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DIETRICH BONHOEFFER: A Man For Others

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DIETRICH BONHOEFFER: A Man For Others

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German theologian, had as his central thought the question, "Who is Christ?" As his thinking progressed, this question developed into, "Who is Christ for us today?". Bonhoeffer was concerned with the status of man as a disciple of Christ. He talked about the man for others, with Christ as the example.

Bonhoeffer, himself, was a man for others. His work and life testifies to this fact. In this paper I will discuss Bonhoeffer; his work, his ideas, and the man. I will try to show how his living helped to develop his thought, for it was through living that he came to understand Christ and man as his disciple. I will also discuss his central questions and the answers he found.

Bonhoeffer was born the son of a great psychiatrist who taught at the University of Berlin. He was born in 1906 in Breslau. As a child, he was exposed to Adolf Von Harnack, an universal theologian, among many other well-established men.¹

Bonhoeffer's first work was "Communio Sanctorum", which made him a licentiate in 1927. Karl Barth came to be of great influence on Bonhoeffer while studying at the University of Berlin. This influence was evident in his later thesis, "Act and Being". In this thesis he shows his interest in dialectical theology (A Kantian theology "that admits the futility of trying to apply the perceptions of the mind to objects transcending experience".²).

Bonhoeffer pastored in Barcelona in 1928 and 1929. In 1930 he attended the Union Theological Seminary in New York. After his return to Germany, he taught in Berlin until the National-Socialists authorities forbade him to do so in 1936. During this time he took charge of the German Congregations of St. Paul and Sydenham in London as a protest against the Church of Germany. He became very involved in the ecumenical movement.³

Bonhoeffer was called upon to lead a Seminary in Pomerania for young ministers for the Confessing Church. This was an emergency task as well as an underground task. During this time he wrote his most famous work, The Cost of Discipleship (1937) and Gemeinsames Leben (Life Together) in 1938.

Bonhoeffer had taken on a pacifist attitude due to the influence of America and London; but now he was to become **very** involved in his country's conflict through his brother-in-law, Hans von Dohnanyi. He now saw pacifism as "an illegitimate escape".⁵

In 1939, while touring America, Bonhoeffer decided that he must return to Germany to participate in the conflict of the church and the state there. With his return to Germany he began his unfinished work, Ethics, which appeared in 1949.⁶

He began also his part in the Resistance movement. In 1942 he visited the Bishop of Chichester at Stockholm. Bonhoeffer was forbidden to remain in Berlin or to lecture, write or make speeches.

In 1943, Hans von Dohnanyi was arrested and Bonhoeffer right after him. He spent the first 18 months in Tegel Prison in Berlin. This is when he began writing the letters and papers that are contained in Letters and Papers from Prison.⁷

In September, 1944, the Zossen Papers were discovered; evidence of the Resistance movement. As a consequence Bonhoeffer was moved to Prince Albert Strasse.

Bonhoeffer was later moved to Buchenwald, then to Schonberg, and then to Flossenburg, without the knowledge of his parents or any friends. Payne Best, an English officer imprisoned with Bonhoeffer wrote about his last day,

"The following day, Sunday, April 8th, 1945, Pastor Bonhoeffer held a little service and spoke to us in a manner which reached the hearts of all, finding just the right words to express the spirit of our imprisonment and the thoughts and resolutions which it had brought. He had hardly finished his last prayer when the door opened and two evil-looking men in civilian clothes came in and said: 'Prisoner Bonhoeffer, get ready to come with us.' Those words 'come with us'--for all prisoners they had come to mean one thing only--the scaffold.

We bade him good-bye--he drew me aside--'This is the end,' he said. 'For me the beginning of life,' . . .
 . . . Next day, at Flossenburg, he was hanged."⁸

The Cost of Discipleship. In The Cost of Discipleship, Bonhoeffer defines cheap and costly grace. Cheap grace, says Bonhoeffer, "means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner".⁹ Man insist that the world has been justified by grace; therefore, Christians should not attempt to separate themselves from the world. The Christian needs to be content with his worldliness. He lives for the sake of the world, not for grace sake. This is cheap grace. "Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."¹⁰

Bonhoeffer describes costly grace as "the treasure hidden in the field"¹¹ It is the gospel and must be sought, a gift to be asked for. "Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ."¹²

This grace cost God the life of his son and for this grace he delivered him up for us. "Costly grace is the Incarnation of God."¹³

Bonhoeffer suggest that the costliness of grace faded as the church became mor secularized. At the time this was written, he was at the Seminary in Pomerania, living in a small community consisting of himself and his students. He later questioned the need to be separated from the world. In his letter of July 21, 1944, he wrote, ". . .I remember talking to a young French pastor in America thirteen years ago. We were asking ourselves quite simply what we wanted to do with our lives. He said he would like to become a saint. . . . At the time I was very impressed, but I disagreed with him, and said, in effect, that I should like to learn to have faith. I could acquire faith by trying to live a holy life, or something like it. I suppose I wrote The Cost of Discipleship as the end of that path. Today I can see the dangers of that book, though I still stand by what I wrote."¹⁴

What was discipleship for Bonhoeffer? First, it is not an offer that man makes to Christ. One must be called. The first step can only be taken at His Word.

The call to discipleship demands obedience. Discipleship means adherence to the living Christ. It is not dogma, or principles; not an idea or law, but grace and obedience. Bonhoeffer proposed that "only he who believes is obedient, and only he who is obedient believes."¹⁵ Faith is faith in the act of obeying. Be obedience, Bonhoeffer is not emphasizing works; but sees obedience as an "act of faith in the word of Christ."¹⁶

For Bonhoeffer, the cross means discipleship. Just as Christ suffered and was crucified, man must suffer and share in Christ's crucifixion. Bonhoeffer bases this on Matthew 16:24, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Bonhoeffer explains to deny oneself is to know Christ and not know oneself.

Bonhoeffer suggests that a disciple must bear the sins of others. To do this we must be able to forgive. "Forgiveness", he says, "is the Christ like suffering which it is the Christian's duty to bear."¹⁷

We can come to Christ only as individuals. Relationships are only possible through Christ. Christ is the Mediator between God and man, man and man, and man and reality. This is an idea that Bonhoeffer had carried with him. While teaching at Berlin, he gave a series of lectures which have been published as Christ the Center. In these lectures, Bonhoeffer discusses Christ's place in history, as well as for man. He devotes a section on "Christ as the Mediator between God and Nature". He also refers to Christ as the Mediator for history and for man. Christ is the Mediator who stands for all creatures before God. He acts for the whole of human existence.¹⁸

Christ as Mediator calls us to be individuals, but at the same time founds a new fellowship. He unites us as his disciples. It is in him that the community of Christians is formed.

From this point, Bonhoeffer begins an exegesis of the Sermon on the Mount. He takes the Beatitudes and translates them to define the disciple. He describes the Beatitudes as such:

Matthew 5:3	"poor in spirit"	those who accept privation for his sake.
4	"they that mourn"	mourn on account of the world's guilt, fate, fortune; bear sorrow and suffering.
5	"the meek"	renounce one's own rights and live for Christ sake.
6	"those who hunger and thirst for righteousness"	renounce their own righteousness, get no praise, look forward to the renewal of earth and God's perfect righteousness.
7	"the merciful"	renounce their honor and dignity for Christ's sake; show mercy; take upon themselves other's distress, humiliation and sin.
8	"the pure in heart"	surrendered their heart completely to Christ.
9	"the peacemakers"	found peace in Christ, renounce violence and endure suffering for Christ.
10	"those who are persecuted for righteousness sake"	suffer for any just cause.

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The fundamental presupposition of the Sermon on the Mount, according to Bonhoeffer, is that Christ, who fulfills the old covenant, stands between the disciples and the righteousness expected of them.

"Love" is the summation of the message of the Sermon on the Mount. It is defined as "the love of our enemies".²⁰ Love conquers by asking how Jesus treated her, not how our enemies treat her.

For Bonhoeffer, the difference between the righteousness of the follower of Christ and the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees is the perisson, "which means the 'peculiar', the 'extraordinary', the 'unusual'. . . ."²¹ It is this extraordinary quality that shows people that one is a Christian. However, this quality is not to be "shown off". It is unreflecting obedience to Christ, and is visible in itself to others.

This "visible but invisible" is accomplished by looking to Christ, letting the old self die, and finding new life in fellowship with Christ and fellow disciples. The **disciple** must put Christ first before all. He allows nothing to come between him and Christ.

How can modern man be called into discipleship? Bonhoeffer suggests that we receive the call in the church through his word and sacrament. The hidden Christ calls, who is only recognized through faith.

Whereas the first disciples knew Christ physically, we know him as Mediator. We receive him in the Holy Spirit through baptism. Baptism means sharing the cross with Christ. Only those who share the shame of Christ can share his glory.

Because Christ was like man, we can be like him. The **disciple** is the imitator of God.

To conclude Bonhoeffer's translation of chapters 5, 6, and 7 of Matthew, they can be put into the following categories:

Matthew 5 -- extraordinariness of life.

Matthew 6 -- hidden character.

Matthew 7 -- separation of **disciple** and community.

Christ the Center. Previously mentioned was a collection of lectures given by Bonhoeffer called Christ the Center. In these lectures, he gives a profound interpretation of Jesus Christ. His main question is "Who is Christ and what place does he have in the modern world?" This is a question that stayed with Bonhoeffer throughout his life.

In Christ the Center, Bonhoeffer says, "Christ is Christ not as Christ in himself, but in his relation to me."²² Christ stands pro-me. He is the Word of God, given to us by God through him.

Bonhoeffer begins by saying that Christ is Present as Person.

He is present as Word, sacrament, and community. He is God's spoken word to man. As spoken Word he is present in the church.

Sacrament is the Word of God as action. Through Christ the sacrament is interpreted and hallowed. Sacraments do not mean something, but are something. They are Christ as Word active in the church.

Christ is the community by virtue of his being pro-me. By pro-me, Bonhoeffer means that Christ stands for man. . . the man for others. Christ is the creator of community and the revelation of the Word of God. He is community and at the same time the Head of that community. Without Christ the community is impossible, but by the same right, without community there is no truth. Truth being the Word and the Word being Christ.

What is the place of Christ? As stated earlier, He stands pro-me; where I should stand but cannot. He stands on the boundary and beyond; and at the same time, in the center, between me and myself. He stands in the center of human existence, history and nature; not in relation to personality, but is our being before God.

In human existence, man stands between law and fulfillment. Man cannot fulfill the law because of his sinful nature. Jesus Christ stands where man cannot toward law. As the center he fulfills the law, and on the boundary stands as judge of man. He judges and justifies.

As in human existence, in history Christ stands where it fails. History stands between the promise and its fulfillment. The Messiah is the meaning of the promise. History cannot fulfill the promise for it has been corrupted by sin. The fulfillment of Christ cannot be demonstrated, only claimed.

Christ is the destruction and the fulfillment. He is destructive because he is hidden, not demonstrated. He fulfills because God entered history and is there. The meaning of history becomes evident only in the humiliated Christ, because he is present in the church only after his resurrection. The humiliated Christ is the Christ of the cross. With his resurrection he was exalted; therefore, Christ is present for us as the humiliated and exalted.

The church stands at the center of history, and at the boundary as the cross. It proclaims the breakup of the human order. The cross destroys, fulfills and affirms the order of church and state. There has been state only as long as there has been the church. Christ is present as church and state. He is mediator between God and state through the church, between God and the church as the center of the church, and therefore making the church the center of history.

For nature, Christ is the New Creation. Nature suffers from a loss of meaning and freedom. It is not reconciled like man and history, but is redeemed from new freedom. Because it is under a curse and not guilt; it needs no reconciliation. Christ is the Mediator between God and nature, and stands for all creatures before God.

"As fulfiller of the law and liberator of creation, the mediator acts for the whole of human existence. He is the same, who is himself the end of the old world and the beginning of the new world of God."²³

Jesus is the Christ not as his person or in his nature, but in his effect on others -- the man for others. The historical Christ is of significant importance. If we are to speak of Christ in his omnipotence and omniscience, we must also speak of him in his weakness. He is God in faith. He must speak of him in terms of the cross and the cradle. He, the man, is the unveiled image of God. He is the Incarnate One, glorified God. . . the Christus pro nobis-- Christ pro me.

Bethge says of Bonhoeffer's concept of the man for others:

"This is for him a strictly theological statement that reveals truth, both shaming us, and raising us up; and it is a statement about existence, whose relation to reality is obvious."²⁴

In his Letters and Papers from Prison, Bonhoeffer states that "Christ takes hold of man in the center of his life."²⁵ (June 27, 1944). This world is not to be prematurely written off, for it is in the center of this world that Christ exist for man.

Throughout most of Bonhoeffer's works Christ is mentioned and explained. In Creation and Fall, Bonhoeffer speaks of God as Creator only when seen in the middle, between the beginning and the end. "The only continuity between God and his work is the Word."²⁶ God is in the world in the Word Christ.

Man, created in God's image is free. In Biblical language freedom is something we have for others, not for self. "Being free means 'being free for the other', because the other has bound me to him. Only in relationship with the other am I free."²⁷ God, in Christ is free for man.

Adam's life came from the middle. He got caught up between the curse and the promise; therefore, man's limit is the middle. Christ fulfills the promise. He is the new middle.

Life Together. While living at the Seminary in Pomerania with his students, Bonhoeffer experienced life in a communal atmosphere. The group shared everything-- work, food, thought, studies, life. Much time was spent in meditation, with and with^{out} others. Time alone with God was a requirement of Bonhoeffer on his students. This type of

sharing was the basis for his book, Life Together.

For Bonhoeffer, Christianity means community in Jesus Christ, through Jesus Christ. It is by this community that we belong to each other.

Righteousness comes from the outside, from the spoken Word. We are dependent upon it. Therefore, we need to hear the word from others. This is why the community is necessary. We need to hear the Word from other Christians. This is the goal of the community; to bring the message of salvation to one another.

Christians may come to each other only through Jesus Christ. He is the Mediator between man and man. Without Him we would not know God or our fellow man.

We must as community, love one another. We need to strive to excel in the task of loving--excellence in and for Christ. In the same right, we should thank God for everything. Not just the large things, but the small as well. Big things begin small. "Only he who gives thanks for little things receives the big things."(1 Corinthians 14:12).

The Christian community, being founded on Jesus Christ, is a spiritual, not a psychic reality. Its basis is the manifest Word of Jesus Christ. The basis for the spiritual community is truth, desire, and its essence is light. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all"(1 John 1:5). The Word of God rules, and it alone is binding. All power, honor, and dominion are surrendered to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit governs.

We are bound together by faith. Our experiences may serve only to separate us; but our faith in Jesus Christ is our "common ground".²⁸ Jesus Christ, alone, is our unity.

Chapter two of Life Together discusses "The Day with Others". Bonhoeffer goes through a day in fellowship with Christians and Christ. Prayer is big concern for Bonhoeffer. He spends much time on Psalms, for it is the prayer book of Jesus. He states that the Psalter is the school of prayer. Three things we learn are: 1. what prayer means, 2. what we should pray, and 3. pray as fellowship.

Bonhoeffer says prayer means praying according to God's Word. We must pray with faith. Never pray for vengeance, for we are to forgive all. We can not, like the Psalmist, call ourselves righteous. It is only through Christ virtue, not our own, that we may pray. By praying as the Body of Christ, we can pray selflessly.

Fellowship at the table contains three assets. The first is to know Christ. "And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him"(Luke 24:30-31). We know Christ as the giver of all things and as Lord and Creator.

Secondly, we must acknowledge that the gifts are given for Christ's sake. He is not only the giver, but he is the gift itself. We share the meal confessing that Christ is Savior and Mediator.

Thirdly, because we ask that the Lord be with us during communion, we are confessing the omnipresence of Jesus Christ. This is true also of all mealtimes shared in Christ presence.

Ethics. One of Bonhoeffer's prize works was his incompleated book, Ethics. The book was put together and published by Eberhard Bethge after Bonhoeffer's death.

Man lives between covering and discovering. This is to say that solitude, as well as unity, is important. Shame is a result of this covering. It can be overcome by restoring the original unity. . . the restoration of fellowship with God and man. This is accomplished by confession before God and men.

One must know himself. "All knowledge is based on selfknowledge."²⁹ Only through knowledge of self can we have knowledge of God. Only by knowing oneself can we have unity.

Christ spoke and lived from the original unity with God. Man lost this unity with original sin, but with Christ the unity is possible again. Man uses Christ for disunions. We bring him into our problems and conflicts and expect him to find the solutions. Jesus' purpose is not to answer these either-or questions put forth by man. His freedom is not the arbitrary choice of one of innumerable possibilities. "He lives and acts not by the knowledge of good and evil but by the will of God."³⁰

The disunion of good and evil is not a problem for the man who Christ, for in knowing him the choice has already been made. It is the unity of the deed and will of God.

The will of God is vague for man; therefore, how can we prove what is His will? Bonhoeffer asserts that, "Only upon the foundation of Jesus Christ, only within the space which is defined by Jesus Christ, only 'in' Jesus Christ can man prove what is the will of God."³¹

Man must concern himself with the ultimate. The ultimate being the last things. First, however, he must deal with the penultimate, the things before the last.

Christian life is the encounter of the Christian with the world. It is living the life of Christ, who lived in the world. This is why we must concern ourselves with the penultimate. It must be dealt with and not brushed aside.

There are four mandates of the world; labour, marriage, government and church. These are penultimate concerns for man.

Bonhoeffer talks about deputyship as man's responsibility to man in respect for mankind. We are responsible for our fellowman. God calls us to deputyship to share the sufferings of others. . . to be for others. Isolation from the world is idealistic and not Christian.

Of the state, Bonhoeffer says that it is a product of human nature. Sin has made necessary government. Man must govern himself because of his sinful nature. Government bears the authority of God and is order in the world. It is not of the world, but of God.

Jesus Christ is the Mediator between God and the government. The government exists, like everything else, because Christ exists, it exists in Him.

Ethics, as stated earlier, is an incompleated work. Bethge added what he could to the text from his knowledge of Bonhoeffer's ideas, and from the letters he received from Bonhoeffer while in prison. The Christian lives not in a vacuum, but in the world-- a world of politics, government, labor and marriage. Therefore, the Christian ethic cannot exist in a vacuum. The commandment of God is to live in the world he made. To live before God, with responsibility to the world. Christian ethics are not to be found in the church apart from the world, but as part of the world.

Letters and Papers from Prison. While in prison Bonhoeffer composed letters and papers to his family and to his dear friend and student, Eberhard Bethge. These letters and papers were saved and put together to form a book of profound thought. In these letters Bonhoeffer shares much of his thoughts and ideas, his anxieties and hopes, his inner feelings about life and about death. The letters offer us a key to understanding better Bonhoeffer's theology. He had much time to read and think and expound on his own writings and the writing of others. It is in these letters that one can come to know what Dietrich Bonhoeffer was about.

The letters are varied in context. Bonhoeffer jumps from subject to subject and from feeling to feeling. In one letter he may begin in a hopeful tone, speaking about his return home; and before the letter is finished, give a feeling of deep despair and hopelessness.

One of the most known concepts that Bonhoeffer deals with in his letters is "religionless Christianity". How can a man be a Christian and not religious? For Bonhoeffer this is not only possible, but essential. Man can no longer isolate himself from the world. The church is not the place for the Christian. It is a place of dogma and doctrine, but the world is where God calls us to live. He calls us not to be saints but to be men. We can only be men by living in the world, with other men. Not just Christians, but we must live with the non-Christian as well. We must be apart of the world and involved in it. We are not to be passive Christians, but active men. To live in the world means to be involved in every aspect of it, including government.

Bonhoeffer found to be apart of the world and to be involved in it sometimes meant going against the law of the world-- the government. To go against it does not always mean to defy government. When a Christian stands against the government, it should be for the government that he is doing so. Bonhoeffer had to face this himself when he went against Hitler.

The Christian in this world must be for others, Christ stands as his example. We must be willing to share the burden of others. We must also be willing to forgive. Christians can not look down on others as sinners. Bonhoeffer said in his letter of June 30, 1944, "Jesus did not make every man a sinner first."³²

To be for others is not necessarily to go out and try to convert every one, but to be there for them. Jesus did not try to convert the two thieves on the cross, but one turned to him, and he was there for him. We are to be like Jesus, putting him first, then others.

We are not to dwell on ourselves. Unsatisfied desires should be kept out of sight and not mentioned. We are to be examples for others, and should be examples of strength. We must love our neighbor, but we can not do this if we feel ourselves better than they. We must come to understand our own limitations and responsibilities before we can genuinely love our neighbors. If we exaggerate our importance, this love becomes vague and abstract.

As Christians in this world we must keep in step with God, not ahead of Him or behind Him. We must walk in communion with Him. We should find God in what we know, not in what we don't know.

Bonhoeffer speaks of the God of the gaps. By this term he is saying that man uses God to fill in the spaces for the things he does not know. God is deus ex machina. Man has throughout history used God to explain the unexplainable. Bonhoeffer says this is wrong.

Is there any place for God in the modern world? Not if he is merely a "God of the gaps". Science today can explain most of the things that man used to use God to explain; therefore, He is no longer needed. That is to say, if He were merely a "god of the gaps." But we must not try to make God into this kind of machine, but look for Him in what we know.

We know God as Creator, and through Christ we know Him as Father. We must be careful, however, in giving God personality, for it may be belittling. God is reality. Christ was God because He is reality. Christ life was lived in reality.

One of Bonhoeffer's terms is a "world come of age". What he means by this term is the modern world, with its technology and science. A world which has outgrown God. Bonhoeffer's essential question was, "Who is Christ for us in a world come of age?" He answers by asserting that we should not ask who Christ is, but how he exist for us. We know who Christ is, but it is questionable as to his significance in the modern world. How is Christ for us?

He is as the Incarnate One. He is present in the modern world as the Exalted One; the resurrected Christ. He is here because God sent him to live and die for man. But this is important only in that he was resurrected for us.

Christ lives in the modern world for us, as Mediator and reconciler. He is our doorway to God. He is God among men. In him, there are no Christian problems. He stands pro-me in this world come of age.

What does this say about man? It says that man is dependent upon Christ. Jesus calls man to life, not just to a new religion. He does not call us to be religious, but to be men, living by his divine example. He does not call us to be saints, but men striving to follow his example. We are to be strong in our striving for it is the sins of weakness which are the real human sins. He is our strength.

Christ calls us to be, like him, for others. It is not religious acts which makes us Christians, but participation in the suffering of God in the life of the world. We, as Christians, share Christ task, his suffering, and in the end his glory. We act as pillows for others to lean on. We share Christ with them, not only through words but through living and doing.

Included in Letters and Papers from Prison is poetry that Bonhoeffer composed while in prison. One of the poems, entitled "Who Am I?", is significant in that it expresses what Bonhoeffer felt that others thought of him. He questions in the poem who he really is. This was striking for a man who seemed to be so close to God and so knowledgeable of his own task, but at the end he answers his own question. It expresses how Bonhoeffer was truly a man for others. I have felt it necessary to include this poem because of its significance in understanding the man Bonhoeffer. It is as follows:

WHO AM I?

Who am I? They often tell me
 I stepped from my cell's confinement
 Calmly, cheerfully, firmly,
 Like a squire from his county-house.
 Who am I? They often tell me
 I used to speak to my warders
 Freely and friendly and clearly,
 As though it were mine to command.
 Who am I? They also tell me
 I bore the days of misfortune
 Equably, smilingly, proudly,
 Like one accustomed to win.

Am I then really all that which other men tell of ?
 Or am I only what I myself know of myself?
 Restless and longing and sick, like a bird in a cage,
 Struggling for breath, as though hands wer compressing my throat,
 Yearning for colours, for flowers, for the voices of birds,
 Thirsting for words of kindness, for neighbourliness,
 Tossing in expectation of great events,
 Powerlessly trembling for friends at an infinite distance,
 Weary and empty at praying, at thinking, at making,
 Faint, and ready to say farewell to it all?

Who am I? This or the other?
 Am I one person to-day and to-morrow another?
 Am I both at once? A hypocrite before others,
 And before myself a contemptibly woebegone weakling?
 Or is something within me still like a beaten army,
 Fleeing in disorder from victory already achieved?

Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine,
 Whoever I am, Thou knowest, O God, I am thine!

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We can see in this poem the effect that life in prison had on Bonhoeffer. One can sense the depression and anxiety he felt. At a point he seems to be questioning the idea of showing strength and hiding weaknesses. He asks if perhaps it is hypocritical, but still again questions that thought also. The important thing about the poem is that Bonhoeffer acknowledges the true essence of his being: "Whoever I am, Thou knowest, O God, I am thine!"

In the first stanza of the poem, Bonhoeffer mentions who others say that he is. In this we can see that Bonhoeffer exemplified the Christian strength he talked about in the letters. It says that he was cheerful, smiling and proud. This is the man for others that Bonhoeffer says we, as Christians must be. The other prisoners came to depend on Bonhoeffer for prayer and comfort and strength that they did not have. Bonhoeffer looked at the weakness of other prisoners with contempt because they were not accepting the strength of God. However he was there for them and tried to help them. He also talked to the guards and made friends of them. He offered letters of comfort to his family and friends, while in himself he felt fear.

In the second stanza, Bonhoeffer looks at himself. He expresses his restless desire to be free. Bonhoeffer had always been an active man, playing tennis and travelling among other things. It had to be difficult for him to be imprisoned for so long. He always kept these feelings to himself, however, sharing them only with close friends like Eberhard Bethge. He learned to deal with his feelings and live in expectation of coming days. A quotation taken from Fritz Reuter expresses Bonhoeffer's strength: "Noone's life flows on such an even course that it does not sometimes come up against a dam and whirl round and round, or somebody throws a stone into the clear water. Something happens to everyone--and he must take care that the water stays clear and that heaven and earth are reflected in it."

Before prison, Bonhoeffer had many opportunities to be for others. In London, he preached at the two German churches and worked with the ecumenical movement. Also, at the Seminary of Pomerania, he lived for his students and to keep the Congregational church alive. This was an underground seminary and could have been dangerous for Bonhoeffer.

The most outstanding suffering and selflessness Bonhoeffer experienced was in the plot against Hitler. Bonhoeffer loved his country. He could have remained in America and probably would have lived to finish his work, but he felt that he must go back to his country to share in the trouble in order to share in the reconstruction. He not only lived his life for others, but it gave it as well.

Bonhoeffer has been called a martyr, a hero, and a saint. He was above all a theologian. If he would have lived his contribution would have been tremendous. Some say he may have changed much of his thinking. We can see some changes already taken place in his letters. It is hard to say exactly how he would change or even if he would at all. Perhaps he would have just furthered his past thought and expounded upon it.

How can Bonhoeffer be of importance for today's world? We can see much doubt in the world today. A lot of people are questioning our government and economic status. We are perhaps on the verge of war. We are not to the extreme of Germany under Hitler, but still are in a situation where much of our life is being questioned. Not only the political and economic, but the spiritual needs are in question as well.

We are trying new religions, new ways to experience transcendence. We are still in a world come of age, a world who does not need God. Whereas in Bonhoeffer's day, science and technology were taking God's place; today, New methods of transcendence, such as meditation--TM, Yoga, etc., are taking us away from God.

Bonhoeffer's Christ in the world come of age is here for us today in the same right as he was for Bonhoeffer's time. He is in the center of the world and is the essence of the world. Without Him there is no community, no church, no state.

Bonhoeffer was a churchman, although he put down the church at certain points. He knew the necessity of the church. There is still that necessity today. The church is our meeting place. It is there that we may meet God through Christ and come to know Him. It is not a place of refuge to hide from the world, but is a center of action in the world. It is lost in dogma and doctrines, and must be revived.

I feel that Bonhoeffer had much to say to the world today and to the individual. For me, he has been a great help in understanding Christ. He has answered some questions and raised others. I cannot agree totally with everything, but it is not my place to. It is for me to read understand and question. I question Bonhoeffer's view of Christ at certain points. He seems at times to make Christ the God to be worshipped. I cannot put Christ on the same level with God. We are to worship God through Christ and in Christ, but Christ is not to be worshipped himself. Christ is our Mediator and our example, not our God. Still I question this in that it put a dark light on the trinity. If God and Christ and the Holy Spirit are one in the same, then Christ would be our God. I see the trinity, however, as the three being inter-

woven, entities of one another, but not completely saturated in one another. Christ is God's son. In this God is in him, a part of him.

In this paper, I have tried to show how Bonhoeffer lived the things he taught. I have tried to show how he answered the question of who Christ is in a world come of age and what purpose he has. Before he died, Bonhoeffer said that by the end it was the beginning for him. He meant by this that he would be entering eternity with God. He no longer had to live and suffer in the world. Just as Christ lived and died, and because he lived and died and was resurrected, Bonhoeffer would die and yet live forever. This is what it meant for him, but for us Bonhoeffer continues to live in the works he left us. He continues to live in the theology he gave us. By this theology we can live in this world come of age as Christians, not isolated but involved in the world. We can live for others, and by doing so bring life to ourselves.

FOOTNOTES

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6. Ibid.
7. Ibid. p. 9.
8. Ibid. p. 11.
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12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Bethge, Eberhard, Letters and Papers from Prison, Enlarged Ed., Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., New York: 1976. p. 369.
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16. Ibid. p. 154.
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18. Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, Christ the Center, Harper & Row, Publishers, New York: 1960. p.
19. Godsey, p. 157.
20. The Cost of Discipleship, p. 126.

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23. Ibid. p. 67.
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27. Ibid. p. 37.
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29. Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, Ethics, ed. by Eberhard Bethge, Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., New York: 1975, p. 25.
30. Ibid. p. 30.
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32. Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 115.
33. Ibid. p. 173.

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