

Luther and Bonhoeffer on the Sermon on the Mount: Similar Tasks, Different Tools¹

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On the surface, Martin Luther and Dietrich Bonhoeffer appear to be direct contrasts in their interpretations of the Sermon on the Mount. On the one hand, Luther regularly calls for the proper distinction between two realms, the *weltliche Reich* or temporal realm and the *geistliche Reich* or spiritual realm.² In the preface to his commentary, Luther complains that the “schismatic spirits and Anabaptists” “do not recognize any difference between the secular and the divine realm, much less what should be the distinctive doctrine and action in each realm.”³ On this basis and reinforced by Luther’s distinction between office and person, some scholars take this distinction of the spiritual and temporal realms to be the (or at least a) primary hermeneutic used by Luther in his understanding of the Sermon on the Mount.⁴

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, on the other hand, disdains any notion of two *separate* realms structuring God’s reality. Against theologians like Paul Althaus, who interpreted Luther’s two kingdoms as a strict separation between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of the world,⁵ Bonhoeffer

¹ This essay was first penned for Dr. Robert Kolb in the seminar “Luther and Authority” in the Spring of 2013 at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

² For helpful literature, see Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther’s Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms in the Context of his Theology*, trans. Karl H. Hertz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966); Robert Kolb, “Luther’s Hermeneutics of Distinctions,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther’s Theology*, ed. Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel, and L’ubomír Batka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 178–79; and F. Edward Cranz, *An Essay on the Development of Luther’s Thought on Justice, Law, and Society*, 2d. ed. (Mifflintown, PA: Sigler Press, 1998), originally published in 1959.

³ Martin Luther, *The Sermon on the Mount and the Magnificat*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, vol. 21 of *Luther’s Works* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1956), 5. Hereafter LW 21.

⁴ E.g., William J. Wright, *Martin Luther’s Understanding of God’s Two Kingdoms: A Response to the Challenge of Skepticism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 126; Jarret A. Carty, ed., *Divine Kingdom, Holy Order: The Political Writings of Martin Luther* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2012), 206–7; and Paul Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, tr. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 61–82.

⁵ Althaus posited the *Eigengesetzlichkeit* (autonomy) of the realms, which allowed for National Socialist goals to dominate the temporal realm without Christian criticism. For detail on Althaus, see Robert P. Erickson, *Theologians Under Hitler: Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus, and Emanuel Hirsch* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1985), 79–119. See also Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, ed. Ilse Tödt, et al., vol. 6 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 56n.36. More than twenty years after Bonhoeffer’s *Ethics*, Althaus continued to assert, “In fact he [Luther] does not claim that Christ is lord within the *orders* as such but only in the *men* who act within these orders. Thus, the secular kingdom does not stand under the lordship of Christ in the same way that the kingdom of Christ or Christendom does” (*Ethics of Martin Luther*, 79).

claims that there is “only *the one realm of the Christ reality*.... The whole reality of the world has already been drawn into and is held together in Christ. History moves only from this center and toward this center.”⁶ In *Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer utilizes his understanding that Christ stands at the center of reality⁷ to criticize the Reformation distinction between office and person which was being used to justify violence and war while sidelining the Word of Jesus.⁸ Hence, Bonhoeffer refuses to separate church and state, redemption and creation, from each other, focusing instead on the one reality of Christ and the totalizing nature of Christ’s call to discipleship.

Despite these differences, this essay argues that Bonhoeffer’s interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount stands in continuity with Luther.⁹ Both interpreters use the sermon for three purposes. First, they use Christ’s Sermon on the Mount as caustic salt¹⁰ to tear down all human projects and pretensions that try to please God or find salvation apart from the Word. Second, they center the Christian life on the Word itself, which justifies sinners through the promise. Third, they offer the Word of God to structure the Christian life in their respective contexts. In these first two purposes, Luther and Bonhoeffer are quite similar even though they are directed at different opponents and use different tools. Both use God’s Word to condemn sinful human works and bring Jesus and his promises to sinners, traditionally called the distinction between law and gospel. Even though the law and gospel distinction is often overlooked by Bonhoeffer scholars,¹¹

Certainly, what Althaus says here is partly true in that Christ’s lordship is hidden in the world. However, by placing the lordship of Christ only over people and not over the orders—which differ how from the principalities, powers, and elemental spirits of the world in?—Althaus retains the autonomy of the orders since they operate independently from the Word of God.

⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 58. Emphasis original.

⁷ See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, ed. Martin Kuske and Ilse Tödt, vol. 4 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 93–96. Bonhoeffer often proclaims Christ as the “mediator” of all things, against any notion of “immediacy” in one’s understanding of or relationship with any person or thing. In other words, Christ is in the “middle,” “between me and the world, between me and other people and things” (93–94).

⁸ Referring to Matthew 5:38–42. Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 134–35.

⁹ As such, my work can be situated within the recent scholarship that focuses on continuity between Bonhoeffer and the Lutheran tradition. The best recent monograph is Michael P. DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer’s Reception of Luther* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). Other recent, helpful texts include Klaus Grünwaldt, Christiane Tietz, and Udo Han, eds., *Bonhoeffer und Luther: Zentrale Themen ihrer Theologie* (n.p.: Velkd, 2007); and H. Gaylon Barker, *The Cross of Reality: Luther’s Theologia Crucis and Bonhoeffer’s Christology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015). On Scripture, see Stephen Plant, “God’s Dangerous Gift: Bonhoeffer, Luther, and Bach on the Role of Reason in Reading Scripture,” in *God Speaks to Us: Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. Ralf K. Wüstenberg and Jens Zimmermann (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013), 37–54.

¹⁰ LW 21:55: “Salting has to bite. Although they criticize us as biters, we know that this is how it has to be and that Christ has commanded the salt to be sharp and continually caustic, as we shall hear.” Compare LW 21:67: “[Christ] Himself starts salting and shining as an example to teach them what they should preach.”

¹¹ For instance, Clifford Green, “Christus in Mundo, Christus pro Mundo. Bonhoeffer’s Foundations for a New Christian Paradigm,” in *Bonhoeffer, Religion and Politics*, 4th International Bonhoeffer Colloquium, ed. Christiane Tietz and Jens Zimmermann (Frankfurt Am Main: Peter Lang, 2012), 22–23: “Bonhoeffer simply did not structure his theology on the law-gospel, two-kingdoms way of thinking—though those ideas can be found in his work.” In light of this paper, law and gospel are

Bonhoeffer's use of the Sermon on the Mount mirrors Luther not by articulating doctrines of law and gospel but by using God's Word to condemn and construct, exposing self-invented pieties for what they are and creating faith through Christ's promise. What Bonhoeffer means by "Word" differs slightly from Luther and Bonhoeffer uses different tools to expose and comfort, yet Bonhoeffer largely mirrors Luther in using the Sermon to do the two tasks of law and gospel. In the third purpose, a larger difference between Luther and Bonhoeffer becomes apparent. Luther focuses more on God's commands fulfilled in a person's vocation in society while Bonhoeffer emphasizes the visible community of the church in which Christ is followed and his life embodied. Throughout their interpretations of the Sermon, Bonhoeffer may not say what Luther says, but he uses the Sermon on the Mount to do what Luther did. Bonhoeffer proclaims the law that exposes the "lovely disguise"¹² of "self-invented and self-chosen piety"¹³ and proclaims the gospel that carries Christ the Savior to sinners, forgiving them and calling them to a new life of obedience to his Word.

This essay will first explore selections of Luther's commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, particularly his exposition of the beatitudes. Luther's central concern becomes evident: justification by faith alone and sanctification as the fruits of faith. We will also see that Luther structures the entire Christian life according to God's Word, criticizing those who do otherwise. In this context, Luther uses the various two-realms distinctions¹⁴ as tools to criticize his opponents and concretize the Christian life in sixteenth-century Saxony. From there, I turn to Bonhoeffer's *Discipleship*, showing that Bonhoeffer's polemic against cheap grace is an argument against separating sanctification from justification. The intimate connection of justification and sanctification is reinforced in Bonhoeffer's argument that "immediacy is an illusion."¹⁵ Then, I will sketch Bonhoeffer's description of the Christian life through his exposition of the Sermon on the Mount. Bonhoeffer's tools are different, but like Luther Bonhoeffer places the Word of God at the center of the Christian life and condemns the best the world has to offer so that people turn to the Word. Finally, in the conclusion, I note the similarity in the tasks of law and gospel and analyze two differences: the

not merely *found* in his work. Bonhoeffer uses God's Word law and gospel, even if he uses different tools to condemn and construct the Christian life. Compare Peter Frick, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Gerhard Ebeling: An Encounter of Theological Minds," in *Engaging Bonhoeffer: The Impact and Influence of Bonhoeffer's Life and Thought*, ed. Matthew D. Kirkpatrick (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 239–58, who shows that Bonhoeffer considers law and gospel to be problematic, but in need of "renewal" not outright rejection (249).

¹² LW 21:180. Luther is commenting on greed, but this characterization fits with all sins that pretend to be virtues.

¹³ Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 70.

¹⁴ I am referring to a number of distinctions Luther employs throughout his commentary on the Sermon: spiritual and temporal realms, office and person, the person-in-himself and the person-in-relation, and the Christian person and the worldly person. While these different distinctions, Luther uses them to do similar things: to call his opponents to repentance for confusing God's ways and the world's ways, the two kinds of righteousness, and to concretize Christian life in the world.

¹⁵ Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 94.

primary referent of “Word of God” and the primary place where the Christian life happens. In short, Bonhoeffer is a faithful *Lutheran* interpreter of Scripture who rejected part of the Lutheran legacy in order to proclaim clearly God’s Word as condemning law and transforming gospel.

Luther on the Sermon on the Mount

Luther’s commentary on the Sermon, published in the fall of 1532, was originally presented as a Wednesday sermon series from 1530–32 during the absence of the usual Wittenberg pastor, Johannes Bugenhagen, who was supervising the reformation in Lübeck.¹⁶ In the preface to his commentary, Luther sets his agenda against two adversaries. On the one hand, Luther interprets the Sermon against the Roman Catholic “jurists and sophists” who have turned the commands of God in the Sermon into “twelve ‘evangelical counsels,’ twelve bits of good advice,” which do not apply to all Christians but only to those who desire “to attain a perfection higher and more perfect than that of other Christians.”¹⁷ For Luther, turning the sermon into evangelical counsels is problematic for three reasons. First, it makes “Christian salvation dependent upon works apart from faith,” also creating levels of Christians as if salvation did not depend on the same Word and same baptism for all. Secondly, it makes Christ’s commands optional by denying the applicability of Jesus’s words to all Christians.¹⁸ Third, it allows the jurists and canon lawyers to rule the church instead of Christ, which also supports the papal claims to temporal power.¹⁹ For Luther, the Sermon is directed to all Christians to live sanctified lives, as the fruits of faith, according to God’s command in established society.

On the other hand, Luther interprets the Sermon against a second adversary, “the new jurists and sophists, the schismatic spirits and Anabaptists.”²⁰ According to Luther, these Anabaptists disrupt the stable order of society, refusing to participate in secular government by denying that Christians can hold office or take oaths, rejecting a Christian’s right to protect his family, and condemning all who own private property. Thus, Luther claims, “They do not recognize any difference between the secular and the divine realm, much less what should be the distinctive doctrine and action in each realm.”²¹ For Luther, these Anabaptists not only deny the divine ordinance of the secular realm, but they also “mislead whole crowds of people” by making justification by faith dependent upon good works. They substitute the true Word of God for “glorious words” like “Spirit” and “fruits of the Spirit.” Instead of listening to these glorious words, a Christian “must

¹⁶ Jaroslav Pelikan, Introduction to Volume 21 of *Luther’s Works*, LW 21:xix–xxi.

¹⁷ LW 21:3–4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* This is only implicit in the preface. Luther writes, “They [the jurists and sophists] are trying to re-establish their cursed, shabby canons and to reinstate the crown on the head of their jackass of a pope.”

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

pay attention only to the Word, which shows us the right way of life that avails before God.”²²

Although Roman Catholics and Anabaptists appear to be nothing alike, Luther critiques both on the same three counts. Most importantly, they oppose Christ and his gospel by failing to recognize the distinction between grace and merit, obscuring faith in Christ which makes works good. Luther emphasizes the difference between God’s grace and a life of works: “Let all merit be simply discarded here [before God] in favor of the conclusion that it is impossible to obtain grace and the forgiveness of sins in any other way, manner, or measure than by hearing the Word of God about Christ and receiving it in faith.”²³ Secondly, both the Roman Catholics and the Anabaptists reject or shroud God’s Word and command for the whole of life by “institut[ing] false good works and fictitious holiness,” which suppress the true good works done according to God’s command in one’s walk of life.²⁴ Third, they reject the divine institution of society, denying that God’s commands are to be followed within established society.

Luther’s primary task in his exposition of the Sermon on the Mount is to proclaim God’s Word of law and gospel that works first as caustic salt against the glorious-looking good works and pieties of the human project before the Word brings faith and new life in Christ. Luther uses the two-realms distinctions to distinguish between justification by faith and sanctification as the fruits of faith against those who confuse grace and merit. Luther’s second task, interconnected with the first, is to structure the Christian life according to God’s Word within sixteenth-century Saxony. To see this, we will examine Luther’s exposition of the beatitudes.

Luther on the Beatitudes

Luther’s interpretation of the beatitudes at the beginning of his commentary sets the stage for the entire exposition. Almost every important theme in the commentary finds a place in the beatitudes: the two realms distinction, the distinction between office and person, the emphasis on sanctification as the fruits of faith, and most importantly the Word of God as that which condemns human pieties and leads the Christian to do God’s will for the good of the neighbor. The central verse for Luther’s understanding of the beatitudes is verse 8: “Blessed are those of a pure heart, for they shall see God.”²⁵ At the center of Luther’s interpretation is his understanding that

²² *Ibid.*, 254. That Luther calls the Anabaptists “the new jurists and sophists” in the preface points to the fact that Luther sees part of their error as obscuring the gospel with law, even if it is not explicit in the preface.

²³ *Ibid.*, 290.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 32–39. Besides the first beatitude about the poor in spirit, this is also Luther’s longest commentary on any one verse of the beatitudes, which gives a sense of its importance. While my statement is an assertion more than an argument at this point, the centrality of verse 8 will become clear as the other verses are interpreted in reference to it. In other words, verse 8 will open up the rest of the beatitudes, which justifies my assertion of its centrality.

God's Word tears down the glorious works of humanity and calls instead for humble service to the neighbor according to God's command.

According to Luther's antisemitic interpretation, Jesus preaches the beatitudes against a Jewish understanding that the good life is a life that appears good to human wisdom.²⁶ These Jews "did not want to suffer, but sought a life of ease, pleasure, and joy; they did not want to hunger nor to be merciful, but to be smug in their exclusive piety while they judged and despised other people. In the same way, their holiness also consisted in outward cleanliness...."²⁷ Not only the Jews, however, hold such a doctrine according to Luther, but "the whole world" also believes the "delusion" that wealth, prosperity, and health, good-looking outward works, indicate God's blessing rather than the Word of God.²⁸ At the heart of this delusion is a belief that the best life is lived according to human standards beyond and apart from God's Word. What the world counts as pure and good is considered the main criterion for good works and purity of heart instead of the Word.

The problem of self-made holiness was not confined to Jesus's day but continues in the lives of the old and "new monks" of the sixteenth century, Roman Catholics and Anabaptists.²⁹ According to Luther, the monk tries to become pure of heart by running "away from human society into a corner, a monastery, or a desert, neither thinking about the world nor concerning himself with worldly affairs and business, but amusing himself only with heavenly thoughts."³⁰ The Carthusian monk "thinks that if he lives according to his strict rule of obedience, poverty, and celibacy, if he is isolated from the world, he is pure in every way."³¹ Anabaptists too isolate themselves, marking their purity by separation from society. For Luther, this delusion calls the commands of God evil and creates a new good work from one's own heart and mind. In fact, Luther claims that the "delusive doctrine" of monasticism has "committed the murderous crime of calling 'profane' the act and stations which the world requires and which, as a matter of fact, God Himself has ordained."³² If God has commanded a vocation, such as being a spouse or parent, then it must be sacred when a Christian does the work. "For God has commanded all of this. Whatever God has commanded cannot

²⁶ Luther misattributes Jesus' words as against the Jews as a group rather than directed at the hearers of Jesus' sermon or certain religious leaders. In so doing, Luther's interpretation is antisemitic. I affirm with my church body: "While The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod holds Martin Luther in high esteem for his bold proclamation and clear articulation of the teachings of Scripture, it deeply regrets, deploras, and repudiates statements made by Luther which express a negative and hostile attitude toward the Jews." ("Frequently Asked Questions—LCMS Views," accessed 11/8/2019, <https://www.lcms.org/about/beliefs/faqs/lcms-views#antisemitic>.)

²⁷ LW 21:33. Cf. LW 21:10–11, 17, 24.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 5. Cf. A monk is anyone "who takes it upon himself to start something special that goes beyond faith and the common occupations...., though he may not affect the same manner or habit or bearing" (*Ibid.*, 259).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

³² *Ibid.*, 32.

be profane (Acts 10:15); indeed it must be the very purity with which we see God.”³³ Whether it is a Roman Catholic monk who runs away from society to live in prayerful solitude or an Anabaptist monk who makes a new society apart from established government and institutions, Luther believes that such a self-made holiness violates God’s command to love and care for the neighbor in society.³⁴

Purity of heart does not come from doing works that appear good to the world, even following Jesus’s Sermon perfectly in order to be seen by others—these are likely to be mortal sins.³⁵ Purity of heart comes from hearing God’s Word and letting it condemn one’s glorious words and works, creating a new heart that is filled with the Word of God.³⁶ Hence, Luther calls for preaching of the Word of God as law and gospel, tearing down “self-made sanctity and self-chosen worship” that threatens the true gospel³⁷ and instructing people about Christ and faith before also teaching the importance of good works according to Christ’s Word and command.³⁸ Thus, the Word of God first acts as corrosive, purifying salt, calling all to repent for living according to their own notions of piety and ignoring the duties God has blessed and given to them. Christians must constantly struggle to rely on God and his Word, to trust how God sees reality instead of understanding purity and holiness from a “natural” point of view. In this vein, Luther exhorts the Wittenbergers: “Be on guard against all your own ideas if you want to be pure before God. See to it that your heart is founded and fastened on the Word of God. Then you will be purer than all the Carthusians and saints in the world.”³⁹ The second task⁴⁰ is teaching the true gospel of Jesus Christ as a light of revelation, by which salvation comes by faith alone without works, leading to teaching good works as fruits of faith according to God’s Word.

For Luther, “everything depends on the Word of God.”⁴¹ The Word of God is the light which reveals what is true, holy, and pure in God’s eyes, and nothing else matters. If Jesus says that the poor in spirit are blessed, then a Christian should not abandon her family or society,⁴² but ought to use God’s

³³ Ibid., 32.

³⁴ Ibid., 69–70. Luther sees Jesus as confirming God’s law in the Old Testament, especially the Ten Commandments, which establish the Christian life in relationship with others in society.

³⁵ Heidelberg Disputation, Thesis 3: “Although the works of man always seen attractive and good, they are nevertheless likely to be mortal sins.” (Martin Luther, *Career of the Reformer: I*, ed. Harold J. Grimm, vol. 31 of *Luther’s Works* [Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957], 43.) Luther’s understanding that ‘good’ is determined by God’s Word and not human perception even (or especially) when they contradict is a facet of his theology of the cross. For a synopsis of Luther’s theology of the cross, see Robert Kolb, “Luther on the Theology of the Cross,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 16 (2002): 443–66.

³⁶ LW 21:33–34.

³⁷ Ibid., 56–57.

³⁸ Ibid., 65.

³⁹ Ibid., 36.

⁴⁰ Second and first are a theological, not a chronological order. After all, both tasks are continual necessities because sin persists in the baptized.

⁴¹ Ibid., 35.

⁴² Ibid., 13.

gifts like a guest, willing to throw away all possessions as soon as God calls for it.⁴³ If Jesus blesses those who mourn, a Christian should not try to escape mourning and sorrow like the world does (nor seek it) but accept it as “God’s good pleasure” with the promise of God’s coming reign.⁴⁴ If Jesus says the meek are blessed, then a Christian ought not to shy away from suffering, but should speak the truth of God and do God’s commands even if it entails suffering.⁴⁵ If Jesus blesses those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, then a Christian should instruct her neighbors in the Word of God and do her duty in her walk of life so that a little corner of the earth is made better even if the wicked abound, making flight and rebellion seem like good options.⁴⁶ If Jesus blesses the merciful, then a Christian should treat his neighbors with compassion so that justice is tempered with mercy.⁴⁷ If Jesus blesses the peacemakers, then a Christian prince must not start a war even with just cause, but “must advise and support peace while he can.”⁴⁸ If Jesus blesses those who are persecuted for his sake, then a Christian should see himself in a battle against Satan and the rebellious world, “ready to suffer for the sake of [Christ’s] Word and work.”⁴⁹ This is not to say that Luther understands the beatitudes as only as command; they are Christ’s promise for Christians who are suffering and treated wickedly by the world. At the same time, however, God’s Word of promise also calls Christians to a certain kind of life, in which the Christian can say, “I feel sorry, misery, and sadness of heart; but still I am blessed, happy, and settled on the basis of the Word of God.”⁵⁰ The Christian comes to see reality through the Word of God, trusting in God’s mercy through Christ no matter what happens, and following God’s commands in her walk of life.

The Christian Life in Society According to the Word

In the beatitudes, the center of Luther’s concern is for the Word of God to shape the Christian person as a whole, in faith and in life. This concern is primarily about justification and sanctification. God makes one pure by the Gospel of Christ received in faith, which then shapes the Christian to do good works as fruits of faith according to God’s command. Thus, for Luther, the Word is both “the Word of faith” and “the Word of understanding.” The Word of faith purifies the person by creating faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord while the Word of understanding “teaches him what he is to do toward his neighbor in his station.”⁵¹ The one Word of God does two things for the Christian *qua* Christian in purifying and teaching, but it remains the one

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 27–28.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 29–30.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 44. Cf. *ibid.*, 39–40.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 45–47, quoting 47.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

Word of God which structures all of reality.

Since the Word of God is also a Word of understanding that teaches the Christian how to live in society, Luther's commentary must also address a second concern: What should the Christian life look like in sixteenth-century Saxony? It is significant that Luther does not ask what the church should look like,⁵² but what the individual Christian life should look like. Heinrich Bornkamm has noted that Luther did not consider the church a separate institutional body in the modern sense "for he was not acquainted with the distinction between the civil and ecclesiastical communities based on their differing constituencies."⁵³ For Bornkamm, this means that Luther got to the heart of the matter with the question of the Christian in the world. In light of recent scholarship on Constantinianism,⁵⁴ however, Luther's Constantinian situation likely prevented him from seeing the importance of the church as a community distinct from the world with its own kind of life and social ethics. After all, for Luther reforming the church and reforming society were practically coterminous.⁵⁵ Luther's focus, then, in ethics tended to be the individual: How should a Christian live in sixteenth-century Germany?

For Luther, the Christian lives from the Word of God both in his vocations and in himself.⁵⁶ Luther makes this clear in his comments on Matthew 7:16-20, the good tree that bears good fruit. For Luther, the good tree is "one who conducts his life, existence, and behavior according to the Word of God, pure and unadulterated."⁵⁷ This is not only true for the Christian as he is in himself, in his attitude of faith toward God and love toward the neighbor, but this is also true as he lives for others in his offices and stations, which Luther specifically emphasizes. Good works, for Luther, are those done within a vocation that God has commanded and given his blessing:

⁵² More accurately, Luther rarely (if ever) asks this question when he's talking about social ethics or politics, but this is an important question when he's talking about ecclesiology. In fact, Luther's understanding of the church as a creation of the Word has social and political consequences which ought to be explored. See, for example, Luther's treatise "On the Council and the Church" for a good example of this notion of church (Martin Luther, *Church and Ministry III*, ed. Eric W. Gritsch, vol. 41 of *Luther's Works* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966], 9–178). Also see Luther's exposition of Psalm 110 for an example of his understanding of church that begins to look like an alternative polity to the civil realm (Martin Luther, *Selected Psalms II*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, vol. 13 of *Luther's Works* [St. Louis: Concordia, 1956], 228–348). Psalm 110 is probably as close as Luther gets to understanding the ecclesial community as distinct from the civil community.

⁵³ Bornkamm, *Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms*, 13.

⁵⁴ For a brief example, see John Howard Yoder, "The Constantinian Sources of Western Social Ethics" in *Priestly Kingdom* (1984; repr., Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2011), 135–47.

⁵⁵ Scott Hendrix, *Recultivating the Vineyard: The Reformation Agendas of Christianization* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004).

⁵⁶ Cf. LW 21:39–40. In another good example of how God's Word structures one's external life in vocation as well as one's internal life of attitude and faith, Luther demands that a Christian prince should seek peace according to Christ's Word, even in cases where secular law would allow for war with just cause.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 260.

It all depends, therefore, on really knowing and maintaining the definition of what Christ calls good works or fruits: a good work is one that is required or commanded by the Word of God and proceeds on the basis of that commandment. So a wife who is pious and faithful in her marriage can claim and boast that her station is commanded by God, that it is supported by the true, pure, and unadulterated Word of God, and that it heartily pleases God. Hence her works are all good fruit.⁵⁸

In a similar way, Luther also says that the man who hauls manure is actually hauling “precious figs and grapes” in God’s sight, even though such work is condemned by reason, since the Christian man is doing his calling in a station that helps his neighbors in society. God’s Word of promise, which justifies the sinner and makes the tree good, and command is what makes a Christian’s work good and holy, nothing else.⁵⁹

Therefore, the main question for Luther is what the Word says and what God calls his people to do. God’s Word establishes the stations that Christians inhabit and use for the good of others. It does not call the Christian to pursue perfection apart from society either in a monastery (Roman Catholicism) or in an alternative society (Anabaptism); rather, God calls Christians to love and care for their neighbors in good vocations already established in Saxony. For Luther, living the *Christian* life in vocation is a distinctive life since so many opponents disparage and dishonor the lives of servants, judges, and parents, denying that these stations are good callings from God. In fact, those who humbly follow God’s Word in vocation *are* the persecuted and the meek as they perform their duties.⁶⁰

Luther does not quite allow a secular idea of vocation and reason to establish the Christian life in the world, although Luther does speak this way at times.⁶¹ The Word of God teaches the Christian to love and care for the neighbor, but it does not always give specific commands about how to structure society, especially in Christendom where Christians have political and societal power, which is alien to the New Testament perspective. Reason is thus essential for forming a good, just, and peaceful society.⁶² At the same

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 262–63.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 268.

⁶⁰ *Cf. Ibid.*, 53.

⁶¹ *E.g. Ibid.*, 110: “You do not have to ask Christ about your duty. Ask the imperial or the territorial law.”

⁶² A good example of this is Luther’s comment on marriage: “For marriage is a rather secular and outward thing, having to do with wife and children, house and home, and with other matters that belong to the realm of the government, all of which have been completely subjected to reason (Gen. 1:29). Therefore we should not tamper with what the government and wise men decide and prescribe with regard to these questions on the basis of the laws and of reason” (*Ibid.*, 93). Significantly, Luther goes on to say how *Christians* ought to think about and act in marriage in distinction from non-Christians. How would Luther respond if the Christian way of marriage was being abrogated by “what the government and wise men decide”? That such a possibility was not on Luther’s radar with regard to marriage or any other matter is another “fruit” of the Constantinian situation.

time, Luther does not believe that nude reason, apart from God's Word, will fulfill God's commands and structure society appropriately. Luther's understanding of reason is Christianized reason, which thinks and acts within the framework of the God of Jesus who commands a person to love his neighbor. In other words, God's Word is the foundational category in which reason finds its proper place; God's Word sets limits for reason and gives it its proper role.⁶³ Hence, Luther claims, "A Christian may carry on all sorts of secular business with impunity—not as a Christian but as a secular person—while his heart remains pure in his Christianity, as Christ demands. This the world cannot do; but contrary to God's command, it misuses every *secular* ordinance and law, indeed, every creature."⁶⁴ The world misuses *secular* law because, for Luther, there is no secular in a modern sense. The society he knows has been shaped and formed by God's Word, and his world wants to follow God's command (in appearance when not in fact). After all, Luther argues with his opponents over *which* commands of God should be implemented in society, not *whether* such commands are appropriate to society. The appropriateness of God's law is presumed.

In this sense, Heinrich Bornkamm is right when he argues that natural law, reason, and love are all equated for Luther,⁶⁵ but Luther's understanding of love, rooted in the Word of God, remains at the heart of reason and natural law. The Word must be the center for Luther because God's Word acts as salt, corroding, burning, and purifying reason, natural law, and even love so that God's Word structures all of life. Luther could practically equate reason, natural law, and love only because Christianized Germany looked to the divine law to clarify matters of the natural law, and everyone reasoned within Christian limits.⁶⁶ God's Word did not need to condemn and purify the structures of Christian Germany in Luther's mind; instead, Luther directed his preaching toward the old and new monks, who were trying to be perfect Christians outside of established society.

⁶³ See Theodor Dieter, "Martin Luther's Understanding of Reason," *Lutheran Quarterly* 25 (2011): 249–78. Dieter concludes on the basis of Luther: "A critique of reason is thus not a rejection of 'reason' on theological grounds, but instead a *recognition of its limitations* through a clear distinction between philosophy and theology" (270, emphasis added).

⁶⁴ LW 21:113. Emphasis added. Cf. LW 21:50, 265–66.

⁶⁵ Bornkamm, *Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms*, 14. Bornkamm understands love to be universal for Luther and suggests these three ought to have equal weight in interpreting each other. Bornkamm interprets Luther this way because he fails to recognize (to be fair, Bornkamm was probably too early to do so) the pervasive effects of the Constantinian situation on Luther's thought. Additionally, for Luther, if you do not fear and love God, you cannot truly love your neighbor. Thus, proper love is distinctly Christian for Luther. See Luther's Small and Large Catechisms on the Ten Commandments: Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, ed., *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 351–54 and 386–431.

⁶⁶ One of the interesting examples of this is the discussion over bigamy with Henry VIII. Certainly, politics was the larger factor, but politics happened in the interpretation of Scripture. For the history of this situation, see Neelak Serawlook Tjernagel, *Henry VIII and the Lutherans: A Study in Anglo-Lutheran Relations from 1521–1547* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1965) and Erwin Doernberg, *Henry VIII and Luther: An Account of Their Personal Relations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961).

In sum, Luther uses the Sermon on the Mount to proclaim God's law and gospel to his hearers, which not only kills and makes alive but also structures life according to the Word of God. Against Roman Catholic and Anabaptist interpretations, Luther first proclaims the centrality of justification by faith alone and the necessity of sanctification as fruits of faith. God's Word creates faith in the heart, condemning all attempts to be holy before God by works, and places the person back into the world to love the neighbor according to God's command. As part of this task, Luther regularly uses the image of the good tree that bears good fruit.⁶⁷ This image distinguishes between faith and works, righteousness before God and righteousness before the neighbor, but also requires interconnection. While this first task emphasizes the person's relationship of faith to God that leads to love to the neighbor, Luther's second task describes the Christian life in the world on the basis of God's Word. To do this, Luther uses the two realms to condemn the monastic way of life that dishonors the Christian's duty in society and to form a positive view of how the Christian ought to live in society. This positive view both justifies the status quo and shapes a positive view of the Christian life in the world rooted in vocation. Luther might have asked: Do you wonder how you should live as Christians? Look at your vocations! You are a father, a lawyer, and a neighbor, just to name a few. These vocations give you neighbors to serve. Follow the Word of God as you care for them, love them, and instruct them in God's Word.⁶⁸ As such, Luther uses the Sermon on the Mount not only to condemn and justify but also to set Christians back in the world to fulfill their vocations according to God's command.

Bonhoeffer on the Sermon on the Mount

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's commentary on Jesus's Sermon, which was published in 1937 under the title *Nachfolge* or *Discipleship*, was written in the midst of turmoil and persecution. Unlike Luther's situation, where he was writing and preaching to Christians in power in Saxony, Bonhoeffer's context was closer to the church in the New Testament. Bonhoeffer's leadership in the Confessing Church put him in direct conflict with Nazi ideology and the government-sponsored German Christian church.⁶⁹ Geoffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey explain the gravity of the situation:

⁶⁷ Luther uses a variant of "fruit" in reference to fruit of faith 96 times (2 of these are ambiguous whether it is literal fruit or fruit of faith) in his commentary, without counting quotations of Scripture (Matt. 7:16-20). Half of those come in Luther's exposition of Matt. 7:16-20, but the other 48 are used throughout the commentary. This in itself indicates the importance of justification by faith and the resulting fruits of sanctification for Luther. (Search accomplished with Libronix software on April 30, 2013.)

⁶⁸ This is essentially what Luther does in his *Haustafel* or Table of Duties of the Small Catechism. See Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 365-67.

⁶⁹ For an historical account of the confessing church before the war, see Victoria Barnett, *For the Soul of the People: Protestant Protest Against Hitler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 18-154. For the ideology of German Christians, see Doris L. Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

“Subsequent [to the Barman and Dahlem Synods] state regulations had squeezed this opposition into narrow enclaves tarred with ecclesiastical illegality. Acts of brutality and psychological coercion followed, as well as imprisonment of dissident pastors, as the Nazi government tightened its control over the ecclesiastical sphere and thus impeded any putative church opposition.”⁷⁰ The Confessing Church in Germany in the 1930s was under persecution and attack, and Bonhoeffer preached, lectured, and wrote to pastors and lay people of the Confessing church who would be imprisoned for the gospel as well as to those who bore the name Christian but were still trying to be “good Germans” as defined by National Socialism.

Despite the opposite situations confronting Bonhoeffer and Luther, Bonhoeffer’s interpretation of the Sermon follows Luther’s trajectory. Like Luther, Bonhoeffer wrestles with the questions of justification and sanctification, the priority of Christ’s call and the necessity of discipleship according to God’s Word.⁷¹ In a letter to Karl Barth, Bonhoeffer commented that the main questions of *Discipleship* are “those of the exposition of the Sermon on the Mount and the Pauline doctrine of justification and sanctification.”⁷² While Luther engages with Christians who are trying to achieve something before God with their works and need to hear Christ’s Word of *faith* and obedience, Bonhoeffer deals with Christians who have made justification into “cheap grace” and need to hear Christ’s call as one to *obedience* and faith.⁷³ To do this, Bonhoeffer uses the language of “costly grace,” the gracious call of Christ into discipleship where Luther had used the image of the good tree that bears good fruit. With the different language, both yet use the sermon as caustic salt that condemns human sinfulness and as the gospel that brings Christ and sets the Christian on the path of faith and obedience. In addition, the second question Bonhoeffer addresses is the same as Luther, What is the shape of the Christian life in *this* world, 1930s Germany? Unlike Luther who concretized the Christian life in the duties of society, Bonhoeffer looks to the visible church as the community of Jesus Christ, and calls Christians to a distinctive life within the church.

The analysis of Bonhoeffer will begin with his understanding of costly grace and his rejection of immediacy to anything except Christ. These themes emphasize justification and sanctification and are used as caustic salt against

⁷⁰ Geoffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey, “Editors’ Introduction to the English Edition,” *Discipleship*, 2.

⁷¹ See Mary L. Vanden Berg, “Bonhoeffer’s Discipleship: Theology for the Purpose of Christian Formation,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 44 (2009): 333–50, for another perspective on the importance of justification and sanctification in Bonhoeffer’s *Discipleship*, which Vanden Berg analyzes under the category “moral formation.”

⁷² Kelly and Godsey, “Editors’ Introduction,” *Discipleship*, 4.

⁷³ Bonhoeffer is particularly concerned with obedience to Jesus over Germany. The Sermon on the Mount was a Scriptural battleground of sorts for this debate since Ludwig Müller, Reich Bishop and leading German Christian, had written his own Germanization of the Sermon on the Mount in 1936. See Oliver Heil, *Die Auslegung der Bergpredigt im Dritten Reich* (Norderstedt, Ger.: GRIN Verlag, 2011).

complacent Christians who have capitulated to Nazi ideology. Then, I will proceed to describe Bonhoeffer's understanding of Matthew chapter five, including the beatitudes and the importance of the visible church-community.

Costly Grace Versus Cheap Grace and Jesus as the Mediator in *Discipleship*

Bonhoeffer begins *Discipleship* with a direct question that focuses the Christian life on Jesus alone: "What did Jesus want to say to us? What does he want from us today? How does he help us to be faithful Christians today? It is not ultimately important to us what this or that church leader wants. Rather, we want to know what Jesus wants."⁷⁴ In this way, Bonhoeffer centers the Christian life on the incarnate Word of God: Who is this Jesus and what does he want? To ask any other question is to avoid God's commandment with human words and works. It does not matter if Jesus's commands seem too difficult for normal Christians; Bonhoeffer rejects the notion that the Sermon on the Mount is optional. Rather, he places *every* Christian under the yoke of Jesus.⁷⁵ In fact, following the Sermon may require painful separations from family and nation. Regardless, the Christian is called to simply obey,⁷⁶ following Jesus under his light and easy yoke (Matt. 11:28–30). No matter how difficult such a life is, because Jesus is the one who leads, Bonhoeffer can claim, "Discipleship is joy."⁷⁷

Having centered discipleship on the Word of God enfleshed in Jesus of Nazareth—just as Luther focused the Christian on hearing, believing, and living according to the Word proclaimed and written—Bonhoeffer distinguishes between "cheap grace" and "costly grace." Bonhoeffer uses this distinction to do three things: to expose the self-invented pieties of twentieth-century Germany, connect Christians to Christ alone, and call them to a concrete life of discipleship in the body of Christ. For Bonhoeffer, cheap grace is not really grace at all; it is an idea of grace rather than the concrete favor of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Bonhoeffer asserts, "Cheap grace means grace as doctrine, as principle, as system. It means forgiveness of sins as a general truth; it means God's love as merely a Christian idea of God.... Cheap grace is, thus, denial of God's living word, denial of the incarnation of the word of God."⁷⁸ Cheap grace replaces the true God with a deified idea of grace; faith is not placed in the God of Jesus but in the abstract concept that the world is justified by grace.⁷⁹ Thus, cheap grace denies the living God who speaks and works in the church today, rejecting justification as an event of the living Word of God. Cheap grace makes justification simply a concept with which Christians can console themselves and feel good about their lives. Moreover, it denies the connection of justification and sanctification, grace

⁷⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 37.

⁷⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 38–40.

⁷⁶ Cf. Bonhoeffer's chapter called "Simple Obedience." *Ibid.*, 77–83.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

and discipleship; cheap grace rejects Jesus's call for Christians to follow him in his church. Instead, the Christian is to "live just like the rest of the world" since grace justifies the world and demands no self-denial or difference between the Christian and everybody else.⁸⁰ Bonhoeffer concludes his opening diatribe against cheap grace:

Cheap grace is preaching forgiveness without repentance; it is baptism without the discipline of community; it is the Lord's Supper without confession of sin; it is absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without the living, incarnate Jesus Christ.⁸¹

Costly grace, on the other hand, is "*simply* grace."⁸² It is the call of Jesus, like the disciples received, to leave behind the nets and follow the master. This grace is costly because "it condemns sin," and "costs people their lives."⁸³ It does not allow the Christian to live as she did before, wallowing in her sin. To use Luther's language, costly grace is caustic, condemning sin yet also graciously justifying the sinner. Above all, Bonhoeffer writes, grace is costly because it cost God the life of his Son. At the same time, this costly grace is *grace* since it calls people to follow Jesus, forgives their sins, and brings them under the yoke of the incarnate God who died to give them life.⁸⁴ Costly grace, then, emphasizes the connection between justification and sanctification in the concrete call of Jesus Christ. "Faith and obedience cannot be separated from each other at all."⁸⁵ The Word of Jesus justifies the sinner, and he calls her to a life of discipleship, simply obeying and following him in the church.⁸⁶

According to Bonhoeffer, Luther's own struggle with monasticism was part of the struggle for costly grace. Monasticism initially had been "a living protest" against a cheapening of the Christian life, but over time Christendom relativized monasticism and turned it into a "special meritoriousness" for a select few.⁸⁷ Luther saw through the façade of

⁸⁰ Ibid., 44.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Jonathan D. Sorum, "Cheap Grace, Costly Grace, and Just Plain Grace: Bonhoeffer's Defense of Justification by Faith Alone," *Lutheran Forum* 21, no. 3 (1993): 20. Emphasis original. Sorum's essay is a good analysis of Bonhoeffer's distinction between cheap and costly grace that shows it is fundamentally Lutheran.

⁸³ Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 45.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 45.

⁸⁵ Florian Schmitz, "Only the believers obey, and only the obedient believe.' Notes on Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Hermeneutics with Reference to *Discipleship*," in *God Speaks to Us: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. Ralf K. Wüstenberg and Jens Zimmermann (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013), 171. Though Schmitz is commenting on a different dialectic in *Discipleship*, the point applies here.

⁸⁶ Schmitz calls Bonhoeffer's notion of "simple obedience" the "leading principle" in *Discipleship's* hermeneutics. Bringing together faith and obedience, justification and sanctification, individual and church, *Discipleship* uses simple obedience as critique of those who separate life from faith and to offer new life in Christ by faith. Schmitz, "Notes on Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Hermeneutics," 182–86.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 47.

monasticism's costliness to see the sin embedded within it: "Luther saw the monk's escape from the world as really a subtle love for the world," which left intact the most glorious work of the world, the "pious self."⁸⁸ For Bonhoeffer, Luther condemned the sinful pretensions of the world, exposing the purity of monasticism as self-love, by calling Christians to live as Christians *in the world*. Luther did not justify the world or secular vocations as such; he rather called Christians to be disciples in the midst of their vocations. "A Christian's secular vocation receives new recognition from the gospel only to the extent that it is carried on while following Jesus."⁸⁹ For Bonhoeffer, this is costly grace.

Bonhoeffer not only uses the distinction between cheap grace and costly grace to condemn the "bourgeois-secular existence" of many Christians and call them to simple obedience following the commands of God,⁹⁰ but he makes a similar point by witnessing to Jesus Christ as the Lord who justifies the sinner and calls her to the extraordinary life of discipleship. For Bonhoeffer, the important point is not *how* Jesus calls his disciples, but *who* Jesus is.⁹¹ There is only one important reason why Jesus calls and his disciples obey: "Because Jesus is the Christ, he has authority to call and to demand obedience to his world. Jesus calls to discipleship, not as a teacher and a role model, but as the Christ, the Son of God."⁹² Jesus's call is not abstract doctrine or a concept of grace but a gracious call that "creates existence anew." The call itself creates faith and brings one into a community of those who obey Jesus by following him.⁹³ Because Jesus is the authoritative Son of God, the call cannot be made into an idea or abstraction, it must remain the authoritative Word of the Son of God which condemns self-invented and self-chosen piety and justifies the sinner, calling him to follow his Lord in obedience.⁹⁴

Thus, the central point of the Christian life is Christ himself, his person and his work, his call and his commands. All things are secondary to Jesus Christ: in fact, everything—the world, vocation, and even one's spouse—must be seen and understood through Jesus only:

In becoming human, [Jesus] put himself between me and the given circumstances of the world. I cannot go back. He is in the middle. He has deprived those whom he has called of every immediate connection to those given realities. He wants to be the medium; everything should

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 49. Cf. LW 21:259–68, Luther's comments on the good tree that bears good fruit.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁹¹ This is a distinction Bonhoeffer uses in his "Lectures on Christology" of 1933 at Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Berlin 1932-1933*, ed. Carsten Nicolaisen and Ernst-Albert Scharffenorth, vol. 12 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 302–8.

⁹² Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 57.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 69–74, quoting 70. The story of the rich young man (Matthew 19) is Bonhoeffer's illustration of Christ doing this.

happen only through him. He stands not only between me and God, he also stands between me and the world, between me and other people and things. He is *the mediator*, not only between God and human persons, but also between person and person, and between person and reality.⁹⁵

Since Jesus is the mediator, “the illusion is immediacy,” and “anytime a community lays claim to immediacy, it must be hated for Christ’s sake.”⁹⁶ This is true for families—if parents and spouses claim an immediate connection or duty that does not come through Christ, they must be hated for Christ’s sake—and also for nations—if Germany claims an immediacy to the *Volk* that bypasses Christ, it too must be hated for Christ’s sake. In other words, Christ has come as the caustic salt that condemns glorious words like “Germany,” “family,” and “*Volk*,” and calls Christians to an entirely new community. To those who hear Christ’s call and follow, Jesus takes them out of their old communities and places them in a new community, his church. Those who lost everything by following Jesus “find themselves again in a visible community of faith, which replaces a hundredfold what they lost. A hundred fold? Yes, in the mere fact that they now have everything solely through Jesus, that they have it through the mediator.”⁹⁷

Bonhoeffer’s distinction between cheap grace and costly grace and his understanding of the Jesus as the sole mediator accomplish similar tasks. Both function as caustic salt against the sinfulness of the age. The polemic against cheap grace condemns the glorious works that seem so good to the world, in particular obedience to the Führer and to Germany, and directs the Christian instead to Jesus, the crucified Son of God and costly grace in him. Bonhoeffer’s understanding of Jesus as the sole mediator also rips the Christian out of other relationships that shape the Christian life—condemning any separation of the Christian’s life in society from obedience to Jesus and his Word—and brings the Christian to abide in Jesus both for faith and for life. In so doing, Bonhoeffer refuses to separate justification and sanctification, the call from the commands of Jesus. Instead of life structured by a society that perpetrates injustice, hate, and violence, Bonhoeffer argues that the shape of the Christian life must be structured *completely* by the Word and life of Jesus through the church.

Bonhoeffer’s Exposition of Matthew 5

When Bonhoeffer turns to his exposition of the Sermon on the Mount, the same themes abound. Bonhoeffer focuses the Christian life on following Jesus and doing his commands, that is, simple obedience to the Word of Jesus. As such, Bonhoeffer often preaches Christ’s Word as caustic salt against those who obscure Christ’s Word. To change the metaphor, one of

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 93–94. Emphasis original.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 94–95.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 99.

Bonhoeffer's goals is to clear out all self-invented piety so that Jesus's Word will be heard for what it is, the command of the Son of God. At the same time, Bonhoeffer constructs a positive view of the Christian life, focusing on following Jesus in the new community of the church.

In his interpretation of the beatitudes, Bonhoeffer points out three distinct groups standing on the mountain: the disciples, the crowds, and Jesus. Jesus is the central figure, who has called his disciples apart from the crowd and preaches to his disciples.⁹⁸ Jesus's call has visibly separated them from the crowds, foreshadowing the enmity between them and the world that will occur on account of Christ.⁹⁹ To these disciples in the midst of the crowds, Jesus speaks his "Blessed!" It is not that the disciples are blessed for their own actions—neither being poor nor suffering is worth anything in itself. Rather, Jesus's call and promise has made them blessed at the same time that it has made them "poor, tempted, and hungry." "The only adequate reason" for being blessed, Bonhoeffer asserts, "is the call and the promise, for whose sake those following him live in want and renunciation."¹⁰⁰ Thus, for Bonhoeffer, Jesus's Word, his call and his justification of the sinner, makes the disciples blessed, and this call entails a particular life of discipleship apart from the world, one which Jesus describes in the Sermon with his promises. Like Luther, Bonhoeffer emphasizes that Jesus calls all Christians to this visible act of discipleship, not just a select few. In fact, for Bonhoeffer, Jesus's Sermon not only blesses his followers and teaches them about their distinctive life together, it also invites the crowd into communion with Jesus, calling them to join this visible community of disciples.¹⁰¹

For Bonhoeffer, "Every additional Beatitude deepens the breach between the disciples and the people. The disciples' call becomes more and more visible."¹⁰² Each blessing describes another aspect of the disciples' renunciation of the world, including the things that the world thinks are holy and pious. In a similar way to how Luther used the beatitudes to condemn the outward pieties of the monastic life and construct the Christian life as doing God's command in one's vocation, Bonhoeffer condemns the glories of nation, prosperity, and power as he also describes the visible shape of the church-community and its relationship to the world.

According to Bonhoeffer's understanding of the beatitudes, the world blesses "those powerful, respected people, who stand firmly on the earth inseparably rooted in the national way of life," but Jesus blesses "those who live thoroughly in *renunciation and want* for Jesus's sake."¹⁰³ "The world shrieks 'Enjoy life,'" but the disciples mourn and grieve at the guilt of the

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 100–1.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 101–2.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

world and the coming judgment.¹⁰⁴ The world lives based on rights and justice, but the disciples renounce all their rights and leave all justice to God.¹⁰⁵ The world tries to grasp righteousness for itself, but the disciples renounce their own righteousness and hunger and thirst for God's.¹⁰⁶ The world seeks after honor and glory, progress and possessions, but the disciples renounce their own dignity to "share in other people's need, debasement and guilt."¹⁰⁷ The world values autonomy, determining good and evil for oneself, but the disciples "renounce their own good and evil, their own heart" so that Jesus "alone rules in them."¹⁰⁸ The world thrives on violence and hate, but "Jesus's disciples maintain peace by choosing to suffer instead of causing others to suffer."¹⁰⁹ The world relies on "property, happiness, rights, righteousness, honor, and violence," but Jesus's disciples renounce these things, which will involve suffering for the sake of Christ and his church, a truly just cause.¹¹⁰

Just as Luther's interpretation of the beatitudes denounced the ways of monasticism for using the criteria of the world to determine what a good work and a good life is, Bonhoeffer also criticizes the malaise of German Christians that has allowed worldly values like patriotism and power to overcome the Word of Jesus and shape the Christian community. Bonhoeffer, like Luther before him, interprets the Sermon as caustic salt against any notion that what is good and right can be determined apart from the Word of God—for Bonhoeffer particularly, Jesus himself.

Although Bonhoeffer and Luther both understand the Sermon in this same critical way—tearing down human pretensions and rooting life solely in Christ and justification—Bonhoeffer's construction of the Christian life differs significantly from Luther. This difference becomes apparent as Bonhoeffer concludes his exposition of the beatitudes: "Here at the end of the Beatitudes the question arises as to where in this world such a *faith-community* actually finds a place."¹¹¹ Bonhoeffer has contrasted the way of the world with the way of Christian discipleship throughout his exposition. At this point, Bonhoeffer makes clear that Jesus is not merely describing individual virtues but the church in discipleship. This church looks like its Lord, the crucified One, who is the meekest, the most tempted, and the poorest of all.¹¹² Like its Lord, the church will suffer, and like its Lord, God will vindicate it. Thus, the beatitudes are great promises for the church at the same time that they call for faithfulness to Christ above all.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 104–5.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 105.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 106.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 107.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 108.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 109. See also the chapter "Discipleship and the Cross," 84–91.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 109. Emphasis added.

¹¹² Ibid.

The importance of the church as a community comes more into focus as Bonhoeffer moves from the beatitudes to the next section of the Sermon, Matthew 5:13-16 on salt and light. Bonhoeffer rejects Luther's understanding that the "office" of the disciples, the preaching of God's Word, is to be salt and light.¹¹³ Instead, Bonhoeffer claims, "What is meant is their whole existence, to the extent that it is newly grounded in Christ's call to discipleship, that existence of which the Beatitudes speak. All those who follow Jesus's call to discipleship are made by that call to be the salt of the earth in their whole existence."¹¹⁴ Thus, for Bonhoeffer, the disciples are salt and light precisely as they become visible to the world, a visible community of faith separate from the world.¹¹⁵ The world will not praise and adore these visible marks—such is usually a sign of self-invented piety anyway—rather, it is the visibility of being poor, strangers, meek, peacemakers, and of course being rejected and persecuted as Jesus was. In short, Bonhoeffer says that it is all one work: "bearing the cross of Jesus Christ."¹¹⁶

In this way, the Christian community is "extraordinary," and it makes space for the "extraordinariness" of the Christian life.¹¹⁷ Bonhoeffer's interpretation of Jesus's antitheses stresses this point. The Christian church is a community of simple obedience to God's law in a world of lawless faith, which is enthusiasm;¹¹⁸ it is a community of reconciliation and forgiveness in a society of power;¹¹⁹ it is a community of chastity and purity in a world of unlimited desire;¹²⁰ it is a community of truth where sin is uncovered and confessed in a society that shrouds sin and glorifies self-denial;¹²¹ it is a community of peace and non-violence in a world where might makes right;¹²² it is a community of love that prays for its enemies in a society that exiles and kills the Jews.¹²³ These "extraordinary" elements of the Christian community are immanently visible, which means that they have to be *done* by Jesus's disciples. Such deeds are to be accomplished not in a flashy or showy manner but "in the simplicity of Christian obedience to the will of Jesus."¹²⁴ To be clear, the disciples are not blessed for these deeds; they are

¹¹³ Ibid., 111. Bonhoeffer's accusation that the reformers "equate the disciples' message with salt" is only mostly true. Luther emphasizes the preaching of God's Word as caustic salt and revealing light, but Luther also places suffering for the sake of the gospel as a kind of salt and light alongside teaching and preaching. Luther writes, "What [Jesus] calls 'good works' here is the exercise, expression, and confession of the teaching about Christ and faith, and *the suffering for its sake*. He is talking about works by which we 'shine'; but shining is the real job of believing or teaching, by which we also help others to believe" (LW 21:65, emphasis added).

¹¹⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 112.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 113.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 114.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 144–45.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 115–20.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 120–25.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 125–27.

¹²¹ Ibid., 128–31.

¹²² Ibid., 131–37.

¹²³ Ibid., 137–43.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 145.

blessed because of the call and promise of Jesus. Jesus's disciples are merely servants who are doing their duty according to the Word and command of God.

To summarize Bonhoeffer's interpretation of the Sermon, Bonhoeffer stresses the interconnection of justification and sanctification, the call and command of Jesus Christ. For Bonhoeffer, when Christ justifies a sinner, he always calls her to an extraordinary life in the visible church. Any notion of grace that does not include simple obedience to the commands of Jesus in the visible church is cheap grace and not the real call of Jesus. Although Bonhoeffer does not often use the language of law and gospel, he does proclaim Christ's Sermon both as condemnation against the self-invented pieties of the German Christians and as a promise to the church that stands separate from the world as a visible, obedient witness to Christ's reign.¹²⁵ As Bonhoeffer considers how the Christian is to live in the world, he looks to Christ and the community that follows him. Christ gives the command and example to follow in living the Christian life, which does not take place alone, but happens in a community of disciples shaped by the Word and promises of God to simply obey the Lord Jesus.¹²⁶

Bonhoeffer and Luther: Similarities and Differences

Luther and Bonhoeffer accomplish the same tasks in their interpretations of Jesus's Sermon on the Mount. First, both proclaim the sermon to expose and condemn all human projects that exist apart from the Word of God, even the most beautiful. That is, both clearly and unabashedly proclaim the law. Second, both proclaim the gospel of justification as a matter of faith in Christ alone, trusting in him, so that the Christian lives only by faith in the Word. Third, the Christian life is constructed and shaped according to the Word of Christ. On this third point, differences emerge between Luther and Bonhoeffer, but on the proclamation of law and gospel in the narrow sense, the two theologians do similar tasks.

For instance, the difference between Luther and Bonhoeffer on justification and sanctification is only one of emphasis. The Wittenberg theologian opposed the Roman Catholic and Anabaptist theologians who made salvation dependent on works instead of God's Word. In response to this salvation by works, Luther distinguished between justification and sanctification and prioritized justification; the *tree must be good* by faith before it will bear good fruit. The Berlin theologian, on the other hand, opposed those who made Christianity irrelevant to public life, justifying their hatred for the Jews and love of war by making Jesus's words irrelevant to the

¹²⁵ Jonathan Sorum argues that Bonhoeffer follows Barth's *intentions* in his ordering of gospel-law, but retains the traditional Lutheran order of law-gospel. "Barth's 'Gospel and Law' and Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship*," in *Reflections on Bonhoeffer: Essays in Honor of F. Burton Nelson*, ed. Geoffrey B. Kelly and C. John Weberg (Chicago: Covenant Publications, 1999), 210–27.

¹²⁶ On the place of God's Word and sacraments in shaping the church, see Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 225–30.

public sphere. In this situation, Bonhoeffer refused to separate justification and sanctification; the good tree *must bear* good fruit. Bonhoeffer's tools are slightly different but he intends something similar to Luther: exposing sinful works that masquerade as God's will and locating faith and life in the Word. Bonhoeffer does so by emphasizing the connection of justification and sanctification whereas Luther highlights the distinction.

Moreover, Luther and Bonhoeffer agree on the essence of the Christian life: the Christian is lived according to the Word of God. The only good, pious work is one that is done in faith according to God's command. In fact, for Luther and Bonhoeffer, *all* good works are done according to God's Word and command. Hence, God's Word must expose and critique all other attempts at good works, all of the glorious words and works of self-invented piety. For Luther, the Word of God must be preached as caustic salt against any attempts at a monastic withdrawal from the world because God calls his people to a loving service of the neighbor, which takes place in the world. For Bonhoeffer, Jesus calls his disciples to separate visibly from the world into the church so that church's words and life are a constant critique of the world's sinfulness, especially sin cloaked in glory and power. For both theologians, God's Word is the only standard by which the Christian can and must live even though the Word criticizes different works and emphasizes different parts of the Christian life in sixteenth-century Saxony than twentieth-century Germany.

Although Luther and Bonhoeffer both use the sermon to condemn sinful human works and call sinners to the justifying Word of God, this essay shows the two theologians differing in two main ways. First, Bonhoeffer and Luther mean slightly different, although overlapping, things when they say "Word of God." For Luther, the Word is primarily the preached and written Word of God, the proclamation of law and gospel and the Old and New Testaments. Jesus authorizes this preaching and serves as its subject—in two senses of 'subject' since Jesus is both the preacher and the focus of the preaching—and Jesus is also the authorizer and subject of the Scriptures. Nevertheless, the Word is primarily the preached and written Word, not the incarnate Word. Hence, Luther argues that the preaching of the Word, particularly the true exposition of Holy Scripture, is the salt and light of the earth.¹²⁷ Furthermore, Luther conceives of Christ's office fundamentally as the office of preaching.¹²⁸ In his commentary on the Sermon, Luther's first observation is that Christ sits down on top of the mountain to preach, which contemporary preachers should emulate.¹²⁹ Throughout his exposition, Luther returns to the necessity of preaching the Word truthfully, hearing the

¹²⁷ LW 21:59.

¹²⁸ Ian D. Kingston Siggins, *Martin Luther's Doctrine of Christ* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1970), 51.

¹²⁹ LW 21:5–9. Luther draws out three things for preachers to learn: stand up publicly, proclaim the truth vigorously and confidently, and limit themselves to the spiritual matters on which the Word speaks.

Word in faith, and loving the neighbor in society as God commands.¹³⁰

For Bonhoeffer, however, the Word is primarily the incarnate Son of God, Jesus himself. Jesus authorizes the proclamation of law and gospel in his church, and the Scriptures are the authoritative norm of Jesus's life and ministry, but at the heart of the Christian life is a person, Jesus of Nazareth. While Luther would say the same thing about Jesus,¹³¹ for Bonhoeffer, the centrality of Christ also means that the Christian looks to Christ's life and commands for how to live as a Christian. If Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God who calls people into discipleship, then there is no Christianity without following Jesus.¹³² To be a Christian is simply to obey Jesus's words and follow where Jesus trod. To do otherwise—to add to Jesus's words, to reinterpret them, or make them irrelevant to public life—is to choose one's own path. "It could be an ideal path or a martyr's path, but it is without the promise. Jesus will reject it."¹³³

The centrality of Christ for the Christian life is also at the heart of Bonhoeffer's argument that Jesus is the mediator of *all* things. Bonhoeffer will not allow anything to come between the Christian and Jesus, not even part of God's good creation. To trust in Christ as the mediator is to give up all relationships to the world except as mediated by Christ. This is not a renunciation of creation; in fact, it is an affirmation of God's good creation, but only through Christ. To know creation as God's is to know creation through Jesus.¹³⁴

In Bonhoeffer's concept of immediacy, the essential difference between Luther and Bonhoeffer is evident. Luther indeed proclaims the centrality and all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ, but he fundamentally works within the given bounds of society and helps Christians love their neighbors in the existing world. Luther could do so since the existence of God and the Bible's authority were presumed in his Christendom. Without these assumptions, however, the distinction between secular and spiritual separated the commands of God and the person of Jesus Christ from public life. With that separation in Bonhoeffer's Germany, people could claim to be Christians while they hated the Jews, fought in unjust wars, and gloried in their Führer. Hence, the Berlin theologian asserted the centrality of Jesus not only for the individual

¹³⁰ E.g. *ibid.*, 118–29 and 235–41. Commenting on Matthew 6:34, Luther sums it up nicely in one sentence: "The kingdom of God requires you to do what you are commanded to do, to preach and to promote the Word of God, to serve your neighbor according to your calling, and to take whatever God gives you" (*Ibid.*, 209).

¹³¹ Siggins, *Martin Luther's Doctrine of Christ*, 79: "Three traits of Luther's doctrine of Christ have emerged persistently in our study of this theme: its historical realism, its soteriological orientation, and its insistence on the uniqueness, necessity, and all-sufficiency of Christ. This last characteristic becomes so predominant that in it consists not only the thrust of his doctrine of Christ but the focus and pivot of all his theology, to which even the doctrine of justification is ancillary" (emphasis added).

¹³² Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 59.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 92–99.

Christian life, but also for understanding nation, vocation, and public life. For Bonhoeffer, the Word that structures the Christian life is fundamentally Jesus rather than the written and proclaimed Word, which still remain essential in Bonhoeffer's thought.¹³⁵

The second major difference is how they conceive of the *locus* where the Christian life takes place. Against the new and old monastics who established pure Christianity apart from established society, Luther places the Christian in the world.¹³⁶ Luther uses the two realms distinction to emphasize that the Christian is called to love the neighbor in society and not apart from it. Thus, Luther employs the concept of office or vocation to concretize the shape of the Christian life in the world.¹³⁷ For Luther, Christians are called to do their duty—as parents, neighbors, merchants, servants, princes, and/or pastors—and it is precisely in doing their duty in society that they follow God's commands to love and serve their neighbors. Luther pointed Christians to follow territorial law¹³⁸ not because secular law was good and right as such, but because the laws of sixteenth-century Germany were often derived from Christian sources.¹³⁹ Territorial law agreed with divine law and pointed Christians to love their neighbors by doing their duty. In this way, Luther focuses the Christian life on how the *individual* acts in the world in relationship to her neighbors.

Bonhoeffer, on the other hand, centers the Christian life on the community of faith without neglecting individual responsibility. The beginning of *Discipleship* is a call for each individual to listen to Jesus and follow in obedience. At the same time, Bonhoeffer emphasizes that Jesus's call is always a call into the body of Christ, the faith community of the Lord.¹⁴⁰ For example, Bonhoeffer writes that baptism, like the call into discipleship, is a "public act," in which "we are incorporated into the visible church-community [Gemeinde] of Jesus Christ."¹⁴¹ Thus, the Christian is situated primarily in the church: "The body of Jesus Christ is the ground of our faith and the source of its certainty; the body of Jesus Christ is the one and perfect gift through which we receive our salvation; the body of Jesus

¹³⁵ On the centrality of the external word for Bonhoeffer, see Paul R. Hinlicky, "Verbum Externum: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Bethel Confession," in *God Speaks to Us: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. Ralf K. Wüstenberg and Jens Zimmermann (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013), 189–215.

¹³⁶ See Bornkamm, *Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms*, 13.

¹³⁷ For Luther's notion of vocation, see the classic text Gustav Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957).

¹³⁸ LW 21:110: "You do not have to ask Christ about your duty. Ask the imperial or the territorial law."

¹³⁹ See, e.g., John Witte, Jr. and Frank S. Alexander, eds., *Christianity and Law: An Introduction* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

¹⁴⁰ E.g. Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 98–99, 109–14, and part II, 201–88. Bonhoeffer says that what the synoptic gospels express as "following the call to discipleship," Paul calls baptism (207).

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 210.

Christ is our new life.”¹⁴²

By centering the Christian life on the church, the most important question for Bonhoeffer is not how the Christian should live in the world but, what is the structure and order of the church? For Bonhoeffer, the church is the living body of Christ. He explains,

Jesus Christ lives here on earth in the form of his body, the church-community. Here is his body crucified and risen, here is the humanity he assumed. To be baptized therefore means to become a member of the church-community, a member of the body of Christ (Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 12:13). To be in Christ means to be in the church-community. But if we are in the church-community, then we are also truly and bodily in Jesus Christ.¹⁴³

Just as Jesus is the center point of the Christian life—his commands and example are the heart of discipleship—so the church is the body of Christ, the bodily community of Jesus, and cannot be known apart from him.¹⁴⁴ This means that the church corporately is formed into the image of Jesus. For Bonhoeffer, this is especially evident in the persecution and suffering of the church: in the church, “we take part in Christ’s suffering and glory.”¹⁴⁵ It is not that each individual Christian is necessarily called to suffer; rather, the entire body of Christ suffers and some are permitted to suffer on behalf of the body. In a sense, this “vicariously representative action and suffering” is a *vocation* given to some of the members in order to serve the whole body of Christ.¹⁴⁶

Bonhoeffer also emphasizes the visibility of this community: “The body of Christ takes up physical space here on earth.”¹⁴⁷ Just as Christ himself claimed a place among humanity in the incarnation, so the Church must be a visible community that claims a space on earth for God and his Word.¹⁴⁸ How does it do this? First, the church makes itself visible in its worship, in the

¹⁴² Ibid., 213.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 218.

¹⁴⁴ Bonhoeffer’s understanding has some similarities to Robert Jenson’s notion of the body of Christ as Christ’s own presence and availability, making Eucharist and church truly Christ’s body. The body of Christ then is not a mere metaphor but his presence in the world, though Bonhoeffer does more to distinguish Christ and the church than Jenson. See Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997–99), 1:201–6 and 2:211–15. Michael Mawson sees similarities between Jenson and Bonhoeffer but also argues that Bonhoeffer offers a corrective to Jenson’s tendency to over-equate Christ and the church, losing ecclesial sinfulness: “The Spirit and the Community: Pneumatology and Ecclesiology in Jenson, Hütter and Bonhoeffer,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 15, no. 4 (2013): 453–68.

¹⁴⁵ Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 221.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 222.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 225.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 225–52. Stanley Hauerwas highlights this aspect of Bonhoeffer’s theology: “Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Political Theology,” in *Performing the Faith: Bonhoeffer and the Practice of Nonviolence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004), 34–53; and “Dietrich Bonhoeffer and John Howard Yoder,” in *The Sermon on the Mount through the Centuries*, ed. Jeffrey P. Greenman, Timothy Larsen, and Stephen R. Spencer (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 207–22.

preaching of the Word of God that witnesses to Christ and creates faith in individuals and in the sacraments which incorporate believers into the church-community.¹⁴⁹ Second, the church is visible in its communal life, in which there is a diversity of gifts and a diversity of peoples.¹⁵⁰ Christians recognize each other not in this church not as Jew or Greek—Jew or German could not have been far from Bonhoeffer’s mind—but as one in Christ. In this community, Christians live by peace, sacrifice, compassion, and truth whereas the world seeks power and profit by way of lies and violence.¹⁵¹ As such, the church has an impact upon the world by being set apart from it for visible witness to Jesus Christ.

Although Luther and Bonhoeffer differ in these two respects—the primary referent of “Word” and the locus where the Christian life takes place—they share much in common. In fact, their differences are largely attributable to the different contexts in which they originated. Luther’s Constantinian situation shaped his articulation of the Christian life in important ways. Because God’s will and societal law were basically coterminous, Luther could direct Christians to their duties and offices in society to follow God’s commands. Bonhoeffer’s context in an anti-Christian society, however, forced him back to the basics of following Jesus in the church. In order to put flesh on the Christian life, Bonhoeffer held up Christ himself, the Word made flesh, and life in the church as the place where Christians visibly live in obedience to Jesus. Bonhoeffer’s criticism of the world may have been new, but this use of Jesus’s Sermon was not since Luther too used God’s Word as caustic salt against the glorious words and works of the world and as the gospel that brings sinners forgiveness by faith in Jesus. Both used the sermon on the Mount to proclaim the Word that cuts human pretension down to size and exposes sin, leaving only Jesus and his word of justification to recreate the sinful heart and make the person new. Bonhoeffer may not have used the explicit language of law and gospel very often in his theological corpus, but his exposition of the Sermon on the Mount shows Bonhoeffer using law and gospel in a similar way to Luther: condemning human works and connecting sinners to the Word that creates faith and shapes the whole of the Christian life. What Bonhoeffer said was different from Luther, but in what Bonhoeffer did he largely mirrored Luther.

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¹⁴⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 226–29.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 234.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 237. See also Stanley Hauerwas, “Dietrich Bonhoeffer on Truth and Politics,” in *Performing the Faith: Bonhoeffer and the Practice of Nonviolence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004), 55–69.