesus on the cross and Jesus is the church existing as community. In order to understand Bonhoeffer's concept of being as an essential component of his theology of the cross, I need to now turn to Luther's idea of community.

[39] DBWE 2:91.

5.3 *Theologia Crucis* as Being

God's formal, absolute freedom necessarily goes together with distance. This distance expresses and upholds that freedom. Luther, on the contrary, will have nothing to do with such freedom. Luther's phrase "God does not lie"[40] points to the God of the promise of grace and justification by faith. This God is bound to God's promise, bound to Godself in Christ. This God is with us. This is quite far removed from an epistemological-idealistic framing of the theology of the cross. Not that some kind of break isn't present, even in Bonhoeffer, but there is a difference between two possible statements. On the one hand, there is the statement: "There is an epistemological break between God and human being because of God's exaltedness, otherness, and absolute freedom" (which is what we hear from Barth and the medieval nominalists). On the other hand, there is the statement: "There must be an epistemological break because God's truth always tends to be subsumed under a system of thought which puts salvation under human control" (which is what we hear Luther – and with him Bonhoeffer – say). Where Luther rejected the scholastic understanding of salvation as a grafting of a doctrine of justification onto Aristotelian virtue ethics coupled with Aristotelian causation theory, Bonhoeffer, in *Act and Being*, similarly points to how human systems of thought fall into the trap of wanting to determine where revelation begins and where it ends or where it can and cannot take place.

There might be a slight shift in emphasis between Luther and Bonhoeffer here. Luther, working within a system of theological thought that accepts the notion of a revealing God, rejects that system's tampering with the radical grace of God in Christ. Bonhoeffer, for his part, working in a context in which revelation as such has been problematized, needs to – in addition to "liberating" God's grace – face the challenges modernity poses. Luther erects the barrier of an epistemological critique to safeguard grace; Bonhoeffer needs to overcome the epistemological barrier erected by transcendental idealism in order to make grace available again. Considering what is at stake here, however, it becomes clear that the difference is ultimately one of context and not of substance. If Luther safeguards what is at stake in our salvation in Christ, Bonhoeffer safeguards that which makes this salvation conceptually possible by allowing revelation to appear on its own terms. Both, then, see salvation as God's self-revelation in Christ. This revelation should not be tampered with, regardless of whether the tampering is achieved by integrating final causation in one's system of thought (realism), by considering oneself at the mercy of Monster Uncertainties I and II (the *potentia absoluta Dei* and the *facientibus quod in se est* of

[40] Martin Luther, *Luther's Large Catechism* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1967), 133.

nominalism), or by means of a self that demarcates its own boundary (e. g., act theologies). Both scholasticism and idealism make revelation and salvation less than it is when it is in fact wholly God's.

With Bonhoeffer and Barth thus removed from each other with regard to the methodological progression in their theologies and Bonhoeffer and Luther brought very close together in their theological starting points, intuitions, and presuppositions, it is time to create space for another way of reading the theology of the cross. This will bring me to explore yet another important connection between Luther and Bonhoeffer.

5.3.1 *Theologia Crucis* as Community

Luther wrote his treatise on holy communion, *The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ, and the Brotherhoods*,[41] in 1519, mere months after his *Heidelberg Disputation* in which he presented the theologian of the cross as the only true theologian. In this treatise, he "offered a practical interpretation of what the body of Christ means in the life of those who would seek to die as well as to live like Christians."[42] I choose this treatise of Luther for good reasons. Bonhoeffer's *Sanctorum Communio*, the dissertation that preceded *Act and Being*, takes its title from Luther's own use of the terminology of 'community of saints' in this treatise. Furthermore, both in *Sanctorum Communio* and *Act and Being*, Bonhoeffer frequently refers to this treatise.[43] In a significant way, *Sanctorum Communio* ought to be read together with *Act and Being*. But here I shall focus on creating room for the concept of community within the understanding of Luther's *theologia crucis* as preparatory work for Bonhoeffer's understanding of *theologia crucis* as being.

In the first paragraph of the treatise, Luther makes immediately clear that the sacrament is itself an outward sign that needs to be accompanied by two things: (a) an "internal and spiritual"[44] significance as well as (b) faith that makes "both of them together operative and useful."[45] The link between sacrament and faith and its spiritual significance leads to Luther's discussion of the church as a community of saints (indeed, a *communio sanctorum*): "The significance or effect of this sacrament is fellowship of all the saints."[46] Partaking in the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ means partaking in this fellowship and becoming incorporated into Christ's body. Luther then discusses how this partaking has both a sorrowful and a joyful connotation. It is sorrowful in that we share in the

41 LW 35/1:49–73; See also: DBWE 1:179–83, 190 and DBWE 2:120, 123.
42 LW 35:47.
43 DBWE 1:179–83, 190; DBWE 2:120, 123.
44 LW 35:49.
45 LW 35:49.
46 LW 35:50.

sufferings of Christ and the saints and it is joyful in that we share in the benefits of Christ and the saints. Luther says,

> This fellowship consists in this, that all the spiritual possessions of Christ and his saints are shared with and become the common property of him who receives this sacrament. Again all sufferings and sins also become common property; and thus love engenders love in return and [mutual love] unites.[47]

I am concerned here to show that this treatise has a deep historical and material connection with the theology of the cross. The connection is, as I noted, historical since Luther wrote the treatise soon after the *Heidelberg Disputation*. If Luther presents the theology of the cross as an all-encompassing mode of doing theology in the *Disputation*[48] there is little reason to think that this theology is suddenly immaterial to the treatise. Materially, the treatise connects with the *theologia crucis* at the following points.

(1) Luther makes it clear that the sacrament is not, as official Roman Catholic teaching would have it, *opus operatum*, i. e., that it is operational irrespective of the attitude or condition of the heart of the believer, that is without faith. Rather, it is an *opus operantis*, a work that is performed through and on the basis of faith (indeed the faith that does not rely on its own works and therefore the direct act of receiving God's grace through faith). This strikes at the heart of the *theologia crucis*, namely justification by faith and not by works as the antithesis to the nominalist idea of *facientibus quod in se est, Deus non denegat gratiam* (doing what is in oneself, God will not deny grace).

(2) Rather than simply explaining what the sacrament means as sacrament or engaging in a discussion of transubstantiation and how to understand it, we find Luther constantly moving from the sacrament to a sacramental understanding of the community. This sacramental understanding is not a mere theological abstraction. After all, this sacrament concerns the body and blood of Christ whose benefits befall the believers, the Christ who bears the sins and sufferings of this life for and with us. But this again brings us to the cross. The "this is my body" is the body of Christ in and through which God reveals Godself *sub contrario* (in suffering and human flesh), but it signifies at the same time the spiritual body of the church of which Christ is the Head. As Luther writes:

> When Christ instituted the sacrament, he said, "This is my body which is given for you, this is my blood which is poured out for you. As often as you do this, remember me." It is as if he were saying, "I am the Head, I will be the first to give myself for you. I will make your suffering and misfortune my own and will bear it for you. So that you in your turn may do the same for me and for one another, allowing all things to be common property, in me, and with me."[49]

[47] LW 35:51.
[48] LW 31:39–70.
[49] LW 35:55.

(3) The theology of the cross has at its heart the happy exchange in which a God revealed in Christ takes our sin and suffering and justifies us by faith alone. It is in the sacrament that we take this body and blood of Christ, this human and suffering manifestation of God to be our own, *contrary* to our human expectations, thus receiving salvation, *contrary* to our human expectations, resulting in our participation with Christ and the believers, *contrary*, again, to our human expectations. As the cross is thus reflected in the sacrament of the body and the blood, so it is reflected in the spiritual body that believers participate in. Christ and the community take my sorrows (Anfechtungen): "[I know that] all my misfortune is shared with Christ and the saints."[50] Moreover, I take Christ's sorrows and those of the community:

> When you have partaken of this sacrament, therefore, or desire to partake of it, you must in turn share the misfortunes of the fellowship … As love and support are given you, you in turn must render love and support to Christ in his needy ones. You must feel with sorrow all the dishonor done to Christ in his holy Word, all the misery of Christendom, all the unjust suffering of the innocent with which the world is everywhere filled to overflowing.[51]

(4) The partaking of Christ's body is not simply a theological reality, but an experiential one in which the spiritual reality of the believers' unification with Christ and with one another is expressed by the very suffering love that characterizes the *theologia crucis*. Just as the *theologia crucis* confronts us with a revelation of God that happens *sub contrario* so the holiness of the *sanctorum communio* is expressed in the sufferings of Christ. Says Luther,

> In this sacrament, therefore, man is given through the priest a sure sign from God himself that he is thus united with Christ and his saints and has all things in common [with them], that Christ's sufferings and life are his own, together with the lives and sufferings of all the saints.[52]

And again:

> … man must be willing to share all the burdens and misfortunes of Christ and his saints, the cost as well as the profit.[53]

The sacrament of the body of Christ (namely, the Christ who is on the cross) exemplifies what the spiritual body of Christ should be like (namely, a community of the cross).

I conclude this subsection on the strong connection in Luther between the body of Christ on the cross and the body of Christ as church with a quotation

[50] LW 35:54.
[51] LW 35:54.
[52] LW 35:52.
[53] LW 35:53.

from *Sanctorum Communio* to show that this is exactly what Bonhoeffer is after:

> Because, however, the entire new humanity is established in reality in Jesus Christ, *he represents the whole history of humanity in his historical life*. Christ's history is marked by the fact that in it humanity-in-Adam is transformed into humanity-in-Christ. As the human body of Jesus Christ became the resurrection body, so the *corpus Adae* [body of Adam] became the *corpus Christi* [body of Christ]. The former as well as the latter leads through death and resurrection; the human body – the *corpus Adae* – had to be broken, in order for the body of the resurrection – the *corpus Christi* – to be created.[54]

Since in Bonhoeffer's thought this idea of the church as *corpus Christi* is deeply connected with his concepts of *Stellvertretung* and community-of-the-cross, I will say more on this below.

5.3.2 *Sanctorum Communio Sub Contrario*

What I take away from Luther's treatise *The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ* ... with regard to the *theologia crucis* is the following. The *theologia crucis* is not merely a method of doing theology or a formal mechanism to produce certain theological statements. The *theologia crucis* is not merely cognitive. Though it certainly addresses epistemological questions in a profound way, it does not linger there. This is because the *theologia crucis*, as Luther indicates in the *Heidelberg Disputation*, is about a posture rather than a method. As a posture, the *theologia crucis* stands at the heart of a way of doing theology and a way of being related to Christ. This posture finds its expression and enactment in the body of Christ. This posture is a reflection of the love of God as it comes to us in Christ in the form of self-giving love, that the believer reenacts and performs in the form of self-giving love for our sisters and brothers. As such the church, as *sanctorum communio* enacts and embodies the *theologia crucis* in which its *sanctus* is – a true *sub contrario* – to be like Christ.

I have thus shown the connection between the *theologia crucis* and the body of Christ as community.[55] It is important to note the movement that has been made from a purely epistemological application of the *theologia crucis* that tends to stress the notion of distance (one cannot have God as an object of knowledge) to one that emphasizes presence. This presence focuses on the givenness of Christ on the cross (without neglecting Christ's life and resurrection)

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[54] DBWE 1:147.

[55] For those who might not entirely be convinced that the way I have argued being and community to be an important aspect of the *theologia crucis*, there is an even stronger argument. It should not be forgotten that in the *Heidelberg Disputation*, where Luther introduces the *theologia crucis*, he actually does not talk about a theology as such. Rather, he speaks of the theologian of the cross. It is not so much an epistemology as it is a form of existence, i. e., the manifestation of a certain being, that is the location of the new theology Luther speaks of.

as God's self-revelation. This givenness is concrete and historical as Bonhoeffer continually emphasizes (yet without becoming an object of knowledge for the dominating power of human thought). By way of Luther's treatise on the sacrament of the body of Christ, I connect the notion of presence with that of community. Inscribing community as an important concept for the theology of the cross frees the way to discuss the concept of being *vis-à-vis* the *theologia crucis*. The epistemological concern is not neglected[56] but overcome as I turn to being, the second major topic in *Act and Being*. This eventually brings me to the discussion in chapter six of *Dasein* and the Heideggerian influence in *Act and Being*. There I hope to show that in Bonhoeffer's view, *theologia crucis* is, starting with a contingent concept of being, a synthesis or coordination of both being and act. But I must first say something very specific about the kind of community that the church is as the *sanctorum communio*.

5.3.3 *Stellvertreter*: Community-of-the-Cross

Only when one understands the church as a community participating in the God who is revealed *sub contrario* can one correctly understand the concept of *Stellvertretung*. This term, usually translated with "vicarious representative action," is ubiquitous in Bonhoeffer literature and, correctly, always understood as a term with an ethical connotation.[57]

While indeed the *Stellvertreter* plays an important role in Bonhoeffer's thought, the term itself does not occur in *Act and Being*. That might seem a good enough reason to not spend too much time on it in this study. However, since the concept of the church is of great importance for Bonhoeffer's construction of theological method in *Act and Being* there is actually all the more reason to be alert to its meaning and function as a concept of the cross. Since *Act and Being* and *Sanctorum Communio* should be understood as belonging together – in fact, the entire movement of participation in the being of revelation through faith so important in *Act and Being* is already treated in brief in *Sanctorum Communio*[58] – one cannot simply ignore *Stellvertretung*. If my aim

[56] At this stage it is necessary to point out that when I say that epistemology is not neglected but by-passed in favor of being, I mean by that the epistemological question is taken up in the experience of being and community. In light of how Bonhoeffer with the help of Heidegger inscribes revelation into the being of the church community, one could perhaps say that he was developing a form of social epistemology that would only come in vogue in the 1980s with thinkers like Alvin Goldman and Steve Fuller while there are even some similarities with Thomas Kuhn.

[57] Bonhoeffer actually strongly denies that the concept of *Stellvertretung* denotes an "ethical possibility" (DBWE 1:156). What he means, of course is that being a *Stellvertreter* is something that no one can do out of their own resources. While it is not a possibility, it certainly has a strong ethical connotation in the sense that in presencing Christ as the *Sanctorum Communio*, we know ourselves called to be for the other even when that implies an ultimate sacrifice.

[58] Note especially the following passages in *Sanctorum Communio*: "*The reality of the*

is to perform a reading of *Act and Being* as *theologia crucis* then it appears that the treatment of the concept of *Stellvertretung* in *Sanctorum Communio* is of a preparatory nature for the way the concept of church functions in *Act and Being*.

Bonhoeffer initially introduces the concept of *Stellvertretung* as "the problem of *Stellvertretung*."[59] What he really means is the problem of how sinful individual human beings, who in spite of their appearance are not taken up in a communal whole, can be related as a social whole to the one Christ. The idea of *Stellvertreter* is actually the answer to this problem. While there is no vicarious representation in Adam, since human beings are self-incurved, and while all of humanity falls ever anew with each individual, the church has been brought into real community with God in Christ. "This is essential to *real Stellvertretung*." As such the "principle of *Stellvertretung* can become fundamental for the church-community of God in and through Christ." Christ's vicarious representative action brings the church into existence. As such it is not merely fundamental to but also characteristic of the church. As a concept, it combines sociological-communal as well as vicarious-soteriological aspects.

The role of the *Stellvertreter* is initially applied to the person of Christ. His death is the unique and ultimate *Stellvertretung* in that this death is an outworking of the human misconception of law. It is a death in this world, for this world, in accordance with the principle of this world. But as much as Christ thus fulfills the expectations of this world the fulfillment of the law is accomplished through love and thus the Jewish understanding of the law is overcome.[60] The claim of God too is taken up in this dying: "His love had to become complete by fulfilling the law – that is, the claim of God and of human beings – even to death."[61] It is essential for Bonhoeffer that the notion of Jesus bearing God's punishment is part of the understanding of Jesus's death on the cross, since "vicarious representative action for sin does take place."[62] Bonhoeffer says,

> In the death of Jesus on the cross God's judgment and wrath are carried out on all the self-centeredness of humanity, which had distorted the meaning of the law. This distortion brought the Son of God to the cross.[63]

The death and resurrection of Jesus, then, result in

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church is a reality of revelation, a reality that essentially must be either believed or denied" (DBWE 1:127) and "Rather, God established the reality of the church, of humanity pardoned in Jesus Christ – not religion, but revelation, *not religious community, but church*" (DBWE 1:153).

[59] DBWE 1:120.
[60] DBWE 1:148.
[61] DBWE 1:149.
[62] DBWE 1:155.
[63] DBWE 1:150.

the paradoxical reality of a community-of-the-cross, which contains within itself the contradiction of simultaneously representing utmost solitude and closest community. *And this is the specifically Christian church-community*.[64]

As it turns out, because of the close connection between Christ and the church-community, the church becomes itself a community of *Stellvertreters* and itself the one *Stellvertreter* in and for the world.

… Christ died for the church-community so that it may live *one* life, *with each other* and *for each other*. This being-for-each-other must now be actualized through acts of love. *Three great, positive possibilities of acting for each other* in the community of saints present themselves: *self-renouncing*, *active work for the neighbor; intercessory prayer; and, finally, the mutual forgiveness of sins* in God's name. All of these involve giving up the self "for" my neighbor's benefit, with the readiness to do and bear everything in the neighbor's place, indeed, if necessary, to sacrifice myself, standing as a *substitute* for my neighbor. Even if a purely vicarious action is rarely actualized, it is intended in every genuine act of love.[65]

Bonhoeffer takes the idea of human beings as *Stellvertreter* very seriously. He even suggests that the love motivating this "demands that we give up our own advantage. This may even include our community with God itself."[66] With this seriousness comes the realization that *Stellvertretung* is not something we freely take upon ourselves as an ethical task, or as an ideal to be realized. It is a divine gift from God. Bonhoeffer notes

The idea of *Stellvertretung* is therefore possible only so long as it is based on an offer by God; this means it is in force only in Christ and Christ's church-community. *It is not an ethical possibility or standard, but solely the reality of the divine love for the church-community; it is not an ethical, but a theological concept*.[67]

In his concluding remarks on the concept of *Stellvertretung* Bonhoeffer connects the ideas of *Christus als Gemeinde Existierend* with *Stellvertretung* which leads into a further explication of the church-community as *Sanctorum Communio*.[68] All these partially overlapping concepts point to one and the same idea, namely, that in and through Christ, Christ's community acts vicariously as Christ, first as members toward members in the community (internally), but secondly as the church in and for the world (outwardly). *Stellvertretung* is what the *sanctorum communio* does as a Christ in the world,[69] thereby being *Christus als Gemeinde existierend*, or, as Bonhoeffer elsewhere states: by being the community of the cross.[70] This cluster of concepts helps to understand how the

64 DBWE 1:151.
65 DBWE 1:184.
66 DBWE 1:184.
67 DBWE 1:156.
68 DBWE 1:190–1.
69 DBWE 1:187.
70 DBWE 1:151.

church is an integral part of the *theologia crucis*. This interpretation is supported by the fact that Bonhoeffer in the same passages speaks of the *corpus Adae* becoming the *corpus Christi* in analogy to the death and resurrection of Christ's physical body.

What is of importance to this project is, first, that it is the concept of *Stellvertretung* that allows us to understand in what way the many become one, not merely as an empirical social community of individual persons, but as the *Gesamtperson* (collective person) in Christ. Because Christ vicariously represents the community, the community is *Christus als Gemeinde Existierend* and, as such, it is a revelatory reality created by God in Christ. It is therefore much more than a sociological phenomenon. Secondly, since the *Stellvertreter* becomes one with the ones who are being vicariously represented, the church itself becomes a *Stellvertreter*, both internally (the members on behalf of each other) and externally (the church community on behalf of the whole world). And here too, the conclusion follows that the act of *Stellvertretung* this community engages in is a revelatory reality. Not only is the church God's revelation in and through Christ, the church's self-giving participation in the world is itself divine revelation! In a very real sense, the *Stellvertretung* of the church cannot be said to be merely a derivative of the original *Stellvertretung* of Christ since the church *is* Christ actualized through proclamation, sacrament, and the vicarious ministry of its members. The church *is* the body of Christ. *Theologia crucis* thus embraces intimately the community of the *simul iusti et peccatores*. Note Bonhoeffer's conclusion:

> This results for us in *the paradoxical reality of a community-of-the-cross*, which contains within itself the contradiction of simultaneously representing utmost solitude and closest community. *And this is the specifically Christian church-community*.[71]

5.4 Grafting Presence onto Being

An examination of the encounter between Bonhoeffer and Barth gave way to an investigation of two methodological approaches that allegedly orient themselves toward Luther and Luther's theology of the cross: distance and presence. I identified theologies of the cross expressed in idealistic terms of epistemological distance as forms of act-theology that surrender to the "question that Kant and idealism have posed for theology."[72] Barth's epistemological distance is such an act theology. But what about being theologies? And what does Bonhoeffer mean by being? Or, to put the question within the frame of this chapter, how does one connect presence with being?

[71] DBWE 1:151.
[72] DBWE 2:27.

Bonhoeffer himself gives the answer already at the beginning of his dissertation. His attempt is to bring together "the concern of true transcendentalism and the concern of true ontology in an 'ecclesiological form of thinking.'"[73] The being Bonhoeffer seeks to elucidate is that of the church. This is a concept of being that is given in grace[74] since "there are in theology no ontological categories that are primarily based in creation."[75] The ontological category of the church becomes the starting point for a new epistemological/hermeneutical approach that honors, on the one hand, Barth's idealistic (act) concern that God cannot and should not become an object for human knowledge and, on the other hand, the ontological concern (being), that revelation needs to have a certain embodiment and a certain historicized givenness in this world. This latter ontological concern is primarily related to the insight that the *theologia crucis* yields a genuine presence in the body of Jesus Christ. For this very reason, I discussed Luther's *The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ, and the Brotherhoods* so as to provide evidence for Luther's own insistence that *theologia crucis* implies presence and being in the body of Christ, which is the church. How can revelation be so real that it can be touched and recognized for what it is without it ever being conceptually mastered by the human intellect? Bonhoeffer's answer requires an investigation of his encounter with and use of the philosophy of Martin Heidegger as found in *Being and Time*. Only when that task is completed, will it become possible to perform a reading of *Act and Being* as *theologia crucis*.

[73] DBWE 2:32.

[74] As a true theologian of the cross, Bonhoeffer – even when opting for the concept of being – refuses to have a beginning point outside of revelation.

[75] DBWE 2:32.

Chapter 6

Christ's and Christs: Bonhoeffer and Heidegger

6.1 With and Without the Apostrophe

Jaroslav Pelikan once provided a unique translation of Luther's wordplay on the word *Christi*. Luther wrote to Bugenhagen on July 5, 1527, the following words: "*Christi sumus in nominativo et genitivo*."[1] In the genitive singular we are Christ's (being justified through faith) and because we are, in our participation with Christ, we also become Christs in the nominative plural.[2] Pelikan had the perfect translation for this: "We are Christ's both with and without the apostrophe."[3] With the apostrophe we are designated as belonging *to* Christ; we are Christ's. Without the apostrophe we are understood to be Christs in the plural. Belonging to Christ we are sent into the world as Christ. Another way of saying this is the following: The church is the body of Christ.[4] This anecdote about Pelikan could easily serve as the perfect conclusion to the previous chapter. Yet, I've chosen it as the beginning of the current chapter and even took the current chapter's title from it. I have done this because it provides the best introduction to the complex appropriation of Heidegger's ontological phenomenology that Bonhoeffer pursues in *Act and Being*. As I engage the rather abstract conceptuality of the philosophical theology of *Act and Being* it is important to keep in mind that it is all about Christ existing as church community, about being Christ's and Christs.

In fact, Pelikan's ingenious translation above provides the backbone of the current chapter. It is along these lines of *belonging* to and *becoming* (like) Christ that one needs to think of the influence of Heidegger on Bonhoeffer. Heidegger's phenomenology of being, with its ideas about *Dasein* and *Dasein's* discovery of its being in the world, provides all Bonhoeffer needed to articulate the primacy of God's revelation in Christ for his own time. With it, Bonhoeffer has the con-

[1] See LW 22:x. The English translation is literally: "We are Christ's both in the genitive and the nominative."

[2] See Bonhoeffer's allusion to the believer becoming a Christ to the other: DBWE 2:113.

[3] LW 22:x. See also LW 7:113.

[4] I must make clear right away that Bonhoeffer utilizes the concept of ecclesial being within his problem of theological method. The goal in *Act and Being* is not to elaborate a doctrine of ecclesiology or engage in practical theology – even though the practical implications are enormous – rather, it is to show how ecclesial being aids the epistemological/hermeneutical apprehension and understanding of revelation.

ceptual tools to rearticulate Luther's theology of the cross. As I made clear in the previous chapters, Bonhoeffer was unprepared to prioritize revelation in a Barthian fashion, based as it is on an idealist epistemology that denies the possibility of knowledge of God (on the basis of human thought) and affirms it (on the basis of God's grace). A faithful execution of the *theologia crucis* demands a different approach.

What this approach looks like after Kant, structurally and systematically, is something which one may be inclined to think Luther was not able to give to post-Kantian theology. After all – and this has been discussed twice before – as a pre-modern thinker, Luther did not face the challenges to the idea of revelation that Barth, Bonhoeffer, and every theologian from Schleiermacher onward had to face. How does God speak when the Enlightenment has bequeathed us an ugly ditch of enormous historical proportions and when Kant, in his own effort to save God from human rationality, has managed to dig one of his own, making God a mere postulate of practical reason? Barth, for his part, proceeds to extend Luther's epistemological critique of reason to his entire theological method by resorting to Kant's transcendental idealism.

For Bonhoeffer, however, this will not do, since Barth's epistemological axis subverts the two important axioms of the *theologia crucis*, namely (a) that the beginning point for theology is not a human possibility and (b) that yet, in spite of that absence of human possibility, God is present in Christ.

Bonhoeffer was one of the first theologians in modernity to take a radically different route. Still on board with Barth's *a priori*, namely that theology begins with God's *a priori* and not ours, Bonhoeffer also agrees with Barth's statement that theology can only be done as a *theologia crucis*. It is, then, precisely there, in the faithful execution of the *theologia crucis* that Bonhoeffer forges an alternative solution to Barth's epistemological one. Luther may have left open the question of what a theology of the cross looks like in the modern world; that question simply did not exist for Luther. He was, however, clear enough as to what its characteristics ought to be. Bonhoeffer turns to Luther, then, for his own approach.

The *theologia crucis* is, in its deconstructive aspect, a critique of scholastic rationality in its Aristotelian-Platonic metaphysical approach to reality in which God is to a large extent thought after philosophical principles. On the constructive side, the *theologia crucis* elaborates God's self-revelation in Jesus. The theology of the cross means that the pinnacle of this self-revelation finds its expression on the cross as the absurd *sub contrario* (opposite) to what we (as human beings in our human thinking) normally expect God to be like. It counters human reason, and yet is present! God is among us in humility and suffering. God is among us as one of us. God is present in the body of Jesus. In other words, touch Jesus's bloody flesh and his broken bones and you have touched God. The theology of the cross, then, is focused primarily on the cross (which

is understood to include Jesus's life, death, and resurrection). This focus lingers there and refrains from speculating about the hidden God, i. e., that aspect, part, or characteristic of God that we simply don't know about.

Here we already have an implicit critique of an all too confident metaphysics and, in a way, of those epistemological approaches that aim to know of God that which we cannot know. Similarly, the emphasis on the body of Christ, i. e., the incarnation, points the way to an affirmation of embodied reality, of creation, of human existence in this world. Dogmatics ought to serve lived reality instead of forcing lived reality into the ideal systematic mold it has constructed. The *on-the-cross* and the *in-front-of-the-cross*, as well as the *from-the-cross-to-the-world*, are the characteristics of the theology of the cross along the lines of which Bonhoeffer is going to construct and articulate his own version of the *theologia crucis*. These cross-related prepositions all come together in the body of Christ. The concept of being is how Bonhoeffer gives voice to the body. And for this he turns to Heidegger. Indeed, as noted in chapter two, Bonhoeffer prefers realism over idealism, without thereby sacrificing the concerns of idealism.

I will proceed, first of all, by examining the literature. Four theologians have written on the relationship between Bonhoeffer and Heidegger: Charles Marsh, Steven Plant, Christiane Tietz-Steiding, and Michael DeJonge. Analyses from four different perspectives will help to find a grounding for my project of linking Heidegger to Bonhoeffer, centering the *theologia crucis* in Bonhoeffer's theology. I will then exclusively focus on the interaction between Bonhoeffer and Heidegger in *Act and Being* in an effort to present *Act and Being* as Bonhoeffer's contemporary and original theology of the cross. Lastly, I will eventually settle on understanding the relationship between Bonhoeffer and Heidegger as one of analogy, which will lead to the analogical use of philosophical concepts in Bonhoeffer. Understanding the analogical use of Heidegger will allow for a reasonably complete picture of Bonhoeffer's *theologia crucis*. After that, the last chapter will be an attempt to complete a reading of *Act and Being* as *theologia crucis*.

6.2 Heidegger in Bonhoeffer Scholarship

Thinking of Bonhoeffer in relation to Heidegger is uncommon in the literature on Bonhoeffer. In some obvious ways, the two couldn't be further apart. Bonhoeffer died a martyr at the hands of the Nazis because of his collusion in a plan to assassinate Hitler, while Heidegger sided with the Nazi regime. Heidegger was a methodological atheist while Bonhoeffer was a theologian who bridged modern and classical theology and attempted to think God first. At first glance, there is little in *Act and Being* that seems to suggest that Bonhoeffer really ap-

preciated Heidegger all that much. In fact, after discussing Heidegger in *Act and Being* as well as in the *Inaugural Speech*, Heidegger drops from Bonhoeffer's radar altogether. The only possible link could be Bonhoeffer's repeated discussion of human conscience in which there seems to be an affinity with what Heidegger has to say about it.[5] More hopeful approaches, then, seem to be those that link Bonhoeffer to Luther and Barth (obviously), as well as to Bultmann and Holl. On the philosophical side, connections are often noticed between Bonhoeffer and Kant, Hegel, and Dilthey.

While the above is true, both Bonhoeffer and Heidegger are known to be profoundly influenced by Luther's thought.[6] Moreover, a close reading of *Act and Being* brings to light Bonhoeffer's appreciation of Heidegger, as well as his critique of the philosopher. Heidegger's introduction to his own *Being and Time* displays a concern that Bonhoeffer also wrestled with, namely, that of overcoming modernist epistemology with its cognitive obsession over the subject object relationship. The image of the modern sheltered white male, withdrawn into the buffered self, dispassionately contemplating the world and mastering it in numbers, syllogisms, and self-defined categories,[7] had faded and a new way of thinking had announced itself with Husserl and phenomenology. Heidegger writes:

> Thus the phenomenon of being-in has for the most part been represented exclusively by a single exemplar – knowing the world. This has not only been the case in epistemology; for even practical behavior has been understood as behavior which is not theoretical and 'atheoretical.' Because knowing has been given this priority, our understanding of its ownmost kind of being is led astray, and thus being-in-the-world must be delineated more precisely with reference to knowing the world, and must itself be made visible as an existential 'modality' of being-in.[8]

Heidegger thus sought new ways to think about the world in which philosophy did not simply see that world as an object for knowledge to be mastered. One's own existence is implicated in and practicipates in the reality of the world. Knowing can therefore not be abstracted from being. Bonhoeffer's own assessment of the task of theology has a similar attention to the problem that Enlightenment rationalism poses for human knowing *vis-à-vis* the knowledge of God. In *Act and Being* he writes:

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[5] DBWE 1:108, DBWE 2:69, 98, 138–61, DBWE 3:128–130. One should not forget, however, that Bonhoeffer's discussion is no less related to Bonhoeffer's response to Karl Holl's Lutheran theology of conscience.

[6] See for instance: Duane Armitage, *Heidegger's Pauline and Lutheran Roots* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 13–32. It might well be that Heidegger's indebtedness to Luther led to certain emphases and themes that were amenable to Bonhoeffer's retrieval of Luther. An investigation into this, however, is outside the scope of this study.

[7] See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 285, 363.

[8] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, rev. ed. by Dennis J. Schmidt (New York: HarperPerennial, 2010), 55.

At the heart of the problem is the struggle with the formulation of the question that Kant and idealism have posed for theology. It is a matter of the formation of genuine theological concepts, the decision one comes to between a transcendental-philosophical and an ontological interpretation of theological concepts. It is a question of the "objectivity" of the concept of God and an adequate concept of cognition, the issue of determining the relationship between "the being of God" and the mental act which grasps that being.[9]

Like Heidegger, Bonhoeffer will present knowing "as an existential modality of being-in." Or to put it another way, the concept of being provides for Bonhoeffer the basis for a hermeneutical participatory epistemology. A certain knowing comes to fruition by way of hermeneutical questioning *vis-à-vis* its own identity and self-involving praxis with regard to the internal and external relations of this being.

Just as Heidegger was searching for a way to see understanding and knowledge of the world as a function of life itself, so Bonhoeffer was looking for a way to understand faith not as an exclusive function of the human ratio but as part of an integrated whole in which both the act and the being of faith were seen as inseparably belonging together. There is no knowledge of God without participation in Christ. There is no participation in Christ without participation in the world. As such the title *Act and Being* is both a nod and a corrective to Heidegger's *Being and Time*.[10]

However, being, limited by time and earthly context, is not complete. It needs to be acted upon from outside. Since, according to Bonhoeffer's thought, this is only possible in and through Christ, Heidegger's methodological atheism does not suffice. The nod refers to the acts of faith and knowing, which need to be integrated into being in order to become genuine knowing.

This, then, is a preliminary way of understanding the influence of Heidegger upon Bonhoeffer, who, it should be remembered, was considered a Heideggerian by his mentor.[11] For the moment, all of this may sound a bit cryptic, but it should at least be clear, at this point, that Heidegger's notion of being is important for Bonhoeffer's proposal.

While not many have attempted to investigate the relationship between Bonhoeffer and Heidegger (which, as noted, is not surprising given the sparse efforts to trace Bonhoeffer's intellectual heritage), those who have done so have discovered that Bonhoeffer's theology shows a remarkable affinity with Heidegger's phenomenology of being. While Marsh, Plant, DeJonge, and Tietz-

[9] DBWE 2:27.

[10] This is not to deny the suggestion in the second chapter that Bonhoeffer's title is also analogous to Barth's *Fate and Idea* with the concepts in reverse order.

[11] Stephen Plant, "'In the Sphere of the Familiar': Heidegger and Bonhoeffer," in *Bonhoeffer's Intellectual Formation: Theology and Philosophy in His Thought*, ed. Peter Frick, in *Religion in Philosophy and Theology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 314. See also, Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 129–130.

Steiding do not exactly agree as to what precisely this affinity entails, their work shows enough of an overlap to warrant attention and hope for a faithful attempt to link the Heideggerian influence to the *theologia crucis*.[12]

6.2.1 Charles Marsh

Charles Marsh wrote a paper on the relationship between Bonhoeffer and Heidegger in 1992, of which the main theme is the critical assessment of Heidegger by Bonhoeffer.[13] The latter criticizes the former with regards to (a) the concepts of the potentiality of *Dasein* (which leads to self-certainty rather than an acknowledgment of the *cor curvum in se*); (b) *Dasein*'s personal continuity (which can only be the work of Christ); (c) *Dasein*'s being-with Others (which in Heidegger gets canceled in favor of the call to authentic existence, which is a *Sein-zum-Tode*, being-towards-death). This is not to say that Marsh does not recognize the positive things Bonhoeffer saw in Heidegger: "Bonhoeffer finds certain themes in Heidegger's fundamental ontology congenial to his own theological purposes," agreeing that "these important, and overlooked, philosophical and methodological affinities undoubtedly influence the shape of Bonhoeffer's philosophical theology."[14] Marsh also admits that Bonhoeffer follows Heidegger "in his desire to displace the hegemony of the self-reflective subject"[15] and he sees a parallel between *Dasein*'s questioning of being in Heidegger and Bonhoeffer's Christological "Who are You?"[16] Two years later, in 1994, Marsh published his seminal *Reclaiming Dietrich Bonhoeffer* in which he focused more closely on the pervasive influence of Heidegger on Bonhoeffer. He starts with the observation of the problem both have in common:

> According to Heidegger, one of the pervasive consequences of the Western metaphysical tradition for contemporary theological and philosophical thought is that the question

[12] There are at least three other noteworthy essays on the relationship between Bonhoeffer and Heidegger from Robert Scharlemann (Robert P. Scharlemann, "Authenticity and Encounter: Bonhoeffer's Appropriation and Ontology", *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 46, 1–4 (1992): 253–265.), Jens Zimmerman (Jens Zimmermann, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Heidegger: Two Different Visions of Humanity," in *Bonhoeffer and Continental Thought: Cruciform Philosophy*, ed. Brian E. Gregor and Jens Zimmermann, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), and Brian Gregor (Brian E. Gregor, "Formal Indication, Philosophy, and Theology: Bonhoeffer's Critique of Heidegger," *Faith and Philosophy* 24, 2 (April, 2007): 185–202). The authors of these papers, however, do not focus as much on a constructive appropriation of Heidegger by Bonhoeffer but rather on a critique by Bonhoeffer of Heideggerian ontology. Therefore, their work will not be the main focus.

[13] Charles Marsh, "Bonhoeffer on Heidegger and Togetherness," *Modern Theology* 8, no. 3 (July 1992): 263–264.

[14] Marsh, *Bonhoeffer on Heidegger*, 264.

[15] Marsh, *Bonhoeffer on Heidegger*, 265.

[16] Marsh, *Bonhoeffer on Heidegger*, 267.

of essence is answered by explaining what something is – by attending to the quiddity of a thing.[17]

It is this desire to break free from the epistemological obsession with definitions and descriptions that also marks Bonhoeffer's work. Marsh notes that

> Heidegger's most dramatic break with the metaphysical tradition in his existential phenomenology of human being is his bold rejection of this descriptive procedure. The philosopher should not say what human being is, but only that it is there. Human existence always constricts its significations to the first person singular.[18]

It is this focus on human existence in its concrete context that helps theological reflection to move away from metaphysics and doctrine to lived reality. Precisely on this point lies Bonhoeffer's positive assessment of Heidegger:

> Heidegger's desire to reawaken the question of Being in his analysis of concrete existence, as well as his project of reaching or questioning back to a place anterior to the split of act and being, captured Bonhoeffer's imagination in a decisive way.[19]

Marsh describes four ways Bonhoeffer used Heidegger's thought: 1. "First, Bonhoeffer follows Heidegger in his effort to debunk the hegemony of the self-reflective subject."[20] Bonhoeffer's deviation from Barth is to be found exactly here. Constructing theology in the twentieth century was not to be based on a method that was infused by an idealist epistemology, where method revolves around the question of knowing. Whether this knowing is generated by anthropocentric concepts that derive from human consciousness of the divine (German liberal theology) or denied in favor of a Wholly Other (Barth), the concerns are entirely informed by the self-reflective subject.

2. The deconstructive move is complemented by a positive one that turns to existence in the world as the location for knowledge (as well as for doing theology). "Bonhoeffer thinks Heidegger's analysis of being-in-the-world points a way toward a viable interrelation of being and thought in which mind no longer has priority over being nor is being relegated to a modification of mind."[21]

3. Thirdly,

> fundamental to Heidegger's investigation of the Seinsfrage [question about being] is his distinction between any particular being (Seiende) and being itself (Sein). Heidegger thinks that careful reflection on this distinction can facilitate the overcoming of the onto-theological mistake of identifying highest being and God.[22]

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17 Marsh, *Reclaiming Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 112.
18 Marsh, *Reclaiming Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 112.
19 Marsh, *Reclaiming Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 117.
20 Marsh, *Reclaiming Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 117.
21 Marsh, *Reclaiming Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 117.
22 Marsh, *Reclaiming Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 119.

For Bonhoeffer, the question of God is not a search for that being among beings in the world that is the highest being. Rather, it is the concrete presence of God in Christ that presents itself to *Dasein*.

4. Fourthly, Heidegger helps Bonhoeffer to conceive of the encounter with Christ as something that cannot be classified in a human system. I quote Marsh at length:

> Bonhoeffer is influenced by Heidegger's claim that the understanding of being is possible through the disciplined exercise of "authentic questioning." As we have seen, Heidegger does not question after a being but after being that there is in Dasein, for Dasein is that one which is distinguished by the capacity of asking the question of its own being (the Sinn von Sein). Correspondingly, in the Christology lectures of 1933, Bonhoeffer considers the classifying schemes of the ontic sciences inappropriate forms for understanding encounter with Christ. He rejects the purely ontic questions of "How?" or "What?" He writes, "When the Counter-logos appears in history, no longer as an idea, but as 'Word' become flesh, there is no longer any possibility of assimilating him into the existing order of the human logos."[23]

Heidegger's phenomenology, then, helps Bonhoeffer to ask the right questions in theology, moving away from a human mastering of the Christological question to a questioning that leaves the otherness intact and allows for a genuine encounter.

6.2.2 Steven Plant

Next, I turn to Steven Plant. In Plant's eyes, the influence of Heidegger is a lasting one in spite of the fact that Bonhoeffer didn't mention Heidegger after his Inaugural Speech. Bonhoeffer's style changed from academic to less formal: Footnotes disappear and Bonhoeffer incorporates many influences into his own work without referencing them. For Plant, the explicit absence of Heidegger thus does not amount to an absence of influence.[24] Plant's interesting thesis is that Heidegger makes his strongest mark on Bonhoeffer's thought, not in *Act and Being* but in the *Christology Lectures*. Again, it is not the number of references that count but the methodology which Bonhoeffer used in the *Christology Lectures* that reveals a clear parallel with the phenomenological method, according to Plant. The Husserlian and Heideggerian projects were, each in its own way, committed to the axiom "*Zu den Sachen selbst!*" We need to pay attention to things in the world as they are in themselves, that is, as they appear to us. Phenomenology aims to focus upon the self-disclosure of objects in the world. According to Plant, this phenomenological method is paralleled in three different ways in the *Christology Lectures*.

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[23] Marsh, *Reclaiming Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 120.
[24] Plant, *In the Sphere of the Familiar*, 307.

First, phenomenologists bracket the epistemological question. This so-called bracketing refrains from mastering its object by way of categories or classifications.[25] It does not hold the object in its knowing grasp. No attempt is made to move from phenomena to the essence. Similarly, Bonhoeffer rejects the "how" question concerning Jesus Christ as a wrongful approach in which the human logos attempts to master the counter-Logos through analysis, intellection, and comprehension.[26] Christ cannot be an object for human knowledge in the sense that Christ's essence is then understood and epistemologically founded on empirical evidence or deduced from first principles.[27]

Second, Heidegger makes a distinction between the ontic and the ontological. The ontic pertains to the specifics of a particular existing thing whereas the ontological is related to the deeper structure of the being that underlies all that exists. The ontic question of classification is similar to the 'how-question' in Bonhoeffer's lecture.[28] It runs aground in the encounter with Christ since Christ cannot be classified ontically, i. e., within the classificatory structures of human reality. Christ exceeds classification. Christ is from outside the world in which *Dasein* finds its being.[29] The counter-Logos addresses the human logos from a completely different plane. It speaks of an ontology that is not to be integrated with the ontic structures of the human *logos,* which masters its world.[30]

Third, Plant sees Bonhoeffer replacing ontology with Christology. By placing Christ where Heidegger talks about being (Sein), *Dasein* is no longer toward death but toward life.[31] For Heidegger, *Dasein* discovers its own Being as that which finds its culmination or fulfillment in death, since, ultimately, we all die. But if Christ takes the place of Being, as Plant suggests Bonhoeffer does, *Dasein* moves from death to life; it participates in God's life through Christ.

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[25] Cf. Plant, *In the Sphere of the Familiar*, 323–326.

[26] DBWE 12:302.

[27] Plant, *In the Sphere of the Familiar*, 323–326.

[28] For those familiar with both Bonhoeffer and Heidegger it may seem more intuitive to compare Bonhoeffer's "how-question" with Heidegger's ontological level of reality. The "how-question" is then the attempt of Dasein to master the deep ontological structures of reality, the being of beings, so as to provide the conditions under which the counter-Logos may appear. After all, this is precisely what Heidegger's methodological atheism aims at and what happens when Heidegger reserves the ontological for philosophy and relegates religion to its own ontic realm. However, whether one interprets the "how-question" posed at the counter-Logos in the Christology Lectures as an ontic or an ontological question, the attempt is in both interpretations a mastery of the counter-Logos by the human logos. This attempt fails because the counter-Logos eludes classification (when the "how-question" is an ontic one) or resists being subsumed under a predetermined ontological principle (when the "how-question" is understood to be an ontological question). Christ is neither a being nor the being of beings (i. e., there is no *analogia entis*).

[29] Plant, *In the Sphere of the Familiar*, 325.

[30] Plant, *In the Sphere of the Familiar*, 325.

[31] Plant, *In the Sphere of the Familiar*, 326.

While this project is limited to the interaction between Bonhoeffer and Heidegger in *Act and Being*, Plant gives a good idea of how phenomenological methodology pervades the theological musings of Bonhoeffer even after his *Habilitationsschrift*. Plant's third point may be taking the parallel too far. Being is not simply replaced by Christology in Bonhoeffer's thought, as Plant suggests. Bonhoeffer is not attempting to provide an alternative to Heidegger's philosophy. Bonhoeffer's Christology is rather *analogous* to Heidegger's concept of Being. I will have to come back later to this analogical use of philosophical concepts by Bonhoeffer.

6.2.3 Michael DeJonge

Michel DeJonge's *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation* probes the interaction of Bonhoeffer with Barth, Holl, Luther, and Heidegger. DeJonge too is convinced that Bonhoeffer was on board with the Barthian objective of preserving the subjectivity or contingency of revelation. "In this sense, the young Bonhoeffer became a Barthian."[32] He too believes that Bonhoeffer did not agree with the way Barth went about achieving that objective, which was accomplished by way of an idealist dialectic that portrays God as the Wholly Other:

> While affirming Barth's turn toward revelation, Bonhoeffer finds that Barth's understanding of revelation leaves many important issues unresolved, and perhaps insoluble.[33]

In order to provide a better alternative to Barth, Bonhoeffer develops a theological method that DeJonge labels "Person-theology."[34] This is a useful term, as will become increasingly clear, since revelation is embodied in the person of Jesus Christ.[35] It is not clear why DeJonge does not relate this to the *theologia crucis* since he calls the Lutheran perspective "indispensable for evaluating Bonhoeffer"[36] and proceeds to explain what specific Lutheran aspects of Bonhoeffer's thought lead him to reject the Reformed Barth.[37] According to DeJonge, Bonhoeffer's Person-theology has everything to do with *Act and Being* and Heidegger. This Person-theology counters the problem of Barth's act-theology (as he calls it) that conceives of revelation as being only in God's act. Revelation in the person of Christ possesses both the act dynamic (i. e., in Christ God acts to encounter humanity but in such a way that God does not become

[32] DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation*, 2.
[33] DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation*, 5.
[34] DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation*, 7–9, 75.
[35] In using the term Person-theology DeJonge certainly does justice to the Lutheran nature of Bonhoeffer's thought since Lutheran theology generally tends to emphasize the enhypostatic (the personal) over the anhypostatic (regarding the two natures) in the Nicaean Christological formulation.
[36] DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation*, 11–12.
[37] DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation*, 83–100.

objectified) and the being dynamic (since revelation gets historicized, embodied, taking up residence among us). According to DeJonge, it is Heidegger who provides Bonhoeffer with the help he needs to achieve conceptual clarity such that Heidegger's thought can be made "fruitful for theology."[38] DeJonge assesses Heidegger's value for Bonhoeffer as follows:

> Bonhoeffer's evaluation of Heidegger, therefore, is twofold. In comparison with other philosophers, Heidegger is superior, since he avoids the philosophical problem of act and being that confounds other philosophies. Nevertheless, from theology's point of view, Heidegger repeats the error of all philosophy, orienting thinking and ultimately the world around the self.[39]

Bonhoeffer made use of Heidegger's concept of "the suspension of act and being in Dasein" (as well as Kant's notion of being in reference to transcendence), resulting in Christian existence as an act-being unity that is open to transcendence.[40] While I will describe the influence of Heidegger in different terms and reach slightly different conclusions, I do believe that in many ways DeJonge's interpretation is correct. He is also on target when he states that Bonhoeffer's appropriation of Heideggerian elements is intended to bolster his specifically Lutheran argument against Barth.[41]

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[38] DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation*, 69.

[39] DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation*, 77–82.

[40] DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation*, 69.

[41] Initially there was one area where I was not sure I could agree with DeJonge. For DeJonge, Bonhoeffer's notion of Dasein as suspended between act and being requires not only Heidegger's thought as source for the idea of suspension but also makes work of Kant's transcendentalism for the concept of being in reference. If Heidegger's ontology provides the ontological concept of church as revelation, DeJonge sees a necessity to support the act-concept with a reference to Kant (DeJonge, 69). This however was problematic in my eyes for the following reasons. (1) The notion of being suspended between act and being is already inherent in Heideggerian ontology since Dasein is always already hermeneutically related to the being of its own being. (2) Wherever Bonhoeffer mentions the suspension of believing Dasein Kant is not mentioned. However, wherever transcendentalism *is* mentioned, it is with a critical eye toward Kant (DBWE 2:35, 41, 60). (3) The suspension between act and being of believing Dasein in the church, finally, is not a Kantian suspension simply because that would be based on an *actus reflexus* whereas Bonhoeffer insists that believing Dasein relates to this revelation not in the form of reflective thinking but in trusting faith, *actus directus*, as part of the personal encounter with Christ who as Christ existing as community never gets to be objectified. It seems that DeJonge thinks that Bonhoeffer needs Kant to transpose the Heideggerian ontology from philosophy to theology. I doubted that this is what is happening. The critique of act approaches in philosophy and theology have sufficiently rendered them useless for Bonhoeffer's own constructive approach. Yet, given the comparison of *Act and Being* and *Fate and Idea* carried out in the second chapter, where one clearly notices how Bonhoeffer, where Barth sunders act/idealism and being/realism, intends to create a synthesis, I have to admit that DeJonge has a point. It should be noted, though, that both the purified act and being concepts with which Bonhoeffer performs a synthesis, are only *analogically* related to Kant and Heidegger, respectively.

6.2.4 Christiane Tietz-Steiding

In her study on Bonhoeffer's *Act and Being*[42] Tietz-Steiding provides an in-depth analysis of how Bonhoeffer interacts with Heidegger's thought in *Being and Time*. In particular, her work is helpful in that she develops a critical analysis of Bonhoeffer's attempt to integrate Heidegger's concepts of *Sein* (being) and *Dasein*. Tietz-Steiding's critique focuses on the coordination of act and being that Bonhoeffer attempts to achieve by way of Heidegger. It is, however, precisely in this coordination that one finds the key to Bonhoeffer's interpretation of Heidegger, as I will argue later, such that the interpretation justifies the coordination Tietz-Steiding is critical of. Bonhoeffer's concern is not faithfulness to Heidegger. He means to deploy Heidegger's coordination of act and being for his own purposes, so as to work out his own solution to the specifically *theological* problem of act and being, or, as we have seen, the problem of realism (being) and idealism (act). Tietz-Steiding's witty title *Bonhoeffers Kritik der verkrümmten Vernunft* points to the criticism Bonhoeffer launches at human attempts to master God and world, a critique that is both philosophical and theological. In *Act and Being*, Bonhoeffer is trying to do more than that, of course. His ultimate aim is to make theological claims possible in a post-Kantian milieu with Heidegger's help. To achieve that, Bonhoeffer certainly needs to critique the "bent" forms of epistemology that were fashioned by both idealists (act-approaches) and realists (being-approaches). Bonhoeffer wonders how in the light of the problem of his day, (i. e., the problem of act and being), theological statements are possible (i. e., how revelation is to be understood). This places his engagement with Heidegger on a different level than simply the criticism of epistemology and invests it with a particular concern.

Tietz-Steiding believes Bonhoeffer misunderstands Heidegger in his interpretation of the concept of *Dasein*. According to her, Bonhoeffer thinks Heidegger's purpose is to continually sublate thinking into being such that the latter is always prioritized. Says Tietz-Steiding,

> Insbesondere *ist* das Dasein, da es immer schon in bestimmte Möglichkeiten hineingeraten ist, immer schon, bevor es sich versteht, genauer: ist es immer schon, als was es sich versteht.[43]

But in Bonhoeffer's understanding this is slightly changed. She says,

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[42] Christiane Tietz-Steiding, *Bonhoeffers Kritik der verkrümmten Vernunft: Eine erkenntnistheoretische Untersuchung* in *Beiträge zur historischen Theologie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999).

[43] Tietz-Steiding, *Bonhoeffers Kritik der verkrümmten Vernunft,* 71. Translation: "Dasein particularly *is*, since it is always already involved in concrete possibilities, always already before it understands itself, more precisely is it always already as that which understands itself."

Gleichzeitig zu dieser ist bei ihm nach Bonhoeffers Beobachtung aber das Sein vom Verstehen abhängig, denn es ist nur im Seinsverständnis zu finden.[44]

The coordination between act and being that Bonhoeffer proposes does not do justice, according to Tietz-Steiding, to Heidegger's intentions. Bonhoeffer equates *Dasein* and consciousness, whereas for Heidegger the concept of *Dasein* denoted "der 'Bezug des Seins zum Wesen des Menschen' und 'das Wesensverhältnis des Menschen zur Offenheit ('Da') des Seins.'"[45] *Dasein* is much more than consciousness; it seeks to highlight human existence in relation to its own being and the being of all of reality.

At this point, Tietz-Steiding makes an important observation. She notes that Bonhoeffer interprets the relationship between *Dasein* and Being (as found in Heidegger) too much in terms of the dialectic of idealism and realism. Though Tietz-Steiding considers this a misunderstanding on Bonhoeffer's part, I tend to consider this precisely the point where Bonhoeffer executes a creative reworking of Heidegger's ontology to make theological claims. Tietz-Steiding is correct in her observation. However, Bonhoeffer is not intent on developing a Heideggerian discourse. After concluding his treatment of Heidegger, Bonhoeffer notes that Heidegger too is not useful for theology,[46] but he also observes that it would be interesting to see how a similar coordination of act and being would work out for theology.[47] If Bonhoeffer transposes the concepts of *Dasein* and being to theology in order to work out such a coordination, he cannot really be faulted for imbuing these concepts with slightly altered content. After all, such alteration is inherent to the transposing. Bonhoeffer uses Heidegger's conceptual framework within the framework of his discussion with Barth that I analyzed in the second and third chapter.

With her reference to the dialectic of idealism and realism, Tietz-Steiding is spot on because, as will become clear in what follows, it is precisely within the dialectic of idealism and realism, or, to be reminded of Barth's preferred nomenclature, fate and idea, that Bonhoeffer wants to work out a coordination of act and being. Of course, this turns out to be more a coordination of idealism and realism than of *Sein* (being) and *Verstehen* (understanding), but it is still executed after the example provided by Heidegger. Keywords in this coordination are "mutual participation" and "hermeneutics." The believing act and the being of revelation participate in each other such that a hermeneutics of revelation is

[44] Tietz-Steiding, *Bonhoeffers Kritik der verkrümmten Vernunft*, 72. Translation: "At the same time, however, is with him, in Bonhoeffer's view, being dependent upon understanding, since it can only be found in the understanding of being."

[45] Tietz-Steiding, *Bonhoeffers Kritik der verkrümmten Vernunft*, 73. Translation: "Rather, according to Heidegger, does the concept of Dasein refer to the 'connection between being and the being of the human person' and 'the fundamental relation of the human being to the openness ('there') of being.'"

[46] DBWE 2:73.

[47] DBWE 2:72.

initiated and formed. Tietz-Steiding, then, is correct in her assessment of Bonhoeffer, but given Bonhoeffer's own constructive proposal that interacts not just with Heidegger's ontology, this is simply not a problem.

6.2.5 Evaluation

Marsh, Plant, DeJonge, and Tietz-Steiding have done amazing work. Like DeJonge, Marsh relates the deviation from Barth to the appropriation of Heidegger because this is how the hegemony of the self-reflective subject, as it slips in through the backdoor in the Reformed act-theology of Barth, is undone. Plant points to the same thing when he refers to the presence of a phenomenological bracketing in the *Christology Lectures*. While those lectures will not be discussed here, Plant's insight only serves to bolster the assertion of the other two.

In Marsh's second positive assessment one notices a positive evaluation of the world as the locus for knowledge in combination with an emphasis on being, which is no longer dominated by dispassionate modernist thought withdrawn into the self. This emphasis returns in DeJonge's notion of Person-theology, where the being of Christ provides historical concreteness and permanence, though in Bonhoeffer's thought there seems to also be a further pointing toward the being of human existence itself.

Marsh's third point concerns a growing post-metaphysical attitude influenced by Heidegger's distinction between the ontic and the ontological question and the hermeneutical nature of *Dasein's* being in the world, resulting in a search for the particular concreteness of God in the man Jesus Christ. Fourthly, Marsh points, like Plant, to the phenomenological bracketing that makes it impossible to assimilate Christ into a category of human thought.

Tietz-Steiding notes how Bonhoeffer's appropriation of Heidegger is slightly flawed and how Bonhoeffer places this appropriation within the context of idealism and realism. In pointing out this flaw she unwittingly forces a closer look at this issue of idealism and realism. It is precisely in the misappropriation, I suggest, that Bonhoeffer's creative genius shows itself. This will be explored in the following pages.

These four theologians have each wrestled with the complex phenomenology of Martin Heidegger much like Bonhoeffer did. The results of their thought intersect and at various moments one thinker reinforces and/or extends the point of another. Where they all fall short, however, is in their failure to relate this to the *theologia crucis*. Bonhoeffer may have been a twentieth-century theologian wrestling with the questions of his time, but his commitment to Luther provided the paradigm and guiding principles for doing so. So whenever Bonhoeffer interacts with a modern philosopher it is always to elucidate or strengthen a basic Lutheran orientation to the world. Bonhoeffer believed that in a contemporary articulation of that source he would find the answer to the questions of his time.

DeJonge understands this. He takes great effort in explaining how Luther fits into the scheme.[48] In the end, however, one important aspect of Bonhoeffer is overlooked. Bonhoeffer's appropriation of Heidegger's *Dasein* and Being is to conceptualize the relationship of ecclesiology and epistemology. A proper understanding and awareness of the *theologia crucis* would have necessarily led to the understanding that Christ and Christ's church are closely connected, such that the being of the body of Christ is at the same time the being of the body of the community, such that the "Person-theology" of DeJonge is synonymous with "Church-theology" or "Body-theology." One of the problems in understanding what Bonhoeffer is after is that the connection of epistemology and ecclesiology (such that ecclesiology provides the key to the epistemological question) is not an intuitive one when the theology of the cross is not consciously in view.

More needs to be said, therefore. Bonhoeffer is articulating and executing a twentieth-century version of the theology of the cross. The contours of that become immediately clear when we read that Bonhoeffer wants to debunk the self-reflective self *via* Heidegger (i. e., deconstruction of rationalistic schemes). Marsh's observation of a positive evaluation of the world as a source and location of knowledge in combination with DeJonge's emphasis on the concrete person of Christ point to the emphasis on embodiment that the *theologia crucis* brings about with its concentration on what is revealed of God in Christ. This feeds immediately into the post-metaphysical tendency that Marsh notes as it aligns itself so well with the rejection by the theology of the cross of that infamous peeking behind the cross into the depths of the hidden God. If all these elements – the critique of rationalistic schemes, locating revelation in the world in the person of Christ, the post-metaphysical attitude, and affirmation of embodied reality – that are so central to the *theologia crucis* come together in Bonhoeffer's appropriation of Heidegger, perhaps something is indeed going on that hasn't been articulated in Bonhoeffer scholarship before. By bringing together epistemology, Christology, and ecclesiology Bonhoeffer is articulating a theology of the cross!

Indeed, Heidegger's phenomenology is used to clarify our knowing as well as our participation in the being of Christ as the church. Heidegger's ontological phenomenology turns into a Christocentric and ethical ecclesiology in which epistemology and existence, method and ethics are blended together. I need to unpack this. But before I can do so, I will have to parse Bonhoeffer's interaction with Heidegger in *Act and Being*.

[48] See also DeJonge's new book on Bonhoeffer's appropriation of Luther's theology: DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Reception of Luther*.

6.3 Bonhoeffer's Evaluation of Heidegger

After introducing the problem of act and being in his *Habilitationsschrift*, Bonhoeffer proceeds with his first chapter, titled *The Problem of Act and Being, Portrayed in a Preparatory Manner as the Epistemological Problem of an Autonomous Understanding of Dasein in Philosophy*.[49] The title is telling in that it betrays what Bonhoeffer sees as the real problem: the epistemology of modernity. Philosophy in the modern era is dominated by the quest for certainty by the autonomous subject. Kant's transcendentalism may have set limits to the ability of consciousness to possess certain knowledge, but the setting of limits only increased the obsession with the question and conditions of possibility. This problem spills over into theology where Barth takes it as a license to prioritize God, while Bonhoeffer in his critique of Barth (and others) shows that this only exacerbates the problem. Though the problem of act and being has a long pedigree in the history of Western thought – as Barth outlines in his *Fate and Idea* – the pressing issue here is specifically that of the Kantian heritage.

An important hint of the direction Bonhoeffer takes is found in the word used for human existence: *Dasein*. This word is unique for Heidegger's *Being and Time* where it is employed to refer to human existence as a unique form of being, with the capacity to ask after the ground of its own being. As Heidegger says, *Dasein* "is ontically distinguished by the fact that in its being this being is concerned *about* its very being."[50] It denotes the hermeneutical nature of human existence *vis-à-vis* its own being, as well as the world in which it finds itself.

Bonhoeffer initially addresses the transcendental attempt which he characterizes as an attempt in which "the I intends to understand itself by regarding itself."[51] After discussing act attempts (idealistic modes of thought intended to understand world, God, and self) he moves on to the ontological ones (realism-based approaches). He describes the latter as the effort "to demonstrate the primacy of being over against consciousness and to uncover this being."[52] As he moves from epistemological/act modes of thinking to ontological/being ones, it is important to remember that ontological approaches in this context are still epistemologically oriented; i. e., they are attempts to understand the world and the other, but they start with the being of a particular givenness and work from there to an understanding of reality. Bonhoeffer observes, "Transcendental philosophy regards thinking to be 'in reference to' transcendence; idealism takes transcendent being into thinking; and, finally, ontology leaves being fully independent of thinking and accords being priority over thinking."[53] Bonhoeffer

[49] DBWE 2:33.
[50] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 10.
[51] Heidegger, *Being and Time*.
[52] DBWE 2:59.
[53] DBWE 2:60.

leaves Hegel's idealism and Kant's transcendentalism behind, noting that "even transcendentalism is in need of radical completion and inner transformation."[54] Eventually, he sees himself equally forced to reject the ontological attempt, and with it, Husserl and Scheler for having a system, something that "seemed to be incompatible with the phenomenological approach."[55]

He observes that

> not until the arbitrarily bracketed existence, or "reality," is put on a new ontological foundation can we expect a clarification of the problem of being, which neither Husserl nor Scheler offers.[56]

Bonhoeffer is now ready to consider Heidegger's ontological phenomenology. We learn that "an understanding of being can be gained in principle only on the basis of a 'hermeneutic of Dasein' …,"[57] because understanding being is something that is characteristic for *Dasein*. Bonhoeffer notes that Husserl's bracketing of reality is replaced by a disclosure of that same reality. Instead of timeless essences, we see that "Heidegger interprets being essentially in terms of temporality."[58] Heidegger shifts the question away from that of abstract, pure transcendental consciousness in Husserl's thought. Heidegger is concerned with "those who concretely ask the question of being, who themselves are something existing in the specificity of their manner of being as '*Dasein*.'"[59] To explain how *Dasein* engages this question, Bonhoeffer approvingly quotes Heidegger: *Dasein* "is in such a way as to be something which understands something like being."[60] As such "Understanding of being is itself a definite characteristic of *Dasein*'s being" because it is "being in such a way that one has an understanding of being."[61] This is in contrast to *Vorhandensein* (being-at-hand), which is characteristic of things. In that case, it would merely possess its "competence for something by way of an extra; it is primarily being-possible."[62] *Dasein*, on the contrary, possesses existence, which means that "Dasein is in every case what it can be, and in the way in which it is its possibility."[63]

Bonhoeffer notes that the concept of possibility is used by Heidegger in a dual way. *Dasein* has ontic-*existentiell* possibilities about which Heidegger as a philosopher remains silent. There are also the possibilities of *Dasein* that are existential-ontological. These are the deeper structures that denote the more funda-

54 BDWE 2:59.
55 DBWE 2:67.
56 DBWE 2:67.
57 DBWE 2:68, Cf. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 62.
58 DBWE 2:68.
59 DBWE 2:68.
60 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (London: SCM Press, 1962) as quoted in DBWE 2:68.
61 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, as quoted in DBWE 2, 68.
62 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, as quoted in DBWE 2, 68.
63 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, as quoted in DBWE 2, 68.

mental character of *Dasein*. Bonhoeffer then quickly names the concepts under which *Dasein*'s existence is discussed by Heidegger, such as being-with-others, being fallen into the they (*Verfallensein an das Man*), having been thrown into the world (*Geworfenheit*), and being able to care (*Sorge*) for the world. Bonhoeffer concludes that, in its temporality and historicity, *Dasein* "must order itself upon its own end so as to attain its original wholeness. And this end is death."[64] However, even though *Dasein* is being-towards-death, it is not authentically living in the "resoluteness to death."[65] *Dasein* finds itself fallen into the "they" and thus needs to be summoned by the call of conscience back to its ownmost potentiality-for-being[66] which is death.

After giving this quick overview of the basic elements of Heidegger's ontology in *Being and Time*, Bonhoeffer focuses on what he considers to be of importance for his own theological project: "What is important for our inquiry here is the unconditional priority given to the question of being over that of thought."[67] Bonhoeffer realizes how important Heidegger's insights are for the critique of epistemological attempts after Descartes: In the *cogito ergo sum* "they neglected to put the question of being to the *sum*."[68] Indeed, "thought does not, therefore, produce its world for itself. Rather, it finds itself, as *Dasein*, in the world; in every instance, it is already in a world just as, in every instance, it is already itself."[69]

Dasein is always already what it tries to "understand and determine itself to be." It is this insight that – and here Bonhoeffer highlights how he intends to use Heidegger's thought – "helps make sense of a leaning toward philosophical realism."[70] Theological realism of a very specific kind is what Bonhoeffer is after.

The whole idea that an external world needs to be proven is wrongheaded since the fact of *Dasein* implies such an external reality:

> The 'scandal of philosophy' is not that this proof [i. e., the proof by thought that there is an external world] has yet to be given, but that such proofs are expected and attempted again and again … If Dasein is understood correctly, it defies such proofs …[71]

With this critique of idealism and the evident priority of being over thought, a balance between spirit and reality is achieved, for the *Dasein* that inquires about its own being is at the same time historicized spirit. Bonhoeffer concludes his treatment of Heidegger with the assessment that

64 DBWE 2:69.
65 DBWE 2:69.
66 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, as quoted in DBWE 2, 69.
67 DBWE 2:70.
68 DBWE 2:70.
69 DBWE 2:70.
70 DBWE 2:70.
71 DBWE 2:70.

Therefore being has priority over thought, and yet being equals Dasein, equals understanding of being, equals spirit. This completes the picture of Heidegger's ontology for us.[72]

Assessing Heidegger, Bonhoeffer observes that "from the perspective of the problem of act and being, it would seem that here a genuine coordination of the two has been reached,"[73] because the being that is prioritized is spirit-being that at once "'is' and understands"[74] being. *Dasein* is per definition a combination of act and being in its self-interpretation. "Heidegger has succeeded in forcing together act and being in the concept of *Dasein*; both what *Dasein* itself decides, and the fact that it is itself determined, are brought into one here."[75] Act and being are thus forced together in the concept of *Dasein*. Bonhoeffer considers this coordination of act and being, transcendentalism-idealism and ontology, a unique achievement, since

The genuine ontological accomplishment of the 'suspension' ['Aufhebung'] of thought in being is conditioned by the view that human beings, qua Dasein, have the understanding of being systematically at their disposal.[76]

The only problem, from the perspective of theology and revelation, is that Heidegger conceives of *Dasein* as essentially closed-in by finitude. Bonhoeffer observes that *Dasein's* "existential ability to be" is not a general characteristic of *Dasein*. Rather, it is disclosed essentially by way of *Dasein's* "closed-in finitude," according to Heidegger.[77] This does not do justice, however, to the concept of revelation, since all creatureliness is open to God. Heidegger's ontological phenomenology, therefore, "remains unsuitable for theology."[78] This would seem to destroy the hope of a prominent role for Heidegger in Bonhoeffer's thought. But it does not. It is exactly at this point that Bonhoeffer makes innovative use of a philosophical concept that is apparently incompatible with theology. Bonhoeffer applies to the encounter of human beings *vis-à-vis* revelation what Heidegger applies to *Dasein* in relation to Being.

Not long after concluding that Heidegger is both unsuitable for theology and yet achieves a perfect coordination of act and being, Bonhoeffer wonders rhetorically, "Does this prove that every ontological approach is of no use for theology? It proves this with regard to an ontological approach just as little as it does with relation to a transcendental approach."[79]

[72] DBWE 2:71.
[73] DBWE 2:71.
[74] DBWE 2:71.
[75] DBWE 2:71.
[76] DBWE 2:72.
[77] DBWE 2:72.
[78] DBWE 2:73.
[79] DBWE 2:76.

This is to say that in and of themselves both phenomenological ontology and idealist transcendentalism as philosophical inquiries cannot be said to be useful or useless for theology. Proof as to their usefulness is only given with each succesful attempt to apply them in a theological framework. With regard to transcendentalism, the previous chapters have already revealed that Barth's attempt leads to major problems, from contingency of revelation to the domination of the reflective self in the process of reflection upon revelation to historical continuity of the new I.

Four pages earlier in *Act and Being*, however, Bonhoeffer has already mused: "Still, it must be highly instructive for theology to see worked out in philosophy a metaphysical definition of the interrelationship of act and being."[80] Here Bonhoeffer anticipates his own creative solution that draws heavily upon Heidegger's ontological phenomenology. It should be noted, though, that in line with Bonhoeffer's excitement over the coordination of act and being in Heidegger's thought, he offers to bring "genuine transcendental philosophy and genuine ontology – as distinct from idealism and phenomenology" – together.[81] Bonhoeffer offers two reasons for this coordination. In the first place, genuine transcendental philosophy and genuine ontology have "thoroughly grasped and thought through the philosophical problem of act and being."[82] Secondly, this thorough understanding of the concepts can be applied to the question of revelation in the sharpest manner. What does Bonhoeffer mean by genuine transcendental philosophy and genuine ontology? Is Bonhoeffer here setting up abstract conceptual versions of transcendentalism and ontology which abstractly do Bonhoeffer's bidding when he uses these terms? This is not likely since Bonhoeffer, in talking about these two, has himself grasped and thought through the problem of coordinating act and being. It seems plausible, here, that for Bonhoeffer Heidegger's philosophy represents the ideal ontology. Who Bonhoeffer has in mind for "genuine transcendental philosophy" is not entirely clear but it seems plausible that, as DeJonge suggests, Bonhoeffer works with a cleaned-up version of Kant's *being in reference to* transcendence. It is also possible that Bonhoeffer means to say that in Heidegger's ontology the "in reference to" of genuine transcendentalism and the "suspension of act in being" of genuine ontology come together. In that case, Heidegger's *Dasein* is a sufficient concept to coordinate both genuine ontology and genuine transcendentalism.[83] What one

[80] DBWE 2:72.
[81] DBWE 2:79.
[82] DBWE 2:79.
[83] Bonhoeffer equivocates on what exactly the sources are for his genuine ontology and transcendentalism. He for instance joins genuine transcendentalism and genuine ontology in just one description of genuine ontology some thirty pages later: "And so a genuine ontology demands a concept of knowledge which does have to do with the existence of human beings, but which does not remain fixed in pure actualism. Likewise, such ontology demands an object of knowledge that in a genuine sense 'stands over against' the I, in such a way that it challenges

does note, though, is that in what follows, Bonhoeffer makes the most work of *Dasein's* suspension in being, i. e., Heidegger's ontology applied to believing *Dasein's* participation in the being of revelation. Whatever the case, Bonhoeffer believes that "the concept of revelation itself will restore an entirely new form to those questions" and that the answers formulated will be "of help in the understanding of the concept of revelation."[84]

This leads to the specific approach to the problem of act and being that Bonhoeffer is offering with regard to the question of revelation in his chapter entitled *The Problem of Act and Being in the Interpretation of Revelation and the Church as the Solution to the Problem*.[85] Bonhoeffer is seeking a proper coordination of act and being, epistemology and ontology, *vis-à-vis* theological method. In his discussion of revelation as act, Bonhoeffer, in spite of his critical treatment of act approaches, also rejects a straightforward adoption of Heideggerian ontology as such:

> The question of continuity makes it clear that Heidegger's concept of existence is of no use for the elucidation of being in faith. Heidegger's *Dasein* is something that has continuity, since it is already in the state of having fallen subject to the world, for which it makes its decision … For being, in the sense of the ability to be, is confined to its limits, whereas faith is not a human ability as such.[86]

In Heidegger continuity is so over-bearing that no voice can come from outside *Dasein's* own ability.

In the section entitled, *The Interpretation of Revelation in Terms of Being*, Bonhoeffer is about ready to offer his own contribution. Here "the issue of the interpretation of being emerges out of the understanding of the continuity between revelation and human beings."[87] In the context of being, revelation can be understood either as doctrine, as psychic experience, or as institution, according to Bonhoeffer. He rejects the first two for lacking encounter but equally dismisses the institutional understanding, since, there too, genuine encounter in which the human being is touched in her sinful being, does not take place.

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and limits its manner of existence, yet without falling victim to being transcended by act and being in the false objectivity of something that exists. In addition, the object of knowledge must so stand over against the I that it is free from becoming known – so that, indeed, knowledge is itself based on and suspended in a being-already-known. The object must in every instance already stand in opposition; it may be said to be something that exists only when it is qualified by being and nonbeing themselves – something existing that underlies or precedes the I in its being and existence. Knowledge cannot have recourse to it as something available at one's convenience, but as that in the presence of which it must suspend itself ever anew in knowledge" (DBWE 2:107). Reading this could easily give one the impression that the transcendental "being in reference to" is simply derived from a reading of Heidegger's Dasein without Bonhoeffer needing recourse to Kant's transcendental idealism.

[84] DBWE 2:79.

[85] DBWE 2:81.

[86] DBWE 2:98.

[87] DBWE 2:103.

Encounter is only between persons. It won't happen "unless God takes hold of human beings and turns them around,"[88] which cannot "happen 'through' something which exists" since existing things are always "transcended by act and being."[89]

6.4 The Coordination of Act and Being

The problems with transcendentalist-idealist act approaches consist of the reflective subject being in control and there being a lack of contingency of revelation. The problem with ontological phenomenology is that *Dasein* lives, interprets, apprehends being out of *Dasein's* own innate possibilities.[90] Revelation cannot address *Dasein* from without, or, alternatively, *Dasein* can hardly be useful as a theological category. Describing the requirements for a genuine ontology for theology, Bonhoeffer lists the following necessary conditions:[91]

(1) It requires a conception of knowledge that has to do with human existence but does not remain fixed in pure actualism (or, alternatively, is not purely dependent on the autonomy of consciousness).

(2) The object of knowledge must stand over against the I as challenging and limiting its existence.

(3) It must do so without falling prey to objectification; it must be free from becoming known.

(4) Knowledge must be based on and suspended in a "being-already-known."

(5) The object of knowledge must underlie or precede the I in its being and existence.

(6) Knowledge must suspend itself ever anew in its presence in knowledge.

This sounds very complex, but in essence Bonhoeffer is seeking for a coordination of idealism and realism, a synthesis of act and being, whereby the being of revelation is genuinely part of human existence without it becoming objectified or mastered as a piece of knowledge that is in one's control and without it becoming enclosed in *Dasein's* existence as a human possibility. Rejecting conceptions of revelation such as "the verbally inspired Bible," "the factuality of religious experience," and "the institutional Catholic church" as unhelpful solutions in which the I subjects itself to something that exists while still being "in subordination to the I,"[92] Bonhoeffer chooses a concept of revela-

[88] DBWE 2:106.
[89] DBWE 2:105.
[90] Cf. DBWE 2:107.
[91] Cf. DBWE 2:107.
[92] DBWE 2:107.

tion "which a genuine interpretation of the being of revelation also demands, namely, the knowledge that the existence of human beings is always already 'being in …'."[93] It is precisely at this point that Heidegger's influence makes its mark in Bonhoeffer's thought. The knowing of revelation is "performed" by those who exist already within revelation, much like Heidegger's *Dasein* finds itself already knowing the being of its own existence in its state as thrown into the world.

In order to unpack this further, I will provide a schematic to clarify how the concepts of act and being play out in Bonhoeffer's mind by delineating three forms of being (and their related act concepts) as an intermediate step toward understanding what Bonhoeffer means by being. Bonhoeffer is not always explicit about what precisely he means. While act and being finally receive their coordination in the concept of church, they have associations with other concepts as well. This is because in the church believers become one with Christ, which is the very foundation for the point that Bonhoeffer is trying to make. In the church act and being become coordinated, but there are different ideas attached to act and being.

(1) For an understanding of being one could start with *Dasein*. In a Heideggerian sense, it is the form of being for which its being is a question. To this being correspond two act possibilities. The one act of human beings is to master its object by way of knowledge. This is the *actus reflectus*. The other form of act exists in the *actus directus*, which is a form of relatedness that is not reflectively analyzed and mastered. It is basically a form of trust.

(2) In a second sense, being refers to the being of revelation. In a strictly chronological way, this being is manifested in the body of Jesus Christ in whom God reveals Godself. This aspect of being has a corresponding act. It is the act of the self-revealing God in Christ. This act of self-revelation is responded to, not by objectification of the self-reflective subject, but by the *actus directus* of the act of faith which, in this act, gives up its self-determination and autonomy. DeJonge refers to this aspect of Bonhoeffer's concept of act and being when he talks about Bonhoeffer's "Person theology." Christ is the God-man, the Person who is encountered in faith.

(3) Additionally, even though revelation is historicized in Christ's physical body, it still hasn't taken on permanence. It is also not clear how the believing subject through the *actus directus* has acquired genuine knowledge of the object of faith without mastering it or understanding it to be constitutive of itself, thereby always suspending its knowledge of its subject in the relation. In other words, how precisely believing *Dasein* participates in Christ, in the being of revelation, is unclear.

[93] DBWE 2:107.

(4) The understanding of being, then, that Bonhoeffer works toward, is to be found in the church as the body of Christ. Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology outlines how the community of the Crucified is Christ Existing As Community. Heidegger's concept of "Being in" is useful in the form of the presence of the body of Christ as community of believers. Such presence of revelation is historicized, has existential permanence, and is hermeneutical as well as practical. Most of all, believers find themselves always already "being in" this being of revelation. Being a Christian is "being in Christ," which equals "being in the church."[94] This is the *Sanctorum Communio*, i. e., Christ existing as community.

Only in this way is the ontology reached that Bonhoeffer seeks. It is not simply Heidegger's ontology, but Bonhoeffer's own interpretation of such being that incorporates the transcendental "being in reference to":

> Here for the first time a genuine ontology could come into its own, if only it defined "being in …" in such a way that knowledge, encountering itself in that which is, suspended [aufheben] itself again and again in face of the being of those existing things and did not force them to be at its disposal.[95]

The church as the unity of act and being, then, is characterized by four features, according to Bonhoeffer.

(1) The church is the place where *Dasein* is understood. *Dasein* can truly only be understood when it is addressed from outside, i. e., that its truth about itself is not an autonomous human possibility. Heidegger's autonomous ontology can neither acknowledge this nor provide for it. After all, the moment the possibility for such a contingent address is provided, it is undone by virtue of the autonomy of this ontology. It can therefore only truly come from God and be justified on the basis of God's revelation. The church, then, is the place where *Dasein* is addressed from outside.

(2) Secondly, Bonhoeffer addresses the mode of being of the revelation of God within the church. The church being "constituted by the present proclamation of Christ's death and resurrection – within, on the part of, and for the community of faith"[96] is how revelation ought to be thought of. Revelation does not simply point back to a past occurrence, but in being proclamation, it must be seen as something present: "Christian revelation must occur in the present precisely because it is, in the qualified once-and-for-all occurrence of the cross and resurrection of Christ, always something 'of the future'."[97] In this, it is remembered that the church is the *Christus prasesens*. Bonhoeffer radicalizes this identification of Christ and church through the self-giving of God in Christ to such an extent that he concludes the following: "This happens in such a way

[94] DBWE 2:108.
[95] DBWE 2:109.
[96] DBWE 2:111.
[97] DBWE 2:111.

that the acting subject in the community of faith, proclaiming and believing, is Christ."[98]

(3) The mode of being of human beings within the church is such that their existence is "acted upon."[99] Bonhoeffer even invokes Luther's words *nova nativitas*, new birth, to indicate the nature of this being acted upon.[100] Bonhoeffer maintains that "every concept of existence that is not formed by being encountered or not being encountered by Christ is 'inauthentic' (including Heidegger's 'authentic' existence)." True act comes from being which has been genuinely affected by revelation. Bonhoeffer discusses faith in this context. One needs to have faith in order to become part of the church. At the same time, however, faith is conditioned upon being in the church: "Faith invariably discovers itself already in the church; it is there already when it becomes aware of its presupposition."[101] This implies that revelation is known only in faith.

(4) Knowledge of God as constituted within the church has a rather different character than that of dialectical theology with its concepts of the non-objectivity of God, God's formal freedom, and a speaking of God in knowing and un-knowing in order to do justice to its concept of the indirectness of revelation. Rather, "the concept of a believing way of knowing is a matter of basic sociological epistemology,"[102] which Bonhoeffer defines as "a believing way of knowing [that knows itself] overcome and pardoned by the person of Christ in the preached word."[103] This social knowledge is based upon the sociological category of the person. The person of Christ is "the point of unity of the transcendental and the ontological approaches to knowledge"[104] By looking at Christ we learn that a person *is* "only in the act of self-giving"[105] but in this self-giving, that person is free from whom to which she gives herself. Says Bonhoeffer,

> The Christ preached in the community of faith gives himself to the member of the community of faith. Faith is "to know oneself to be in reference to this." In faith I "have" Christ in his personal objectivity, that is, as my Lord who has power over me, reconciles, and redeems me. There is no not-knowing in faith, for Christ bears witness to himself in it.[106]

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[98] DBWE 2:111.

[99] Bonhoeffer begins his section with a quote from Luther: "*Prius est enim esse quam operari, prius autem pati quam esse. Ergo fieri, esse, operari se sequuntur*" (from the Lectures on Romans, 105, note 2, and 434, WA 56:117, 27–29) translated as "Thus, being possesses priority over acting; however, being acted upon is before being. Therefore, being created, being, acting follow one on the other" (LW 25:104). To begin his section with this Latin quote is fairly significant in the light of Bonhoeffer's rhetorical strategy as analyzed in chapter six.

[100] DBWE 2:116.

[101] DBWE 2:117.

[102] DBWE 2:126.

[103] DBWE 2:126.

[104] DBWE 2:128.

[105] DBWE 2:128.

[106] DBWE 2:128.

6.5 The Analogical Use of Philosophy

Bonhoeffer's construct has an affinity with, but is ultimately categorically different from, Heidegger's ontology. Where for Heidegger *Dasein* exists out of its *ownmost* possibility in its being toward death,[107] (that is, *Dasein* is essentially possibility, though limited by time, and heeds the call to authenticity[108] out of its own resources), Bonhoeffer sees *Dasein* for its own understanding helplessly dependent upon an address from outside, namely, revelation. It is only in the church that *Dasein* is understood.

But one should be careful to realize that *Dasein* for Bonhoeffer does not simply equal Heidegger's *Dasein*. Some Bonhoeffer scholars have taken this difference between an autonomous and a dependent *Dasein* to mean that Bonhoeffer is constructing an alternative to Heideggerian ontology.[109] While it is true that Bonhoeffer develops an implicit critique of Heidegger at the beginning of section B *The Problem of Act and Being in the Interpretation of Revelation and the Church as the Solution to the Problem*, this critique is a corollary of his actual and primary intention of portraying the church as the being of revelation in order to arrive at his act-being synthesis.[110] One must understand that Bonhoeffer is no philosopher and is, as such, not interested in constructing a rival philosophy. Bonhoeffer works with elements of Heidegger, but these elements and concepts function in a different way and within another discourse than philosophy. The *Dasein* that is dependent on an address "from outside" is therefore not exactly the same as Heidegger's *Dasein*. It is *believing Dasein*. In a footnote in *Act and Being*,[111] Bonhoeffer refers to Bultmann, who (of course in dialogue with Heidegger) "formulated the relation of philosophy to theology." Philosophy addresses the fact of existentiality (Existentialität), while theology has as its theme "concrete (believing) existence (Existenz)." *Dasein* has its own ontic structure. Within this structure, according to Bultmann, believers are no better equipped than non-believers to state what revelation is. But they are still able to testify that (and Bonhoeffer quotes Bultmann here): "revelation has touched them, that they are in life, that they have received grace and are forgiven."[112] This sets believers apart.

Believing *Dasein* is its own thing, so to speak; it follows its own rules, asks its own questions, and has its own identity. Even though Heidegger rules out

[107] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 241.

[108] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 240.

[109] I have already referred to the work of Gregor and Scharlemann in footnote 12 of this chapter.

[110] DBWE 2:81.

[111] DBWE 2:77.

[112] DBWE 2:77. Bonhoeffer quotes Rudolf Bultmann: Rudolf Bultmann "The Historicity of Man and Faith," in *Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann*, ed. Schubert M. Ogden (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1960), 92–110, 94.

any address from outside for *Dasein*, *believing Dasein* is *dependent* on it. Positing the idea of such an address, namely divine revelation, is therefore entirely coherent. Says Bonhoeffer,

> But if it is an act of God that draws human beings into the occurrence of revelation, then it is not one among the possibilities of an autonomous philosophy of Dasein. This means that nothing can justify this presupposition save God – which is to say, the presupposition justifies itself.[113]

Not deductive reasoning (Heidegger's deductive assessment that frames his inductive or hermeneutical approach) but internal coherence (Bonhoeffer's hermeneutical discovery that simply acknowledges the address from outside as a given) is the operational principle here. Revelation is its own justification. This is entirely in line with the way the *theologia crucis* in Luther's theology provides for a discontinuity between our knowledge of God and Godself. It puts an end to the God of the philosophers.

But there is more going on. Bonhoeffer does not simply posit the possibility of revelation as an address extrinsic to *Dasein* so as to philosophically justify the need for theology. The *Dasein* Bonhoeffer speaks of is a *Dasein* "in Christ."[114] This *Dasein* is not a simple counterfeit of Heidegger's *Dasein* but a *Dasein* that "is 'in reference to' Christ."[115] It is ontologically different. This *Dasein* truly has its own being which is the ground of its existence and its participatory environment, namely, Christ. This is the heart of Bonhoeffer's original reworking of the concept of *Dasein*.

If Bonhoeffer is not trying to develop a theology that is rival to Heidegger's philosophy, what is he attempting to do? Bonhoeffer is using the insights of Heidegger's ontology, especially the particular insight that *Dasein* begins its understanding of its own being in the world by always already knowing the world. Bonhoeffer combines this insight with the necessity of an address from outside, which is at the same time an address from within, so to speak. It is an address from outside, since "there are in theology no ontological categories that are primarily based in creation …"[116] Even though Bonhoeffer is after an ontological conception of revelation, he knows that nothing given with this world can form the basis for it; revelation has to come from "beyond." But it is simultaneously an address from *within* since the question about revelation is a question about trusting that which *Dasein is* at the same time, through faith *in* Christ. *Dasein* believes in Christ and at the same time asks about the being it participates in; its own being, the body of Christ. Here we have a concept for theology that allows for revelation to function on its own terms (from outside, beyond) while it is

[113] DBWE 2:110.
[114] DBWE 2:134.
[115] DBWE 2:134.
[116] DBWE 2:32.

simultaneously understood as being the believer's *own* being without that being grasped by those who come to know it in faith. This, then, becomes the foundation upon which theological claims can be made or rather, the context in which theological claims are validated and become meaningful as the body discovers its own being and engages its own life.

How does Bonhoeffer use philosophical concepts for his theology? Gregor and Zimmerman speak of "cruciform philosophy" in an attempt to highlight the fact that Bonhoeffer's entire project centers around the cross of Christ and that any use of philosophy is always toward facilitating its crucicentric nature, and so never intends to provide the conditions under which revelation is possible or to delineate the boundaries within which theology is to operate.[117] Likewise, Charles Marsh had earlier already described Bonhoeffer's theology as a "Christological redescription of philosophy."[118] While this Christocentric use of philosophy is certainly present, there is another way of looking at this that sheds additional light on how Bonhoeffer integrates philosophy into his theology. The Christocentric descriptions offer both the starting point and end of the integrative process. They do not explain, however, how philosophical and theological concepts function next to each other.

I, therefore, suggest another term: analogy. The young Bonhoeffer's interaction with philosophy is profound and yet also marked by a certain limitation. This may well be due to the nature of his project in which he attempts to re-center revelation on its own terms. The main concern is that of theological method. A large-scale interpretation of the world and the necessary corollary of an engagement with world-interpreting philosophies does not take place. Bonhoeffer is not interested in constructing a "Christian" philosophy. A comprehensive worldview, world picture, or theoretical approach to reality does not emerge. In *Act and Being*, Bonhoeffer examines theologies and philosophies with regard to their usefulness for the coordination of act and being, idealism and realism. His aim is to make post-Kantian theological statements viable in a way that avoids the distance of Barth's epistemology. In order to accomplish this objective, Bonhoeffer makes an analogical use of philosophical concepts. As Marsh puts it: "Bonhoeffer finds certain themes in Heidegger's fundamental ontology congenial to his own theological purposes …"[119]

The analogical use of philosophical concepts already starts in *Sanctorum Communio*, where Bonhoeffer makes use of the Hegelian concept of *Geist* (Spirit), to explain the church as a Hegelian synthesis of Christ and believers through Spirit. Hegel's *Geist* is certainly not identical to Bonhoeffer's *Geist* in

[117] Brian Gregor and Jens Zimmermann, *Bonhoeffer and Continental Thought: Cruciform Philosophy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 3–8.
[118] Marsh, *Reclaiming Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 55.
[119] Marsh, *Bonhoeffer on Heidegger and Togetherness*, 264.

Sanctorum Communio.[120] It is an analogical use. *Gott als Gemeinde existierend* (Hegel) becomes *Christus als Gemeinde existierend*. Just as Hegel's philosophy is used analogically in *Sanctorum Communio*, so Heidegger's ontology is used analogically in *Act and Being*. Bonhoeffer is not interested in providing a theology that counters ontological phenomenology; he merely wants to set revelation free from human rational constructs.[121] Just as *Dasein* relates to the world, suspended between knowing and being, so believing *Dasein* is suspended between knowing and being in the church. It is analogical, a Christological-Pneumatological analogy in both *Act and Being* and *Communio Sanctorum*. It is only with *Ethics* and the prison letters that a mature Christological interpretation of the world as a whole is emerging, but by then Bonhoeffer's interaction with philosophy is much more subdued or clothed in Bonhoeffer's own theological language.

Bonhoeffer thus uses Heidegger's concepts of being (and *Dasein*) analogically, which means that the concept of being performs a function within another discourse or at another level of existentiality similar to its use in the discourse from which it originates. This implies that Bonhoeffer's *Dasein* has its own specific characteristics separate from Heidegger's *Dasein*. There are strong similarities and subtle differences.

A few similarities are that (1) *Dasein* is hermeneutically oriented toward its own being. This is the whole point of Bonhoeffer's project: to show that there is a post-Kantian way of doing epistemology that takes its cues from being. (2) *Dasein* problematizes its own being. It questions it, but only to the extent it is part of it. It comes to know it only by participating in that being itself. (3) Heidegger's *Dasein* discovers the being of its own being by engaging the world. Bonhoeffer's *Dasein* in Christ follows a similar trajectory of doing (being for the other) what it is (being the body of Christ) and in doing so acknowledges revelation. (4) Believing *Dasein*, like Heidegger's *Dasein*, always already knows the being after which it inquires. Whoever is in Christ also always already knows Christ. There is no way one can be part of Christ's body and not already know the Head of that body.

But there are also some differences. (1) Heidegger's *Dasein* is thrown into the world and needs to dissociate from the "they" as it hears the call of con-

120 Cf. Adam Kotsko, *Objective Spirit*, 17–31.

121 In this regard too Bonhoeffer rather closely mimics Luther's own approach *vis-à-vis* scholasticism. Luther similarly does not provide a system to counter scholasticism and has a choose-and-pick approach to leveling various deconstructive strategies against scholasticism that involve humanistic approaches, hermeneutical strategies, and even scholastic arguments. Cf. Theodor Dieter, *Luther as Late Medieval Theologian*, and Robert Rosin, "Humanism, Luther, and the Wittenberg Reformation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, eds. Irene Dingel, Robert Kolb, Ľubomír Batka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 91–104.

science toward authenticity and becomes its ownmost self.[122] Bonhoeffer's *Dasein* is essentially communal, essentially relational, essentially for the other, as the life of Christ is its being. (2) In Bonhoeffer's thought, *Dasein* is not given with the world but comes into being as an act of God, God's self-revelation in Christ. (3) The being that believing *Dasein* interrogates is not a problematization but a gift that invites and transforms. The ownmost self of *Dasein* (i. e., being in Christ) turns *Dasein* away from itself. (4) *Dasein* is not a being-unto-death but a being-for-the-other. (5) This is because the being of Christ is that type of being that freely exists for the other and freely gives itself away.

[122] See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 247–280.

Chapter 7

Act and Being as *Theologia Crucis*

7.1 Summary of the Argument

The task in this study was to show that Bonhoeffer's *Act and Being* constitutes a theology of the cross. In this final chapter I formulate the answer as follows: understanding the church community as the coordination of the concepts of act and being amounts to a contemporary theology of the cross. The *theologia crucis* thus proves itself to be the motif at the heart of Bonhoeffer's theological project in which epistemological concerns concerning revelation and methodology are addressed by means of an ontological-communal hermeneutic. Summarizing the argument so far, one might start with the claim that Bonhoeffer was a subversive reader of Barth's *Fate and Idea*. Since Barth presents his slight preference for an idealistic approach – which in Bonhoeffer's analysis is called an act-approach – as a *theologia crucis* in the line of Luther's thought, it is self-evident that to the extent that Bonhoeffer retraces the steps of *Fate and Idea* in *Act and Being* he is also intent on producing a theology of the cross. It is also clear, then, that this *theologia crucis* will place the emphasis on an approach with realistic and ontological tendencies without thereby ignoring the idealist concerns of nonobjectivity. My conclusions derived from the analysis of *Fate and Idea* proved helpful in the interpretation of a number of binary concepts (idealism and realism, *crisis* and *crucis*, distance and presence, act and being) elaborated in the chapters that followed.

Barth's position that his *crisis* is in line with Luther's *crucis* amounts in Bonhoeffer's eyes to a Kantian misreading of Luther's theology. The deconstructive moment of Luther's theology of the cross is carried over into Barth's constructive proposal such that he lingers with the epistemological question necessitated by idealism instead of moving on to the hermeneutical function of the *theologia crucis*. The result is an opposition between Barth's epistemological distance and Bonhoeffer's *theologia crucis* which opens up to the idea of the promising God who is faithfully present to us in Christ.[1] One the one hand, we have a Calvin-

[1] As Bonhoeffer says, "For reflection, all praying, all searching for God in God's Word, all clinging to promise, every entreaty in the name of God's grace, all hope with reference to the cross is 'religion,' 'credulity.' But in the community of Christ, even though it is always the work of human beings, it is faith, given and willed by God, faith in which God may truly be found" (DBWE 2:154. Cf. DBWE 2:114).

istic understanding of the incarnation (*extra calvinisticum; non capax*) together with the link Barth established between his epistemology – influenced as it was by Kant's idealism – and the concept of the sovereign electing God of Calvinism. On the other hand, we have Bonhoeffer's Lutheran understanding of incarnation (the *communicatio idiomatum* and the *capax*). On the one hand, we have Barth's *ordo salutis* in which the electing God has primacy. On the other hand, we have Bonhoeffer's Lutheran order of salvation in which election is decidedly and intentionally not foregrounded since it belongs to the notion of the *Deus absconditus*, the hidden God. All these differences reinforce the notions of distance in Barth and presence in Bonhoeffer. At this point it seems unavoidable, once again, to connect distance and act on the one hand and presence and being on the other. It became very clear that the two concepts of act and being thus represent two radically different interpretations of Luther's *theologia crucis*.

Where the burden of proof on Barth is to show how epistemological distance is able to yield a gracious God (he uses a dialectical method and Chalcedonian Christology to achieve indirectness of revelation), it is Bonhoeffer's task to show how being as promise, faithfulness, and presence yields the reality of revelation without it being compromised through objectification. For this Bonhoeffer traces Luther's thought. Where Luther moves from the body of Christ on the cross, via the "this is my body" of the sacrament of communion, to the church community as that Body where that participation, sharing, and co-suffering exemplified in the cross takes place, so Bonhoeffer, similarly, presents the church in *Act and Being*, which in *Sanctorum Communio* was still a sociological-theological category, as the hermeneutical-ethical sphere in which the believer recognizes and participates in revelation, i. e., revelation as the Body of Christ where the name of Christ is proclaimed and believed. Says Bonhoeffer,

> Revelation should be thought of only in reference to the concept of church, where the church is understood to be constituted by the present proclamation of Christ's death and resurrection – within, on the part of, and for the community of faith. The proclamation must be a "present" one, first, because it is only in it that the occurrence of revelation happens for the community of faith itself, and secondly, because this is the only way in which the contingent character of revelation – that is, its being "from outside" – makes itself known.[2]

The community is *Christus praesens*:

> Christian revelation must occur in the present precisely because it is, in the qualified once-and-for-all occurrence of the cross and resurrection of Christ, always something 'of the future.' It must, in other words, be thought in the church, for the church is the present Christ, 'Christ existing as community.'[3]

[2] DBWE 2:110.
[3] DBWE 2:111.

The church as Christ's body is the being of revelation in which the concepts of act (faith as *actus directus*) and being (revelation) are coordinated.[4] Bonhoeffer's emphasis on being is accompanied by the use of the insights of idealism.

7.2 The Coordination of Act and Being

Act and being come to their genuine coordination in *Christus als Gemeinde Existierend*. The term used here is borrowed from *Sanctorum Communio*. However, it is as if the terminology comes to fulfillment only in *Act and Being*; as if Bonhoeffer comes into his own on this subject fully only in *Act and Being*.[5] Just as Heidegger's *Dasein* always already finds itself in the world, i. e., there is no *Dasein* without the world, so believing existence is a "being in …" There is no believing *Dasein* outside Christ. This works as follows: When we see that

> the reality of revelation is just the sort of existing being which constitutes the being (the existence) of human beings – but that this being is the triune divine person – our picture is complete, provided that this is understood as "being in Christ," that is to say, "being in the church."[6]

In the concept of the church, not as institution based on a long tradition of apostolic succession, but the church as the organic unity of Christ and the believers, do act and being synthesize into their perfect coordination. In the act of faith, *Dasein* responds to Christ in whom God is manifested as the divine act of revelation, the saving God who is faithful in the promise of justification outside the law. In the act of faith, the human person in her state of the *cor curvum in se*, the essential state and identity of *Dasein*, but now addressed from the outside, believes in (and in that act participates in and becomes one with) the being of revelation. The being of revelation is no longer just Christ; it is Christ together with the believers; it is Christ existing as community. Bonhoeffer talks in this regard of "The church as the Unity of Act and Being,"[7] in which *Dasein*, having responded to an address from the outside, is now placed on the inside of the being of revelation which joins in with the act of faith of the faith community. Of course, this is a somewhat abstract conceptualization of what in reality is the ongoing genuine historical realization of the Crucified One as the community of those who believe. Bonhoeffer puts it this way:

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[4] See Luther's "Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ, and the Brotherhoods" (LW 35/1:49–73) and Bonhoeffer's frequent reference to it in *Sanctorum Communio* and *Act and Being* (DBWE 1:179–83, 190; DBWE 2:120, 123).

[5] What I mean is that the dissertation on sociological ecclesiology becomes a preparatory work on a *Habilitationsschrift* on theological method, in which the ecclesiology functions as an epistemological category.

[6] DBWE 2:108.

[7] DBWE 2:109.

At issue, rather, are historical human beings who know themselves transposed from the old to the new humanity, who are what they are on account of membership in the new humanity, persons newly created by Christ. All this they "are" only in referential-act toward Christ. Their being-"in reference to"-Christ ["in bezug auf"-Christus-Sein] is rooted in their being in Christ, in the community of faith, which means that the act is "suspended" in being just as, conversely, being is not without the act. The person, as synthesis of act and being, is always the two in one: individual person and humanity.[8]

It is important to note that this being of revelation only has continuity to the extent that the community responds in faith and obedience to the proclaimed Christ. As such the ethical dimension of continual transformation is always implied and therefore always points to the future. Bonhoeffer observes:

Were the existence of human beings not affected through revelation in the community of faith, everything said there about the being of revelation in the community of faith would be pointless. A continuity that does not affect existence is not the continuity of Christian revelation; it is not present being, but bygone entity. In other words, the community of faith warrants the continuity of revelation only by the fact that I know myself to be in the community of faith, that I believe. Here the problem of act and being emerges with ultimate clarity in the form of the dialectic of faith and church.[9]

My analysis of Bonhoeffer's use of Heidegger corresponds with the main points of Marsh, Plant, DeJonge, and Tietz-Steiding but also goes beyond them. I have noticed Marsh's insistence that Heidegger's influence pertains to Bonhoeffer's "desire to displace the hegemony of the self-reflective subject."[10] Where Marsh sees a parallel between how Heidegger allows *Dasein* to question being and how Bonhoeffer invokes "Who are You" as the proper theological question in the *Christology Lectures*, I suggest that in *Act and Being Dasein* does quite a bit more than the questioning that takes place in the *Christology Lectures*. Like Heidegger's *Dasein* in relation to its own being, Bonhoeffer's *Dasein* already knows the Christ in whose being it participates. Both Marsh and Plant are correct in linking the *Christology Lectures* to the influence of Heidegger's ontology for indeed this is exactly what happens in *Act and Being*. And there it is not merely a matter of proper questioning, but rather one of knowing and being known. In other words, much more than phenomenological bracketing is going on (which is for Bonhoeffer ultimately an act concept), the hermeneutical encounter with being takes place. This knowing, Marsh notes, is an "interrelation of being and thought in which mind no longer has priority over being …"[11] Indeed in the church the believer participates in the being of Christ, such that knowing is cradled by being and being nurtured by knowing. As Marsh realizes, the being of revelation is not the scholastic highest being among beings but the

[8] DBWE 2:120.
[9] DBWE 2:114.
[10] Marsh, *Bonhoeffer on Heidegger and Togetherness*, 265.
[11] Marsh, *Reclaiming Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 117.

concrete presence of Christ.[12] It is impossible to ignore the obvious affinity here with the *theologia crucis*.

Michael DeJonge certainly deserves to be mentioned as well. His *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation, Berlin, Barth & Protestant Theology* is a sustained effort to show how Bonhoeffer found Heidegger helpful in articulating his own Lutheran theology independently from Karl Holl and especially from Barth. While I would prefer the term "*theologia crucis*" to describe what happens here, DeJonge's choice for the term "Person-theology" is no less an adequate characterization on account of the Lutheran emphasis on hypostasis in the hypostatic union of the incarnation. Indeed, the encounter with the Other, the person of Christ, is crucial. My emphasis that ultimately Bonhoeffer's theology in *Act and Being* does not land with the encounter but with the being of revelation, which is Christ existing as community, accords well with the idea of Person-theology but emphasizes the participatory and abiding nature of the encounter. The *Dasein* that is the church engages its own being, which is *Christus als Gemeinde Existierend*. The Christological-Pneumatological construct, in which believers participating in Christ, *are* in and *know* Christ, is the focus of Bonhoeffer's theology. This is the *theologia crucis*.

Ultimately, I feel compelled to disagree with Plant's thesis that Heidegger makes his strongest mark on Bonhoeffer in the *Christology Lectures*. I do not discredit the work Plant does with the *Christology Lectures* – it is sublime – but I am convinced that the influence of Heidegger is nowhere stronger than in *Act and Being* by virtue of the fact that Heidegger's concept of being becomes the crucial element in Bonhoeffer's *theologia crucis*. The theological method Bonhoeffer develops in *Act and Being* shows up later in the Christological question. In my understanding, *Act and Being* seems to have the primacy when it comes to Heidegger's influence. Of course, this is only a minor disagreement.

Lastly, I am grateful for Christiane Tietz-Steiding's analysis of *Act and Being* as a misinterpretation of Heidegger on Bonhoeffer's part. I'd like to suggest that the misinterpretation, whether intentional or unintentional, invites a reading of Bonhoeffer's use of Heidegger as a re-direction of Heideggerian conceptuality to the idealism-realism debate as well as an analogical use of this conceptual framework for theology.

Ultimately, though, I have to go beyond the analyses of Tietz-Steiding, DeJonge, Plant, and Marsh in stating that Bonhoeffer uses Heidegger's concept of being analogically to express his idea of the church as the being of revelation. This perhaps rather limited use of being is specifically designed to express Luther's insistence that Christ and the church community as the Body of Christ are one and, thus, to give shape to Bonhoeffer's contemporary *theologia crucis*.

[12] Cf. Marsh, *Reclaiming Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 119.

In this way, epistemology (theological method), Christology, ecclesiology, and ethics come together.

7.3 Heidegger's Being and the *Theologia Crucis*

The burden of proof upon me is to argue that the coordination of act and being in the concept of church as *Christus als Gemeinde existierend* is indeed a contemporary execution of Luther's *theologia crucis*. I have already done most of the important work toward this end in the preceding chapters and the summary at the beginning of this chapter. Still, a few observations are in order.

7.3.1 The Completion of Bonhoeffer's Argument

As noted in the last section of the previous chapter, Bonhoeffer uses philosophical concepts analogically to place Christ at the center of his theology in such a way that the concerns and questions of modern thought are adequately met. Bonhoeffer is keen to make sure that in this process two things are accomplished. In the first place revelation in Christ is given primacy, initiative, and autonomy while humanity is addressed from the outside. This is made possible, secondly, by the fact that the being of revelation is not given with the world, nor is it seen as part of the repository of human abilities. Thus, revelation is not objectified as it is historicized and receives permanence in the world.

Luther's *theologia crucis* provided all the elements for this theological construct. Its initial critical move against scholasticism finds a counterpart in Bonhoeffer's deconstructive criticism of the whole range of act and being philosophies and theologies in which Barth and Heidegger figure as major conversation partners. While Bonhoeffer seems to be somewhat left to his own devices as far as a positive articulation of the *theologia crucis* is concerned, this is only partly the case. It is true, Luther was a pre-modern and thus for him asserting the primacy of revelation with reference to the cross was not burdened by the questions that a twentieth-century theologian has to face. This is not to say that Luther's theology of the cross lacks the elements needed for the twentieth-century articulation that Bonhoeffer sought. For Bonhoeffer, it was but a small step to move from body on the cross to the body of the community. After all, Luther had already done that. It was merely up to Bonhoeffer to recognize this as *theologia crucis* and to employ it as the solution to the question of revelation within the dynamics of realism and idealism and to see how such an emphasis on the body provides an avenue to articulate a nonobjectifiable theological method on the basis of being.

And thus, while being quite content to struggle alongside Barth against the hegemony of the modern self, wielding the theology of the cross as a tool of de-

construction, he soon is forced to expose Barth's *theologia crucis* as counter-productive. A modernist epistemologically-oriented theology of the cross that is dependent for its execution upon the self-reflective subject, as Barth's theology up to that time still was, is ultimately doomed to fail. Bonhoeffer's next step is to develop a non-dialectical method to avoid an exclusively cognitive orientation to revelation. Heidegger's concept of being provides him with the tool to reach that objective. How does the concept of being do this?

Marsh's analysis is relevant once again. Earlier I quoted him saying that Heidegger was one of the first to go against that pervasive trait of Western metaphysics to inquire about the "quiddity of a thing."[13] Heidegger's notion of being helps Bonhoeffer to identify revelation as that kind of being of which the "quiddity" cannot and should not be established. Being can only be interpreted as that which is simply already there as that which forms the context of *Dasein* before reflection can commence. The same thing can be said of the being of revelation. But note, this is precisely what the *theologia crucis* in its pre-modern version means to say: stop mastering the object and content of revelation, stop peeking behind the cross to ponder the metaphysical reality of the hidden God. God is here, on the cross. As the risen Christ says to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt, but believe." To which Thomas can only respond: "My Lord and my God!" More pointedly, the church, the Body of Christ, is that particular environment in which the believer, in the process of participation, encounters revelation and stammers "My Lord and my God!"

The distance of the knowable/unknowable object of revelation in idealism is replaced by the permanence of the being of revelation as it is historicized. Over against the cognitive as the axis along which a concept of revelation is to be formed, comes self-involvement and participation as the practical avenues along which believing *Dasein* always already finds itself being known, knowing, and in the process of understanding revelation. Over against the objectification of revelation stand the encounter and the relationship. Over against the self-reflective subject stand radical grace and promise in which the believing subject is swept up in a mutuality of participation in the church community. The move away from the world is replaced by a world-affirming one in which the being of revelation results in a being-with-and-for-the-world. The primacy of the self as the location of truth, receptor of truth, and the guardian of its boundary is replaced by the address from outside that demands faith and trust.

With these I have the essential characteristics of Luther's theology: (1) critique of rationalism in any form, (2) a decisive anti-metaphysical tendency (or at least anti-speculative) with an affirmation of embodied reality, (3) revelation of God in God's opposite (*sub contrario*) which confronts human self-sufficien-

[13] Marsh, *Reclaiming Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 112.

cy, (4) movement from the cross back into the world, (5) solidarity with and vicarious participation in the world and its sufferings, (6) a coming together of theological method and soteriology, faith and the reflection on it, theory and self-involvement, epistemology and ecclesiology, (7) a theological system that can only be performed and embodied in *christopraxis*.[14] On all these points Bonhoeffer closely follows Luther.

7.3.2 *Theologia Crucis* as Community

One difficulty remained unsolved in my research at that point. The theology of the cross focuses on Christ's body upon the cross, while Bonhoeffer locates revelation in the being of the church in which Christ and believers participate in each other. One might wonder whether Bonhoeffer's proposal is not significantly different from the classical *theologia crucis*: crucified body versus living community. Bonhoeffer, however, addresses this question by means of a conflation – or rather: understanding together – of the two understandings of the body of Christ. On the one hand, "body" refers to the real body of Christ on the cross. On the other hand, that mangled and tortured body, the expression of God's counter-intuitive self-giving in Christ, stands for the continuous presence of the faith community that in and through its identification with Christ is indicated as the Body of Christ that gives itself to the world. The proximity of the latter understanding of body to Luther's theology of the cross is not only aided by the conceptual identification of Christian and Christ, it finds a historical proximity in Luther's *Blessed Sacrament*,[15] written so soon after the *Heidelberg Disputation*, in which Luther alternates between the body of Christ in the sacrament and the body of Christ as community. Clearly, the body on the cross and the body of the sacrament are closely linked with the body of the community. The connection is further facilitated by Bonhoeffer's outworking in *Sanctorum Communio* of the concept of *Stellvertreter* which explains how the many become one in Christ and how the one community is created in Christ to be a Christ with and for the world. With it, we become aware of the function of the theology of the cross as an open-ended metaphor.

In addition to the *Blessed Sacrament*, Bonhoeffer draws from Luther's 1527 "That These Words of Christ, 'This is My Body,' etc., Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics."[16] He does so in his discussion of the Barthian formal freedom. In a footnote Bonhoeffer gives his updated translation of Luther that he introduces with a correcting "but":

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[14] Cf. the title of Andrew Root, *Christopraxis: A Practical Theology of the Cross* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014).

[15] LW 35/1:49–73.

[16] LW 37:72.

But cf. Luther: 'It is the honor of our God, however, that, in giving the divine self for our sake in deepest condescension, entering into flesh and bread, into our mouth, heart and bowel and suffering for our sake, God be dishonorably handled, both on the altar and the cross.'

As antidote to the formal freedom there is the *freedom for* exemplified here by God being dishonorably handled both on the altar and the cross. What is being dishonorably handled is, of course, Christ's body. And just as we see this happen in the *Blessed Sacrament* so here we see the emerging of a semantic overlap between the terms cross, body, sacrament, community. This is how Bonhoeffer, following Luther, connects cross and body in his thought.

Bonhoeffer, then, sees a close connection – just as there is a connection between Christ as *Stellvertreter* and the church as *Stellvertreter* – between the proclamation of the cross and the community of the cross. The community is shaped in the form of the cross as much as that community is the place where such proclamation ought to take place:

Seen in this way, the question of the interpretation of revelation in terms of act and being takes an entirely new turn. God gives the divine self in Christ to the community of faith and to every individual as member of this community of faith. This happens in such a way that the acting subject in the community of faith, proclaiming and believing, is Christ. In the personlike community of faith, but only there, the gospel can be truly proclaimed and believed.[17]

The only way this can become a reality is when the believer is not forced to objectify revelation as a piece of knowledge and when the believer does not find herself detached from such a form of unhistoricized sterile revelation. The solution is a *coordination* of act and being (i. e., believing and revelation)[18] as takes place in the church community. Elsewhere Bonhoeffer uses the related, slightly overlapping concepts: synthesis,[19] being in reference to,[20] and being suspended.[21]

Focusing on the community of faith in which Christ exists as community and in which *Dasein* is suspended between the act of faith and the being of revelation cannot be the same as focusing on an external cross which the believer beholds; we must realize that such beholding entails self-involvement. Bonhoeffer thus captures the essence of what the theology of the cross means. His *theologia crucis* is a modern articulation in which he deals with the very specific problems of (a) the possibility of revelation as an address from outside, (b) the need to avoid a

[17] DBWE 2:112.
[18] DBWE 2:71.
[19] DBWE 2:120, where Bonhoeffer speaks of the related concept of the human person as a synthesis of act and being.
[20] DBWE 2:120 (*in bezug auf*, DBW 2).
[21] DBWE 2:72, 106, where Bonhoeffer speaks of the related concept of thought suspended in being (*aufgehoben*, DBW 2).

modernist epistemology in engaging this revelation, and (c) the necessity of participation and self-involvement. Bonhoeffer solves the problem of knowledge (act) by means of being, thus integrating the two. Revelation is not an object but a relationship with Jesus Christ into which the believer is invited through trust and participation. Just as Heidegger's *Dasein* finds itself already knowing its being as it discovers it, so the believer, in encountering and believing in Christ, no longer relates to revelation the way a subject stands over against an object. In making this move, Bonhoeffer honors Luther's *theologia crucis* as an address from beyond rationalistic systems and the reflective self. It invites the human being to trust in what is offered on the cross, namely, justification by faith, the unmerited grace of God, that can only be "understood" as an experience one participates in but can never be grasped from outside one's state of unbelief. Bonhoeffer captures the essence of the *theologia crucis* in using the concept of being thus overcoming the modernist epistemology that subverts it again and again.

To be sure, Bonhoeffer's *theologia crucis* is not only faithful to Luther but also innovative as it addresses concerns of the modern age. It seems that, next to understanding *theologia crucis* as community, he elaborates two notions implicit in Luther's theology of the cross. There is, in the first place, an ever-increasing affirmation and importance of embodied reality. Where in Luther's theology of the cross, embodiment is very important as revelation is located in the very flesh of the Christ, in Bonhoeffer, the emphasis on embodiment becomes even more important as the being of revelation is understood as Christ existing as community. This is not just about the believer being saved but propels the community of believers with Christ into a vicarious existence on behalf of the world. This leads to the second elaboration on the part of Bonhoeffer, namely, that of self-involvement and participation in the cross. The cross is not only the location of revelation and salvation but also points to the only way forward for the believer: to be like Christ in the world and to take the cross as a sign over one's own life.[22] In these two elaborations, Bonhoeffer closely follows what Luther himself already suggests in the *Blessed Sacrament*.[23]

As there is a movement from the concept of cross to the concept of body in my investigation of *Act and Being*, there is a movement from the being and the body of revelation to the cross in *Act and Being* itself. Those who are part of the body, i. e. those who are in Christ, are to take up the cross and follow him. There is no being in Christ without crucifixion in and with Him. The being of revelation is the community of the cross. Bonhoeffer puts it this way:

> Because Christ died, and because we, too, died that death with Christ in baptism (Romans 6), death is concealed in faith; for that reason the faithful must daily die that death. The strength to die is not given by asceticism or focusing on the self – that is a work of

[22] Cf. DBWE 5:99.
[23] LW 35/1:49–73.

natural human beings who cannot desire cross and death; rather, they die solely in faith. They do not give themselves death but, in faith, see themselves given into death by Christ.[24]

For some, the notion of suffering with Christ is odious as such an emphasis can easily lead to abuse or prevent people from breaking free from it. But what is meant here is neither idolatrous masochism nor an affirmation of the victim in her role of being victimized. Quite the contrary. The unification with Christ in Christ's suffering is a necessary expression of the outward-bound or exocentric transformation away from the self, toward being free for others in their suffering. Neither the masochist nor the victim is free to being there for others. Both need liberation. The former from self, the latter from oppression. Whatever one may think of Bonhoeffer's insistence (together with St. Paul in Romans 6) that we need to be crucified with Christ, it is clear that Bonhoeffer thinks of the Body of Christ as our unification with Christ in Christ's sufferings on the cross. In Bonhoeffer's understanding, the church is the continuing self-revelation of God in Christ on behalf of the world.

These two elaborations of the emphasis on embodied existence and the centering of the cross as the characterizing feature of the community of the cross are not departures from Luther but rather innovative expressions of what is already germane to Luther's theology. They strengthen what is already present in the *theologia crucis* and bring out its true characteristics. Bonhoeffer's innovations are essentially "Luther." Luther's theology too is world affirming as one can see, for instance, in his insistence that one's life in the world is one's vocation as a Christian. In addition, Luther has a similar emphasis on self-involvement and participation. There is no distant point of view possible as justification by faith, the central feature of the theology of the cross, is a gift that needs to be accepted in, precisely, *faith* which points to self-involvement. One can only be a partaker of the grace of God through one's union with Christ. But it also shows up in the *Blessed Sacrament*, and when Luther writes that we are *Christi* both in the genitive and nominative (or as Pelikan translated: "we are Christ's both with and without the apostrophe"). This is essentially what Bonhoeffer works out with his use of the concept of being together with the concept of act, in order to bring revelation and salvation, address from outside and participation from within, together.

7.3.3 Three-fold Function of the *Theologia Crucis*

Perhaps it is good to look at the theology of the cross as having three main functions in both Luther and Bonhoeffer. One can distinguish in the theology of the cross a *deconstructive moment*, a *hermeneutical existence*, and an *ethical*

[24] DBWE 2:157.

call. As a *deconstructive moment* it ruptures the state of the *cor curvum in se*, with its attempt to control and master the other and its state of being turned in on itself. The *theologia crucis* halts that process and confronts the self. It is the address from outside. The moment is to be understood as the abiding presence of the encounter with the *Christus praesens*, i. e., the moment is always now, and always confronts anew, and demands deconstruction of rusty paradigms, ingrained patterns of thought and behavior, construction of god-concepts, and strategies of closure of meaning. In that sense the Christian life always begins anew and the Christian needs to seek forgiveness of sin again and again. The *Sanctorum Communio* continues to be a community of those who are *simul iusti et peccatores*, sinners and saints.

The theology of the cross also points to a *hermeneutical existence* or denotes a hermeneutical process in which the believer, participating in the body of Christ, discovers and acknowledges the reality of revelation. Revelation is not that which constantly cannot be said. Revelation is not only indirectly spoken of. In that case revelation never really reaches us, never transforms us, never really encounters us in our need. While revelation cannot be objectified it is nevertheless *here*. Knowledge of it is hermeneutical and experiential. This knowledge is not without its cognitive aspect but is first and foremost a putting on of the New Human Being, which is Christ. This hermeneutic requires participation and never finds closure of meaning. Just as (Heidegger's) *Dasein's* engagement with the world teaches it about the being of its own being, the Christian knows herself through faith already one with Christ and gets to know Christ more and more. The reference to the body of Christ applies to both sacrament and community. The church *is* the body of Christ. The Christian is identified with and participates in Christ.

But just as the deconstructive moment is not without an ethical aspect (we are called to repentance) so the believer discovers in her participation with Christ not only who Christ and the church are, but that she is a Christ in the world. The *theologia crucis* is at the same time an *ethical call*. This is the third aspect. Participation in the being of Christ and the hermeneutical discovery of Christ and church at one and the same time constitute a call: the call to follow and become one with Christ and Christ's followers in their glory and suffering. It is the ethical call to relinquish control of one's life by trusting Christ and to take up the life of Christ and the believers. Acknowledgment of the body leads once again to *Stellvertretung*. Christians, as Christ existing as community, live out Christ's vicarious representation in the world. Once again I must emphasize with Bonhoeffer, however, that the ethical call is not an ethical possibility. If it were, we would have separated Christ and church again and the church would not be a community-of-the-cross. Just as justification by faith is intricately linked to the *theologia crucis* so is the concept of *Stellvertretung*. Both are *sola fides* and *sola gratia*.

This three-fold function of the *theologia crucis* of deconstruction, hermeneutics, and ethics, is woven together with the concept of sociality. After all, the deconstruction happens as encounter with the Crucified One, while the hermeneutical discovery of being in Christ is the social experience of belonging to the community of the Crucified One, who calls us into the world to be with and for others. All three bring us into community with ever-widening circles. Naturally, separating these aspects of the *theologia crucis* is artificial – they belong together and together constitute the encounter with the Crucified One. One can see these aspects return in *Act and Being* where there is a "No" against all act-attempts to draw the boundaries of transcendence (as much as there is also a "No" against being-attempts that similarly operate out of self-mastery) and a call for faith (*actus directus*). It is followed by the hermeneutical existence of the believer's acknowledging revelation and understanding her participation in it as a member of the Body of Christ. This immediately leads to hearing the ethical call (as divine gift), which is to become cross-bearers with Christ and Christ's followers in the form of being there for others. Being crucified with Christ is then not merely an inner process of transformation but something that is ethically directed outward to the world:

> Touched in their existence (through judgment and grace), they know themselves directed into humanity. They themselves committed the sin of the old humanity; at the same time they know themselves irresistibly pulled by their humanity into its sin and guilt. Through believing, praying, and proclaiming, they bear the new humanity; at the same time they know themselves borne in all their actions by the community of faith, by Christ.[25]

7.3.4 Cross Typologies Revisited

I am now able to briefly look back at the typologies of cross theologies in the twentieth century. I had to by-pass them in chapter four in favor of a one-on-one engagement with Luther's original concept of the *theologia crucis*. As it was, my understanding of Bonhoeffer as a theologian of the cross was already heavily colored by the twentieth-century retrieval of the *theologia crucis*. However, now that I have established Bonhoeffer as someone who intentionally develops a theology that is faithful to the central insights of what is commonly known as Luther's theology of the cross, it is time to briefly revisit the aforementioned typologies of Bradbury, Ruge-Jones, and Madsen.

Doing so confirms once again that Bonhoeffer's theology is indeed a *theologia crucis*. In fact, to the extent that Bonhoeffer's theology encompasses the full spectra of said typologies, he stands out as a theologian who is exceptionally faithful to Luther even when the central insights of Luther's *theologia crucis* are not expressed in a confessional framework but rather as an exponent of

[25] DBWE 2:120.

the wider post-liberal project that both the Luther Renaissance and dialectical theology can be said to be contributing to.[26] Bonhoeffer's theology meets Bradbury's demand that the *theologia crucis* is a disclosed word (epistemological concern for the non-objectivity of revelation) as well as a word that saves (the promise of justification by faith). For Bonhoeffer, the linchpin of his coordination of act and being is precisely the act of faith as *actus directus* in which the self relinquishes all claims to autonomy (*actus reflexus*) and trusts God's promise of justification in Christ. Epistemological and soteriological concerns coincide at this point and demand a redescription of the epistemological as participatory hermeneutics of the believer's self-discovery of being in Christ. With this, Bonhoeffer's *theologia crucis* leaves Bradbury's definition behind in that ethical concerns are drawn into its vision based on the believer's unification with Christ in the Body of Christ.

Ruge-Jones's threefold distinction of the antithetical, the proclamatory, and sacramental is taken up in Bonhoeffer's theology of the cross as we encounter it in *Act and Being*. Of course, the antithetical is sublated in Bonhoeffer's coordination of act and being into the ontological reality of *Christus als Gemeinde Existierend*, though in such a way that human knowledge is never the measure of divine revelation or revelatory possibility. In addition, in constructing his coordination of the concepts of act and being, proclamation plays a crucial role. In fact, Bonhoeffer's concept of the community of faith as the Body of Christ is entirely dependent on the preaching of the gospel:

> Revelation should be thought of only in reference to the concept of church, where the church is understood to be constituted by the present proclamation of Christ's death and resurrection – within, on the part of, and for the community of faith.[27]

And why is this so?

> The proclamation must be a 'present' one, first, because it is only in it that the occurrence of revelation happens for the community of faith itself, and secondly, because this is the only way in which the contingent character of revelation – that is, its being 'from outside' – makes itself known.[28]

Even though Bonhoeffer is sensitive to the epistemological (i. e., antithetical) concern, his theological construct has some unexpected affinities with the sacramentally-oriented theology of the cross. After all, in Bonhoeffer, revelation is not merely a word from beyond, spoken on God's terms alone, or a proclamation to be heard and responded to. His coordination of act and being results in a particular vision that links cross with community. When he speaks of Christ ex-

[26] Cf. Assel, Heinrich. "The Use of Luther's Thought in the Nineteenth Century and the Luther Renaissance," in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, ed. Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel, and Ľubomír Batka (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 551–572.

[27] DBWE 2:110.

[28] DBWE 2:111.

isting as community, he basically has a sacramental understanding of revelation in which the reality of Christ is extended and lived out in the church community. Perhaps the term "Christological theosis" could be suggested to describe Bonhoeffer's proposal.

Madsen's distinction between cross theologies that exclusively address sinners and those that include those sinned against finds a synthesis in Bonhoeffer's way of thinking. In Bonhoeffer's theology revelation is first and foremost a word for the sinner. But as revelation for the sinner it is always already a word from Christ who is to be found among the marginalized and the destitute. This understanding was already present before Bonhoeffer encountered the black Church in Harlem and even before he wrote *Act and Being*. In the sermons he preached while in Barcelona there is some clear evidence of that.[29] Moreover, in the *theologia crucis* of *Act and Being* the connection between the Word for sinners and Christ's presence with those sinned against is to be found in the ethical injunction incumbent upon the church community. Christians are to be Christs in the world and as such emulate the presence of Christ among the destitute.[30] Here the theology of the cross is not just a *word* for sinners and victims but as sinners are taken up into this revelation, they, in turn, become God's embodied *revelation* in Christ for victims of injustice.

7.4 Bonhoeffer Scholarship

Having completed the reading of *Act and Being* as a *theologia crucis*, I have completed what I set out to do. It has been adequately demonstrated, in my opinion, that Luther's theology of the cross provides the normative principle, systemic structure, and ethical impetus for Bonhoeffer's theology as he develops it in *Act and Being*. In my introduction, I argued that research into Bon-

[29] "It is the wonderful theme of the Bible, so frightening for many people, that the only visible sign of God in the world is the cross," Bonhoeffer writes in a sermon on February 21, 1932 (after writing *Act and Being)*, on National Memorial Day (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Collected Sermons of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. Isabel Best (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 17). But even before *Act and Being*, while in Barcelona, his sermons are characterized by an understanding of the *theologia crucis* as God's presence among the suffering. In a sermon delivered on December 2nd, the first Sunday in Advent, Bonhoeffer writes: "Come, God, Lord Jesus Christ, come into our world, into our homelessness, into our sin … in the realm of evil and suffering and death," (Bonhoeffer, *The Collected Sermons*, 9). And later: "It is so peculiar because we so often encounter God's footprints in the world together with the footprints of human suffering, of the cross on Golgotha," (Bonhoeffer, *The Collected Sermons*, 10). And again: "But here we are confronted with the terrifying reality; Jesus is at the door, knocking, in reality, asking you for your help in the figure of the beggar, in the figure of the degenerate soul in shabby clothes, encountering you in every person you meet" (Bonhoeffer, *The Collected Sermons*, 11).

[30] "… the church is the present Christ," (DBWE 2:111). "Through such proclamation of the gospel, every member of the church may and should 'become a Christ' to the others" (DBWE 2:113).

hoeffer's academic work is necessary and that such should be attempted with an eye toward the unity in Bonhoeffer's work.

The project undertaken in this study necessarily confined itself to just one of Bonhoeffer's works in order to create enough room for in-depth analysis and meaningful constructive work. While understanding *Act and Being* as *theologia crucis* was the task I set before me, I still expressed concern for the unity in Bonhoeffer's work. It seems necessary, then, to at least point to a few areas where this unity is enhanced by the understanding of the systemic importance of the theology of the cross for Bonhoeffer. Of course, at this place such areas can only be pointed to. Future research will have to explore these areas.

7.4.1 Important Themes in Bonhoeffer

The three-fold function of the *theologia crucis* (deconstructive moment, hermeneutical existence, and ethical call) lines up well with four important emphases in Bonhoeffer scholarship that continue to be of interest: Christocentric revelation, ecclesial sociality, crucicentric ethics, and worldly embodiment.

In the first place, there is the *ongoing prioritization* of revelation. It will continue to be tempting for some to interpret a radical change in Bonhoeffer from the Barthian youngster to the world-affirming theological radical in prison. Others will want to preserve continuity with Barth at all cost in order to produce either a moderately liberal or moderately conservative Bonhoeffer. The present study bypasses both the Barthian and the radical break discussions by centering Bonhoeffer's theology around the *theologia crucis*, in which a sense of continuity with Barth is ultimately overcome by a rather strong notion of discontinuity. This discontinuity, however, is structured around the theology of the cross which continues to be the underlying principle for all Bonhoeffer's theological work, especially also for his ideas in prison. There is a rejection of a modernist epistemological approach to revelation in favor of a hermeneutical-ontological epistemology that bypasses the hegemony of the modernist self-reflective subject. The postmodern and post-metaphysical elements that emerge in Bonhoeffer's thought are borrowed from Heidegger's phenomenology, but only to articulate a *theologia crucis* for the twentieth century in which revelation speaks first. It lines up with the spatial metaphor *God-on-the-Cross*. Christ encounters us still!

The hermeneutical function of the *theologia crucis* is worked out as community, as being part of the being of revelation, Christ existing as church community. This is the theology of the cross as *theology-in-front-of-the-cross*. No depths of speculation (or speculation about the impossibility of speculation) but the concreteness of the present Christ as community in the believers. Clifford Green was right all along to read Bonhoeffer from the perspective of *sociality*. His was one of the first monumental studies examining Bonhoeffer's theology

comprehensively.[31] In Bonhoeffer's theology the *theologia crucis* is inscribed in sociality.

The third spatial metaphor I used earlier on to describe the theology of the cross, *movement-from-the-cross-into-the-world*, results in two things. First, this movement amounts to an *ethical call*, since God's coming-into-the-world-in-Christ becomes our going-into-the-world-as-Christ. Our identification with Christ, the man for others, leads to our being there for others. This connects with an important recurring emphasis in Bonhoeffer's work, namely, that of vicarious representation (*Stellvertretung*). The second result is an increasingly positive assessment of the world as the concrete realm of the outworking of God's grace and the reconciliation with Christ. *Embodied worldly concreteness* in this penultimate world has its own place and value. The world is affirmed by the incarnation.

In sum, proper understanding of the theology of the cross, then, will help to bring interpretive unity to Bonhoeffer's work as I show here with regard to the three spatial metaphors used for the theology of the cross.

7.4.2 Some Areas of Interest

It seems that further work in Bonhoeffer research may have to be done with regard to Bonhoeffer's relationship with Barth and the attendant consequences for systematic theology. My analysis of Barth's *Fate and Idea* and the comparison of *Fate and Idea* with *Act and Being* constitutes material evidence that Bonhoeffer disagreed with Barth at the most fundamental level. My short summary and analysis of Bonhoeffer's sustained critique of Barth may further contribute to better and more in-depth studies on this topic.

If my interpretation of Bonhoeffer as *theologia crucis* is correct – and in this I receive solid support from the excellent work recently done by Gaylon Barker – more study is needed to see where and how this *theologia crucis* is further developed, what influences it undergoes, and which direction it takes. Reggie Williams, who is the first scholar to exhaustively explore the influence of the Harlem Renaissance on Bonhoeffer, is – to my knowledge – researching that very development with regard to the Harlem influence.[32] But Harlem is not the only area under investigation. Even the latest developments in Bonhoeffer's thought in prison should be understood as further outworkings of the theology of the cross. That at least is my current opinion. The concept of religionless Christianity as necessitated by a world come of age is deeply anchored in the *theologia crucis*. A *mündige Welt* may have opened its mouth and is busy rele-

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

[32] Reggie Williams, *Bonhoeffer's Black Jesus: Harlem Renaissance Theology and an Ethic of Resistance* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014).

gating the God-of-the-gaps to the outer regions of the known universe, but on the basis of the *theologia crucis* we already know that this is merely the demise of the god-concepts of scholasticism, the god of the philosophers, German liberalism, and science – in short – the god human beings construct to believe in or reject. Much religiosity in our Western world expresses itself as a continuation of the God-of-the-gaps discourse. It must be abandoned to make room for the God who encounters us in Christ on God's terms. This is most likely what Bonhoeffer wants to achieve with his concepts of *Arkandisziplin* and *Weltlichkeit*.

In the end, the cross of Christ is the most worldly sign Christianity has to offer, even when it challenges the world utterly beyond its own means. But if this sign can only be understood as a dead metaphor for an outdated worldview, it is time to go undercover and discover anew what is being revealed in Christ.

However, to end with the current study, what this being of revelation is can only be understood to the extent that we *receive* it as gift and *participate* in it in order to *be* it.

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