Grapho : Concordia Seminary Student Journal

Volume 3 | Issue 1 Article 10

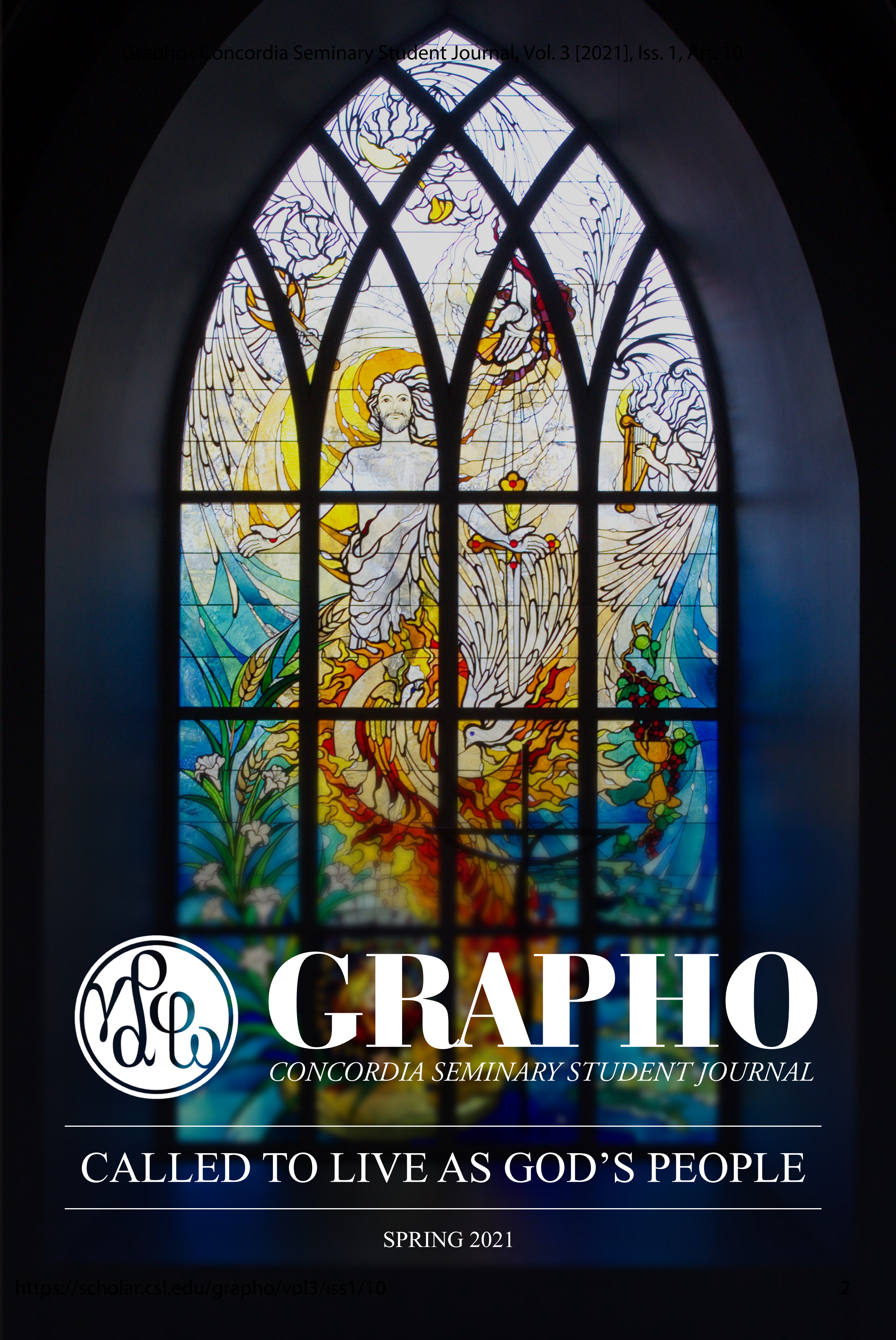
4-15-2021

Grapho 2021

Kendall Davis
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, davisk@csl.edu

Concordia Seminary
ST. LOUIS

801 SEMINARY PLACE • ST. LOUIS, MO 63105
314-505-7000 • WWW.CSL.EDU



GRAPHO

CONCORDIA SEMINARY STUDENT JOURNAL

CALLED TO LIVE AS GOD'S PEOPLE

SPRING 2021

GRAPHO
CONCORDIA SEMINARY STUDENT JOURNAL
SPRING 2021

Grapho cover photography:
The Resurrection window in the Chapel of St. Timothy and St. Titus, used with permission of Concordia Seminary Creative Services.

Submissions for review should be sent to cslstudentpublications@gmail.com. Manuscripts submitted for publication should conform to Chicago Manual of Style. Editorial decisions about submissions include peer review.

Grapho is published annually.

www.csl.edu | www.concordiatheology.org

GRAPHO

CONCORDIA SEMINARY STUDENT JOURNAL

GRAPHO

CONCORDIA SEMINARY STUDENT JOURNAL

Student Publications Committee Members

Jacob Barber

Timothy Barber

Andrew Bloch

Christian Dollar

Christian Einertson

Alan Furst

Jason Kohm

Cody MacMillin

Benjamin Vanderhyde

Mason Veith

Abigail Ward

Chairman

Kendall Davis

Graphic Designer

Jodi Huffman

The Student Publications Committee would also like to offer a special thanks to Concordia Seminary's staff from Creative Services and Publications for their help and guidance in bringing this project to fruition.

Letter from the Chairman

Letter from the Chairman: Called to Live as God's People

Kendall Davis

Introduction

It's almost certainly a cliché at this point, but it's been an incredibly long year and a half for all of us. This year's fourth year class was forced to learn alongside their churches how to do ministry in the midst of a pandemic. This year's vicars will have done their entire vicarages during a pandemic. Even though we've been in-person for classes, things have still been markedly different on campus. Classrooms are socially distanced and have even been conducted online at times. The usual events that characterize the seminary calendar have been mostly gone. Even outside of the pandemic the United States has been rocked with protests and debates about racial injustice. We've endured a contentious and disputed election. Sometimes it feels like the world around us has been burning.

And in the midst of all this, the church is still here, right where Jesus has called her. I believe that in moments of change and transition, unrest and instability, or uncertainty and anxiety, the church is again pressed into asking what it means that Jesus has called her to live as his people. Christians find themselves asking what it means to follow Jesus when their neighbors are sick and dying. Churches ask themselves how they can be a trustworthy voice proclaiming the gospel when all voices seem to be distrusted and discounted. We ask ourselves what it means for us, both individually and collectively, that we have been called to live as God's people right where we are and when we are.

This year's issue of Grapho is offered up as a small piece of that conversation. This is by no means the beginning of this conversation, nor is it the end of it. Our hope is that these poems and articles might encourage the kind of edifying reflection and conversation described by Paul in his letter to the Colossians: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (3:16, ESV).

Here you'll find our writers challenge the church to consider the challenges and opportunities of living in a culturally chaotic world, as in Christian Dollar's article. Cody MacMillin critically engages with the false and hypocritical masks that Christians can hide behind and shows how Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount points to a different way. In my own article I show how the Synoptic Gospels radically redefine popular expectations of what a messiah would be and do and thereby radically redefine what it means to be a faithful member of God's people. In Greg Moffit's exploration of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's richly philosophical and theological approach to the life of the Christian, he offers us a picture of the life of the Christian as inseparable from the life of the church and the lives of both as inseparable from the life of the risen Christ. Finally our poems reflect on the witness of the scriptures and the Christian faith and what this might mean for us.

Naturally, this year's issue would never have come together were it not for the help of so many wonderful people. In particular I'd like to thank the entire Student Publications Committee which has worked tirelessly at every stage and paid meticulous attention to every detail. A big thank you is also due to our graphic designer, Jodi Huffman. I'd also like to thank our founding chairman Jordan Voges and his wife Alyson Voges for their help and guidance as I have undertaken the task of continuing this publication. Invaluable help and guidance has also come from David Lewis, David Schmitt, Ben Haupt, Tim Saleska, Travis Scholl, and Jayna Rollings. Finally, I'd like to thank all our writers for their labor and contributions to this project.

In closing, I'd like to leave you with some words from Martin Franzmann on Jesus' call to his disciples in Matthew's Gospel:

> When Jesus said, "Follow Me," He was confiscating man for Himself. For that word applied to man with personal and inescapable urgency His call to repentance and His annunciation of the Kingdom come. It brought the gift and the claim of the Kingdom to bear on man. The whole Gospel of Matthew is simply the record of the process of progressive Messianic confiscation, the record of how Jesus shaped men in the mold of repentance, of how the Christ created men in his image, Christian men.[1]

God's Peace,

Kendall Davis
Student Publications Chairman
St. Louis, Missouri
April 2021

Endnotes

1 Martin H. Franzmann, *Follow Me: Discipleship According to Saint Matthew,* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), 33.

Essays

Reflections on the Dangers of Community Building in a Polycultural Context

Christian Dollar

Introduction

The culture is changing. Such a statement is as obvious and non-controversial as they come. No matter what side one fights for in the innumerable culture wars being simultaneously waged in our country and world, all can agree on one thing: the morals, rituals, beliefs, and behaviors of wide swaths of people are changing. New morals are crashing into old ones. Old beliefs are being revitalized, and behaviors once thought unimaginable or relegated to distant lands are being championed at home. Infinitely more controversial than the presence of cultural change is what exactly *culture* is. For the sake of simplicity and being generic enough to include most definitions, let this simple definition of culture suffice: "the shared life of the community." Whatever culture does finally end up including and whatever form it takes, there is no doubt: it is changing.

Christian Dollar is a concluding MDiv student from Jefferson City, MO. He completed his undergraduate education at Concordia University Texas in Biblical Languages and Psychology. He is continuing his education in the STM program with a focus on systematic theology at Concordia Seminary.

This culture clash goes far beyond the secularization of the West. While secularization has been a significant cultural shift in the last few centuries, the world is also in the midst of an unprecedented period of immigration – from the movement of many Latino peoples from Central America northward, to Middle Eastern refugees fleeing to Europe and elsewhere, to the movement of persecuted peoples in east Asia. As these people make their home in foreign lands, they bring their culture with them, and over the last few years, these new neighbors have often been met in their adopted countries with a resurgent native nationalism demanding either assimilation or exodus from the new arrivals. This nativist nationalism, coupled with the perennial cultural shifts of new generations—now amplified by the progress of technology—have created a maelstrom of concurrent cultures: mixing, fusing, fighting. In many cases it is now difficult to label which of the many cultures are dominant and which are truly counter-cultural.

What is the church to do in such a storm? How is the Church to live in a multi-cultural world, country, or neighborhood? The Church has always developed many different cultures in many different places. The shared life of one congregation or church body celebrates a particular style of music while another does something different. It should not be surprising that the American Church lives in an American style. Thus, on one hand, the answer is the same as it has always been, or as Ambrose's council to Augustine is often paraphrased, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." [1]

On the other hand, the Church finds herself in a time unlike any before it. Technologies such as the internet and modern travel have evaporated the long distances that once separated disparate cultures and now separate the present Church from any historical precedent. Undoubtably the Church has always had to jump from culture to culture through translation and modification, but now the borders themselves are migrating. It is no longer only the Church crossing cultural boundaries but cultural boundaries crossing the Church. Look out the window! Foreign customs and strange behaviors are no longer distant. So how does the Church "do as the Romans do" when the Romans are doing a million different things? How does the Church share a common life in a place of infinitely variable styles of life? How does the Church be the Church in a polycultural context?

Three Models of Cultural Interaction

Every community has a culture, namely, a shared life. It could hardly be called a community without it. The Church is most certainly a community, and it has a variety of cultures at every level: congregational, denominational, catholic. What happens when one of these cultures meets a different culture, be it inside or outside of the Church? Should she adapt or stand firm? Should she reach out or retreat? What would Jesus do? Dr. Leopold Sanchez helpfully identifies three possible frameworks for the interactions between cultures that may inform the Church's future: multi-cultural, cross-cultural, and inter-cultural.

Multi-Cultural

The first framework of cultural interactions that Sanchez identifies he calls "multi-cultural." Multi-cultural interaction is simply an awareness between cultures of each other. Multiculturalism has certainly forced its way into the popular mind as it has emerged as a reality, and it is undeniable that in the United States the many different cultures living side-by-side, and often among each other, have become more prominent in the media. Cultural sensitivity, diversity, and representation have become virtues of popular culture, and identity politics has weaponized cultural identifiers. To use Sanchez's own simile, each culture in multi-cultural interaction is like a parallel line.[2] None of the lines cross each other, just as in this framework each culture remains separate and siloed. Hardly a permanent reality, multiculturalism is at best a peaceful, tolerant coexistence between different cultures. At worst it is an isolationist ghettoization of cultures that says, "You leave me alone, and I'll leave you alone."

On the surface it should be obvious that multiculturalism is an inappropriate framework for any community in the Church to use when engaging with other cultures, even if awareness is a necessary first step towards true engagement. To use a multi-cultural framework to address other cultures within the church is to deny community with other brothers and sisters in the faith and to erect divisions within the church. This is the sad reality when there is no shared life between those of the same parish who attend the traditional service and those who attend the contemporary service. This is a bifurcation of the body of Christ.

Multiculturalism is also an inappropriate method for dealing with cultures outside of the Church. The mission imperative of Christ demands that the Church does more than simply acknowledge the existence of others; she is to reach out to them. Peace between people is not the mission of the Church, but salvation is — however unpleasant it might be. Thankfully the Church has a long history of engaging with outside cultures and developing new communities for both its old and new members to share.

Unfortunately, as the cultures of the world and the cultures of the church drift further apart, multiculturalism becomes an ever more powerful temptation for the Church. There are those who, worn down by the conflict between the Church and the world, seek the peace that is promised by multiculturalism. This is a peace that is satisfied with sacrificing Sunday morning to the Church so long as the world holds sway over the other 6½ days. It inevitably results in a privatization of faith, where the shared life of the community is no longer shared, and necessarily, the community can no longer exist. There is also a second group that opts for the worst of multiculturalism in the hope that it will preserve the Church. Choosing isolation to escape the foreign ways of life around them, they retreat into a metaphorical monastic fortress where those inside the walls are Church and those outside are *Alien*. This has the twofold problem of sanctifying the mundane that had by historical chance occupied a place in the Church when the walls when up (such as the style of music or language used) and demonizing the good the Church has yet to baptize. It snuffs out the mission imperative of the Church—even if the door is left cracked—for a fatalistic outlook on the *other*. It abandons the one for the ninety-nine and starves the angels of joy.

Cross-Cultural

The second framework Sanchez describes is "cross-cultural" interaction. This is where one crosses over a cultural boundary, from one's own to another. To rely on Sanchez's line imagery again, the cultures in cross-cultural interaction would be a set of perpendicular lines that intersect at a particular point.[3] One enters into the cultural setting of another. Much like multiculturalism, the cross-cultural jump is a common reality in a multi-cultural world. It can hardly be avoided. Cross-cultural interaction is certainly a step in the right direction and the appropriate next stage of multiculturalism's awareness of others. However, there are unique dangers that arise when one culture crosses into another.

Perhaps the most common failure of cross-cultural interaction within the Church is the instrumentalization of the other, or (to use a more culturally charged word) colonialism. Both the host and the visitor can be guilty of instrumentalizing the other. Often the Church can be guilty of objectifying the brave soul that has crossed from his or her own culture into that of the Church. Even when the visitor is invited into the community, he or she is preserved as "the other:" the token of proof that the congregation is multi-ethnic, missional or welcoming. They must remain different to continue to serve as proof, and so in the mind of a culturally homogeneous congregation, the cultural immigrant is too often stamped as "the black member," "the autistic girl," "the foreigner." He or she remains a welcomed oddity whose purpose is fulfilled not as a member of the Body of Christ, but in being different.[4] This is the dehumanizing effect of tokenism that prevents true community from being built.

But even when the Church crosses cultural borders, she can still instrumentalize her host. This is the selfish mission-trip model wherein the needs of the neighbor are subservient to the goals of the missionaries. Missionaries traveling great distances to see new places, spending exorbitant amounts of money to experience a life altering event, or taking a week off work for a religious high are all examples of instrumentalizing the hosts. This is more than an issue of efficiency; this is an issue of the neighbor's humanity. Is the neighbor primarily a fellow or potential brother or sister in Christ, or are they a savage in need of saving? If the former, then they should be accorded enough respect to be served by the Church in an honest humility that is willing to listen to the hopes, desires, and needs identified by those being served. If the latter then they are hardly more than animals to be used to fulfill whatever goal the visitors have in mind and undeserving of full membership in the community.

A second danger of cross-cultural interaction is assimilation: the demand that the other conform to one's own culture. In this problem, the lines of culture intersect on the person while excluding other aspects of their culture. In its most extreme form, everything other than the physical body of the neighbor is rejected. Names, rituals, values, and any other cultural signifier can be rejected and replaced by the assimilating culture. At first, it might seem that assimilation is a good thing, so long as the culture of the Church is doing the assimilating. The question both within and without the Church quickly becomes, "Who gets to assimilate who?" With the plethora of cultures existing within the Body of Christ, which one gets to be dominant? What voter's assembly in an American church would not revolt at a demand from a European bishop to give up its voting rights? What Thai congregation would not chafe under a liturgy in Swahili? This was the fault of the Judaizers who demanded that the Gentile believers assimilate into Jewish culture before becoming Christian. There are, undoubtably, boundaries that all Christians are obliged to follow (and every culture bends towards and away from these guideposts to varying degrees), but these regulations are not there to tie down burdens too heavy to bear or civilize the savages into one's own culture but to conform the faithful to the image of Christ. Not to recognize the difference between the two is to confuse self with God.

Unlike multiculturalism, cross-cultural interaction is not a repudiation of the mission of the Church. In fact, cross-cultural interaction is often a necessary first step, especially in times of emergency where urgency is important.[5] In that way cross-cultural interaction is much better than multiculturalism. However, many of the barriers that stunt true community building are still present within this framework. The focus on differences both in assimilation and instrumentalization remains a factor. The Church cannot be satisfied with only cross-cultural interaction and must seek something more.

Inter-Cultural

The final framework Sanchez suggests for the Church is that of inter-cultural interaction. Perhaps reflecting the more complicated nature of this framework, a simple line metaphor hardly does inter-cultural interaction justice. One might propose two lines: one blue and one yellow. Instead of remaining parallel or only intersecting at one point, these two lines run on top of each other—at certain points more blue than yellow, at others more yellow than blue—sometimes even green! Although the blue line can never be yellow, nor the yellow line blue, together each culture combines, accentuates, shades, and informs the other. That is because the chief characteristic of inter-cultural interaction is not simple awareness (multi-cultural) or even the crossing of cultural boundaries (cross-cultural) but a mutuality and interdependence between cultures.[6]

It should become apparent from the line imagery that inter-cultural interaction is infinitely more demanding from both cultures than either parallel multiculturalism or perpendicular cross-cultural interaction. Perhaps that is why Sanchez decided to drop the line imagery for a marriage metaphor:

> Like an effective sports team, inter-cultural engagement uses the gifts and strengths of each partner or player in developing a common project or vision, avoiding the danger of unilateral border crossings. Think of a partnership, perhaps like a marriage, where each member, while retaining his or her uniqueness, nurtures the other, and where both partners develop their relationship over ongoing, sustained, creative, and faithful engagement. Partners are critical and constructive of each other, but they also seek to build something of value together. We have a model that, while taking into account particularity, works toward common values and community.[7]

It is this "working towards common values and community" that allows the various cultures of the Church to have a shared life—a super-culture—true catholicity. Only through this mutual partnership of cultures can the beautiful image of Revelation 7 be tasted here on earth and we prepare to worship before the throne by adding our accent to the chorus. This super-culture of the Church is not simply the lowest common denominator or the characteristics shared by every church body. It includes every God-honoring expression of the Church. Catholicity is universality, not homogeneity. It is the catholicity of the Church that allows the Christian to adapt to local customs, be that Roman, American, or Contemporary. Even when the newly baptized carry their once alien culture into the pews, the Church can make free use of its resources—though, not unthinkingly. Although inter-cultural interaction is the best framework for the Church to manifest its own catholicity, it is not without its hurdles.

Challenges of Inter-cultural Interaction

Inter-cultural interaction is often profoundly uncomfortable. Humans crave the security of familiarity any first inter-cultural step will lack. An inter-cultural interaction is a leap of faith into uncertainty—into diversity. Inter-cultural interaction is predicated on mutual engagement with those who are different—other. That should come as no surprise. However, this diversity requires a degree of vulnerability from authentic inter-cultural interaction from all participants—and more so when occurring in the Church. In the Church each member has a claim on his or her servant-neighbor, and each owes a duty to their neighbor-lord. "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject of all, subject to all."[8]

When cultural diversity is introduced to a congregation or church body, there is now an otherness that has a claim on a member. It is now not only those with whom one shares a common worldview and familiar customs who may make a claim on one's services and love but also those with whom there is not a shared culture.

Following Luther's statement, the perfectly dutiful servant of the neighbor from a different culture serves not at the convenience of the servant but at the need of the neighbor.[9] This *other*-neighbor will have *other*-needs that can only be met in unfamiliar ways. What is to be done with the neighbor from another culture who needs to hear the Gospel preached in their heart-language? What is to be done when they need to contribute to worship (as all Christians do)? What is to be done when they need to respond loudly to the joy of God's grace during the service? Are those needs, both big and small, to be met according to the traditions of one neighbor or the preferences of another? Whose needs are met when? The mutuality of the inter-cultural interaction prevents a simple or, as is often the case, consistent answer one way or the other, because catholicity is constantly being built by all those involved. It is a continually morphing reality of new needs being met in needed ways.

These are just a few of the challenges that will face a Church attempting to realize true catholicity, but beyond the struggles of vulnerability, sacrifice, and shared ownership that are present even in the best-executed inter-cultural interaction, there are dangers here not present in the other frameworks.

Dangers of Inter-cultural Interaction

Syncretism and Unionism (the interdenominational equivalent) are the dangers even honest attempts of inter-cultural interaction face. Both are the inappropriate and inauthentic pairing of two incompatible things that result not in an aggrandizement of culture but a bastardization that, for the Church, amounts to unfaithfulness. It should come as no surprise that the sinful nature can corrupt even the good intentions of the faithful, and the Church should always be on guard. It would be impossible to enumerate even a fraction of the ways syncretism can creep into the Church. From Gnosticism to the Prosperity Gospel, however far and wide catholicity may carry the God-honoring shared life of the Church, there is always an edge just beyond it in which sin waits. The Church must always be watchful for this edge—though, perhaps, not any more so than the more mundane places where sin is to be found within the community. Arguably, the Church should be less concerned with how foreign forces may corrupt the communal life than with how one's native culture leads one to sin: a log in the eye of one's culture.

These dangers cannot dissuade the Church from striving after the true catholicity afforded by honest inter-cultural interaction, even if our own church body's culture is still haunted by the threat of Unionism. Inter-cultural interaction is the most difficult framework to enact of the three outlined by Sanchez, for in it the dichotomy of *us-them* is dissolved into a we that cannot be dismissed as *other*. This framework forces the Church to confront what she assumes as givens and how she might grow, develop, and change. It demands a realized vulnerability and sacrifice inherent in Christ's command to be the neighbor, but it is only in the beautiful mutuality of many different nations, tribes, peoples, languages, accents, ethnicities, backgrounds, generations, etc. that the Church can be who she is.

Hope for the Future

Regardless of which framework one's local Church expresses, there is the hope of the Gospel and God's life-giving power. Those who have lived their lives in the relative safety of a multi-cultural framework can rejoice that they have already taken the first step in authentic inter-cultural community-building. Only with an awareness of other cultures can the Church begin to form catholic communities, but she cannot be satisfied being the *Many,* Holy, *Segregated,* and Apostolic churches. She must be the *One,* Holy, *Catholic,* and Apostolic Church.

Those with experience in cross-cultural interaction have already taken the necessary next step towards fulfilling the Creed. Simply by exploring other cultural contexts or by inviting others into their own, they have reached out with the hands of Christ across the multi-cultural divide. That is no small feat! While the Church cannot rest content with intermittent, one-sided cultural tourism, cross-cultural interaction can lay the foundation and build the relationships necessary for a mutual inter-cultural movement.

Even for experts in building inter-cultural communities, the work is never done. Culture is not stagnant. It continually shifts and changes, and the content of catholicity does as well. It is a promised present reality that the Church continually works towards and out of. In that regard, it is no different than being Holy or being Apostolic. The Church can take comfort in knowing that these characteristics are sure. Christ has promised that the gates of Hell will never prevail against His Bride, so she may devote herself to the vulnerable, uncomfortable task of sharing her life with others, even in a polycultural context.

Endnotes

1 Augustine relates the actual quote from Ambrose in a letter to Januarius: "When I visit Rome, I fast on Saturday; when I am here, I do not fast. On the same principle, do you observe the custom prevailing in whatever Church you come to, if you desire neither to give offense by your conduct,

nor to find cause of offense in another's." St. Augustine, "Letter 54," in Prolegomena: St. Augustine's Life and Work; Confessions; Letters, ed. Philip Schaff, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1886), 687.

2 Leopoldo A. Sánchez, "Hispanic Is Not What You Think: Reimagining Hispanic Identity, Implications for an Increasingly Global Church," Concordia Journal 42, no. 3 (2016), 232.

3 Sánchez, Hispanic Is Not What You Think, 233.

4 Robert D. Lupton, Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help (and How to Reverse It) (New York City, NY: HarperCollins, 2011), 12.

5 Lupton, Toxic Charity, 6.

6 Sánchez, Hispanic Is Not What You Think, 233.

7 Ibid.

8 Martin Luther, "Freedom of a Christian," in Martin Luther: Selections From His Writings, ed. John Dillenberger (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1962), 53.

9 Sánchez M. Leopoldo, Sculptor Spirit: Models of Sanctification from Spirit Christology (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2019), 214.

Faithfully Unmasked: A Warning Against Hypocrisy and a Hope for Our Time

Cody MacMillan

Cody MacMillin is a first year MDiv student from San Antonio, Texas. He completed his undergraduate studies at Texas A&M University in College Station, majoring in English. His interests include young adult, youth, and campus ministry.

Introduction

The Church has found herself in a difficult situation these past twelve months. Wrestling with the practical concerns of gathering safely and legal restrictions on worship, many Christians have found themselves in some form of spiritual exile. They have been isolated from the people who would otherwise demonstrate God's love and care. The voices that once sang together in their sanctuaries have since been muted for fear of feedback in their monitors, and the Christians who have found the courage to attend in-person worship are now met with floating eyes over choking cloth. Indeed, the oft-debated and dreaded drapery which now occupies public interface does not shy away from the house of God. Today's Christians find themselves covered up and cautious. Those who once stood hand in hand before the Cross now sit alone, temporarily detached from one another in hopes of one day gathering again.

It is not the task of this essay to determine whether masks are worth their salt or serve their stated purpose, nor is it to suggest that there is a war between faith and fear in the discussion of masks for which the reader must take a side. Most certainly, the aim of this work is not to accuse, slander, or defame any decisions made by pastors or Church leadership in the past twelve months. There is, now more than ever, a desperate need for congregational humility and patience in this regard. The pastors, directors, and team leaders who have worked endlessly during this pandemic to provide sound teaching and space for worship have done just that. Their efforts should be the objects of our continued prayer as we approach the narrow door (Lord-willing) of a post-pandemic season and spiritual renewal.

This paper is a thematic and expositional search into the Scriptures, relevant First Article Wisdom, and helpful considerations by Martin Luther concerning the hidden and revealed God, the God who hides in plain sight and reveals himself ultimately in the person of Jesus Christ. The chief aim of this study is to uncover the many ways in which the Church and larger society have clothed themselves in various masks of hypocrisy. Furthermore, this essay will reveal the negative effects of such hypocrisy and promote Christ's teaching as a model for honest, humble, and genuine living. These traits, exemplified in Christ, are essential destroyers of the masks we wear, both personally and culturally, which threaten our spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being.

Shuffling the Masks

There are, as a preliminary list, three masks that the average person wears in our society today. First, there is the Mask of Benevolence. It is the mask we wear when we proclaim our love for neighbors while harboring selfishness in our hearts. We wear this mask because we want to be perceived as good but are not willing to act on the goodwill we claim to have. Second is the Mask of Intellect. It is the mask we wear when we claim to have wisdom for the world while failing to recognize God as the Source of all wisdom. We wear this mask because of problems in society that beg to be solved and because we, in our pride, think that some or all of these problems *can and will* be solved by our own reason and strength. Third, and finally, is the Mask of Oppression. It is the mask we wear to give an appearance of weakness which feigns itself as righteousness. We wear this mask when we cannot collect our desired ends from others and when we substitute warlike rhetoric for reconciliation. (NB: In creating a category of false oppression, it is not my intent to remove legitimacy from the claims of those who are, in fact, personally and culturally under attack. Rather, such a category represents and evaluates the trend of militant thought among some who seek out self-righteous behavior through cultural war).

Using the current dilemma of masks as grounds for application, this essay will look specifically at Matthew 6 and at Jesus' warnings against religious hypocrisy. There are three parts to Jesus' warnings which will serve, each in their own turn, as counters to the issues described above. First, we will examine Jesus' response to selfish giving as a model for removing the Mask of Benevolence. Then we shall move on to Jesus' similar polemic against prideful prayer as a solution to the Mask of Intellect. Following this will be an exposition of Jesus' warning against dramatic fasting in order to discard the Mask of Oppression. Finally, this essay will consider Luther's doctrine of *larvae Dei* as a helpful and sanctifying alternative to hypocrisy, reflecting also on Jesus' incarnational role as God Himself unmasked, as the manifold mystery of God who calls us to holy living.

On the Mask of Benevolence

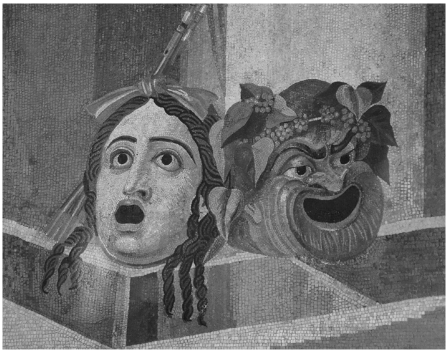
The Mask of Benevolence is an increasingly common form of hypocrisy. Both Christians and non-Christians fancy charities to be something of a sport. They are motivated to give, if they are motivated at all, by competitive schemes and marketing tactics rather than by philanthropy or "goodwill." It is not uncommon for individuals, schools, companies, and churches to advertise how much they have raised for a certain cause. These gifts can be talents, treasures, etc., yet they are given only in the measure with which they can be flaunted and displayed. Take, for example, the canned food or clothing drives often hosted around Christmas and the undeniable promotion of such events (before, during, and after) on social media. In the present day, it is counter-cultural to do anything but glamorize and glorify our acts of giving.

The problem with the Mask of Benevolence is not whether giving occurs but the manner in which it does. It occurs only for a season, often out of coercion from the collective rather than personal conviction. Givers compete with one another for pious superiority, as if the Church and world are saying together, "Look what we did for those people! That child has new socks and a sweater for Christmas! Those hungry people have our hands to feed them!" Platitudes are especially common in statements like these, reflecting a superficial care which does little for anyone except Mr. or Mrs. Helpful making their moral claims. These claims are not always without evidence, mind you, but they are certainly full of pride and ego which overshadows the true Provider of all good things.

The Mask of Benevolence allows many so-called givers to quickly retreat from the objects of their affection. They meet what appear to be the wants of others while neglecting their deeper needs, and it is this hypocrisy which Jesus speaks against in Matthew's Gospel:

> Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.
> (Matt 6:1-4 ESV)

Jesus warns against doing good works for the sake of being seen. He is not against giving, but he is against much of the loudness that comes along with false piety and self-reverence. The English Standard Version says that Jesus refers to the



"Mosaic depicting theatrical masks of Tragedy and Comedy, 2nd century AD, from Rome Thermae Decianae (?), Palazzo Nuovo, Capitoline Museums" by Following Hadrian is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

self-righteous givers as hypocrites, but the English term "hypocrite" is only a transliteration of the Greek word *hypokritai*, which referred to actors and theatrical players in first-century Rome. In ancient theater, actors would often play many roles for the same show, assuming different characters who were set apart mainly by their dress. Players were also known for using more than one mask for the same performance, so the same man might play a father, a son, and even the occasional god during a single scene. The illusion was not lost on the audience, but it was nevertheless a moving skill for an actor to present himself as many conflicting characters in the span of a few short minutes.

What was great for theatrical performance, however, was not good for righteous giving. The idea that one would put on the Mask of Benevolence was, for Jesus, just as sinful as not giving at all, for the giver wearing this mask sought to provide themselves moral satisfaction and justification before God without showing any personal care for those receiving their gifts. In other words, the gifts themselves were no more than masks for self-righteousness, allowing the giver to participate in outward charity while still caving in on themselves.

This behavior should not surprise us. Selfish giving is yet another selfish product formed by a selfish heart for the purpose of selfish gain. We live in a fallen world, deeply stained by sin, and people are looking out for themselves, doing whatever they can to present a better face than their own. This presentation is the Mask of Benevolence, and it is our full reward for selfish giving. We may appear to be righteous, but such appearance is a far cry from the real thing.

Jesus calls us to secret rather than selfish giving, to a giving that spares the pomp and circumstance and remains focused on the good of the recipient himself rather than the good of the giver. Jesus is not saying that we *cannot* receive as we give (Luke 6:37-38), but we should be careful not to assume specifics. Doing so lives out the false doctrine that Prosperity Preachers have advanced for far too long, namely that we can get (dare I say take) from God and our neighbors in exact measure the benefits we think we deserve from the other side of a karmic equation. While Jesus promises due reward for our efforts, he does not say explicitly in Matthew's gospel when or where this may happen.

In light of such ambiguity, it is no wonder that we put on the Mask of

Benevolence. It is a spiritual attempt at self-security when our souls are troubled, but the facade tricks us as well. Our reflection is hazy, and our sinful hearts are covered. We convince ourselves of our own self-righteousness, our own worthiness by our deeds and best intentions. When we fail to receive from others as we believe we ought, the subtle cracks in our face appear. Fill them as we may, we are left with a shattered and fallen image, one that exposes and condemns us for our hypocrisy.

On the Mask of Intellect

The Mask of Intellect is not merely worn or reserved for academics and intellectuals. In fact, the most authentic academics would rather retire than assume some authoritarian rule which defines the ins and outs of their field without accountability or correction. The smartest people in the room do not need to flaunt their intelligence to be recognized, for the fruits of their labors are already understood by those who enjoy their company. Indeed, it is not the experts we need to worry about. *It is the people who claim to be experts who should concern us.* Their knowledge puffs them up, but their attachment to argument and lofty opinion is a danger to all. It tricks them into believing their own words, fools them into considering their own reason and strength equal to or beyond that of their Creator.

The problem with the Mask of Intellect is that it bears no reverence for true and godly wisdom. It does not take proper hold of the truth which God's Word supplies, substituting human reason and strength for the pages of Scripture. To people who wear this Mask, everything can and will be solved by more debate, by more inquiry, and by the eradication of what they deem to be erroneous, illogical, or superstitious belief. The Masked Intellectual likewise believes "more'' to be the answer to everything: more words, more money, more policy, more goodwill, and less stupidity. Anything that does not suit his fancy as an expert is ignorantly disregarded as foolishness. His prideful thoughts are confirmed by his own biases and bases for echo. He is, perhaps most simply, one who loves the sound of his own voice. This masked performer shovels out and sings bombastic wails that call to mind Shakespeare's famous lines: "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage / And then is heard no more: it is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing." [1]

Such a person would love nothing more than a moment of significance, cherish nothing more than to hear his voice heard by some audience which affirms his banter and clever quips.

He might even receive these things as his full reward. Even so, Scripture once more poses a fatal warning:

> And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. (Matt 6:5-8 ESV)

Jesus mentions a second time the hypocrites and their love for the spotlight, now in the context of prayer. It should not be said that prayer itself is the problem here, nor is there a scandal in the time and place in which prayer is done. It is the *posture* of these prayers that Jesus is concerned with. That is, those who practice self-righteousness operate with a fatal and formulaic presumption in their prayer and praise. They script and deliver their own personal melodrama of pious activity, looking for the love of man just as much as or more than the love of God. They think themselves wise or worthy of God's attention, and they certainly had it, though not in the way they would have liked. God spoke wisdom through the words of Jesus, and the hypocrites rejected him, sending the Son of God to the Cross because he was getting more of the philosophical spotlight (Matt 27:18).

Jesus' response to this hypocrisy is to correct it with a dose of godly humility, building confidence in his disciples while deriding those who believe they have completed their intellectual ascent. He shows his disciples how to pray the Lord's Prayer, beginning in verse nine:

> Our Father in heaven,
> hallowed be your name.
> Your kingdom come,
> your will be done,
> on earth as it is in heaven.
> Give us this day our daily bread,
> and forgive us our debts,
> as we also have forgiven our debtors.
> And lead us not into temptation,
> but deliver us from evil. (Matt 6:9-13 ESV)

This prayer flips the script of hypocrisy by recognizing and deferring to God's sovereignty in its first three petitions. It is YHWH whose name is hallowed, YHWH whose kingdom is coming, and YHWH whose will is done at all times and in all places. A person still wearing the Mask of Intellect has immense trouble praying the Lord's Prayer, submitting their will to God, and praising a name other than their own. He or she cannot fathom a sovereign God who controls and ordains the good of the world. He or she would rather lean on his or her own understanding to incite selfish gain and self-piety.

The Church is not immune to the Mask of Intellect and might even be one of its most frequent abusers. If she is not careful, the Church can just as well be consumed by lies of her own creation, seeking to solve complex problems by brute and human force rather than by inquiring of God's wisdom in his Word. She would be wise to pray the Lord's Prayer continually and faithfully, wise above all to submit herself to the unyielding sovereignty of God. She should acknowledge and seek to remedy the difficulties of living in a sinful world, but she must first be unmasked, striving for godliness above all else.

On the Mask of Oppression

Of the three masks being assessed in this study, the Mask of Oppression is perhaps the most insidious and troublesome for me personally. I learned of this mask when talking to a good friend of mine who happens to be non-religious and a self-described agnostic. We were discussing current events when he posed to me his open disgust for people who insisted on a false war between religion and society. He blamed mostly Christian preachers who were so ignorant of their culture that they had little choice but to fight against it. Specifically, my friend was concerned with churches making themselves out to be the victims and underdogs of a culture war when they were just as brutal and antagonistic as those they railed against.

There are quite a few propositions in the discussion above which deserve to be parsed out by someone more qualified than me and at a different time; however, it is my suspicion that the sentiment behind my friend's frustration is one that resonates especially in non-Christian circles. It is almost laughably easy for Christians and non-Christians alike to conjure up a dichotomy between Church and state, Church and culture, Church and media, or whatever options for opposition remain. We want to see an enemy in our scopes so we can justify looking through them in the first place. We lament the habits of canceling, polarization, and hardness of heart when we see them in the secular community, but we neglect the sort of selfish games that are played in our own backyards. More than that, we surmise that any wound inflicted upon us is ample reason to strike back. Our rhetoric for the church militant emerges in response to the sad truth that our numbers are dwindling in many places. We are scared of wasting away, of vanishing altogether at the hands of some postmodern mayhem we perceive, but our responses to such chaos are often just as brutal and heartless as those of our imagined opponents. It is no wonder that the Church herself has become defined by outsiders as a tribe of hypocrites. We cannot faithfully preach truth in love and yet practice hatred and false testimony against our neighbors.

The Mask of Oppression presents a problem in Christian circles in that it fails to recognize both the position and power of God's Church triumphant. This mask not only veils us with a sense of self-righteousness; it also projects a Mask of Opposition on any person or people who appear to have an upper hand against us, extending our own false drama—our own false narrative of tragedy—to those who are hardly worthy of an understudy to true villainy. Because of this, the Church creates powers and authorities where there may be little to worry about, especially in light of the Gospel. There are, to be clear, legitimate dangers to Christian life and well-being across the world. In the discussion above, I am speaking primarily of the American context in which religious freedom has been infused into our core values and protected with decent rigor from the nation's earliest days.

We must now come to ask ourselves what, if anything, Scripture has to say on this topic. Jesus told his disciples to be wary of wars and rumors of war in respect to his Second Coming (Matt 24:6), but what should we think of the rumored wars which are waged in the here and now, when He is still on his way? His discussion on fasting in Matthew 6, while not an exact parallel to the present situation, may yet provide us with the insight and clarity we need to evaluate our hearts and direct them towards better and holier things:

> And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (Matt 6:16-18 ESV)

It is worth noting a play on words as it appears in verse sixteen. The word that gets translated as "disfigure" in the ESV is a form of *aphanizo* which literally means "to vanish or destroy." It is a negation of its root, *phaino*, which is translated as "be seen" at the end of this verse. In other words, the hypocrites are destroying themselves so that their suffering may be seen, pitied, and revered. They beat themselves up and showcase their pain in some masochistic display via the Mask of Oppression. This self-destruction may inflate their egos, but it is a profound insult to those who are suffering pains and hurts which are outside of their control. What these false fasters are doing is not a pious act for God; it is a show of strength which seeks to undermine any moral authority their cultural oppressors can muster, especially the Gentiles in their midst.

It is often forgotten, or perhaps just rarely mentioned, that the Jews were not a political majority in the days of Rome. The Jews maintained a mostly civil relationship with Roman authorities and citizens, many of them becoming Hellenized and adopting the pagan culture as their own. There was, however, a select faction of Jews who set it upon themselves to restore proper reverence for the Mosaic Law in everyday life. These were the Pharisees: the ones Jesus was most likely referring to as hypocrites in Matthew's account. The Pharisees were a minority in the Empire, surrounded by pagan influences and subjected to foreign rule. They saw themselves in a cultural battle with the Gentiles, looking to preserve their own traditions more than they were trying to dominate the public sphere.

It is in this light that we should read and understand the false fasters as Jesus exposes them. Their fasting was not only meant to inspire awe and reverence from their fellow Jew; it was meant to stand up and against the orgies and drunkenness that ran liberally and unashamedly through the streets of Rome. These Jewish hypocrites emphasized their perceived marginality by disempowering themselves even further, starving themselves while feeding into the already present narrative that they were second-class citizens among the Roman population.

Jesus sees right through this self-righteous and self-defeating game, calling out the hypocrites and instructing his disciples to, in a word, stand up straight and face the world courageously rather than play out some personal tragedy. Specifically, Jesus tells his disciples to anoint their heads and wash their faces when they fast. Notice once more that fasting, much like prayer and giving, is not the issue here. *It is the manner in which it is done.* Faithful fasting, and by extension all Christian living, is the denial of self for the sake of personal intimacy with God and our neighbors. Our good works are not simply another public or political demonstration, nor are they means by which we should assert our pride against the perceived pagan majority. Furthermore, adding bombastic demonstrations to the Christian life makes our work a service to self and removes any sacrifice from the equation. Our starvation and physical oppression become a show for the world to see rather than a prayer for God to answer.

Christ and Church as Masks of God

Martin Luther coined the phrase *larvae Dei* in his doctrine of vocation, a pair of words that translates to the Masks of God.[2] Luther claimed that each Christian in their own place and position was to reflect God's love shown to them through Jesus. He saw Christians, the people themselves, as various faces that God could wear as he continued his divine activities. The phrase *larvae Dei,* rightly understood, should then give us pause when we consider the masks we exchange for the mask of God. Whether they be benevolent, intellectual, or oppressed, our false fronts are full of flaws and foolishness which need to be filled in and enlightened.

Important for our discussion here is also that, for Luther, both "human and nonhuman creatures function as masks of God… behind which He remains the creative agent of life."[3] These mask-bearing creatures are also the tools by which God provides and preserves life, producing order in creation rather than chaos. While unity and harmony come from godly interface, discord is always the result of false fronts and what other masks bring to the table, both in our relationship with God and in those we have with our neighbors. Lies can only sow needless divisions between us, wedging pride into the middle of pain and sorrow, and this is not what we are called to as Christians.

The Great Commission of the Church is to represent Christ in every time and place, going to the ends of the earth, teaching as Jesus did and baptizing as Jesus commanded. His truth, his love, and his mercy should not only guide our movements but also give the model for our mission to all people. There is no worthy substitute for Jesus; nothing compares with the incarnate *imago Dei* as he is revealed in Scripture. Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the unmasked mystery who creates and controls all things. (Col 1:15-16) He is the exact imprint of the heavenly nature, the radiance of God which shines rather than shadows his divine activity. (Heb 1:3)

There are times, however, when Christian radiance is overlooked, times when Christ is left unmentioned, and the mask over God's character remains. Going unrecognized, the character of God becomes looming and ominous because of its ambiguity; his love and justice take the form of problems needing to be solved rather than facts historically and physically demonstrated by Christ on the cross. Thus, a lack of the proclaimed Christ has led many faithful Christians to be swallowed up by needless mystery, constantly trying to explain God's character by secondary means, desperately seeking relief from the looming strangeness of his divine shadow. Speaking of God in theological terms without mention of Christ's forgiveness is to put a mask on his character and ignore his reconciling work. Furthermore, this sort of theology will inevitably put itself in the role of Christ himself, "(undertaking) to reconcile us to God by seeking to penetrate (his) masks, to get behind (his) abstractions."[4] These efforts are fruitless, however, for the Mask of God's character cannot be removed by anything but the proclaimed, crucified, and risen Christ. Apart from this proclamation and historical reality, "God and Satan are virtually indistinguishable."[5] Explaining God without proclaiming Christ thus reduces God to a cosmic question, if not a caustic phantom to be feared by all.

The problem of masks, both ours and God's, can only be solved by Jesus. He is the one who reveals our sin, stripping us of our false piety and striking us with the heavy hand of the Law. He is also the one who redeems us from our sin, freeing us from falsehood and sanctifying us by his Spirit, sculpting us by his Word and through the fires of temptation. He invites us to put on a new self and to dispose of the lesser masks we make, showing them to be the machinations of our own hearts and minds bound to sin (Col 3:9-10). He exhorts us to kindness, humility, patience, meekness, forgiveness, and, above all, love which binds us together in unity (vv.12-14).

As Christians and as the Church, we must ask if the mask we wear is helping or hurting our witness to the Gospel. We must look in the mirror and re-examine the cracks of our fallen image. We need open and honest accountability from our Christian and non-Christian neighbors to show us how, when, and where we miss the mark, where the inconsistencies are in our prescribed and ascribed identities. This is not only a cry for a better conscience, nor is it simply a call to personal conviction; it is a matter of professional embarrassment. We are chosen as God's people, elected, justified, and glorified by his sacrifice. If there is to be any definition of Christian community, any thought of world mission which seeks to bring that community into contact with culture, it must begin with an honest look at our own shortcomings as sinners-yet-saints pressing on to the coming Kingdom. We do not need to feign our benevolence because the benevolent God has borne our burdens for us. We do not need to fake our wisdom because there is an almighty Wisdom who rules justly for all time. We do not need to falsify our oppression because we have a God who has put Death, the ultimate oppressor, in chains.

We wear the righteousness of Christ alone, the revealed Mask of God for our sake and for those around us. He is not to be traded for lesser faces; He remains the same yesterday, today, and forever, and there is no hypocrisy in eternity.

Endnotes

1 William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Macbeth*. 5.5.23-27.

2 Martin Luther, "Exposition of Psalm 147" in *Luther's Works,* Vol. 14, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, Daniel E. Poellot, and George V. Schick (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), 107–135.

3 Robert Kolb and Charles P. Arand, *The Genius of Luther's Theology: A Wittenberg Way of Thinking for the Contemporary Church,* (Baker Academic, 2008), 55.

4 Gerhard O. Forde, *Theology Is for Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 20.

5 Forde, *Theology Is for Proclamation,* 20.

Messiahship and Discipleship in the Synoptic Gospels

Kendall Davis

Kendall Davis is a fourth-year concluding MDiv student from Houston, TX and the current chairman of Grapho. He completed his undergraduate education at Concordia University Irvine in biblical languages. He will be continuing his education in the STM program in the next academic year focusing on exegetical theology.

Introduction

The question of discipleship in the synoptics is really a question of what it means to be a faithful member of God's people of Israel. In late Second Temple Judaism the answer to this question was by no means obvious. For some, such as the Pharisees, the answer was to follow the traditions of the elders fastidiously in every area of life (cf. Matt 15:2). For others, such as the Qumran community, the answer was to escape the sinful compromise of modern Israel and create a pure community in the desert. For others, such as the zealots and other revolutionaries, the answer was to follow in the tradition of the Maccabees by fighting and potentially accepting martyrdom at the hands of Israel's Gentile enemies.

The synoptic Gospels are replete with Jesus' instructions to his disciples, such as his oft-quoted "Judge not that you be not judged"[1] (Matt 7:1) or his relativization of family ties (Mark 3:33ff). However, the centerpiece of synoptic discipleship is the imitation of Jesus. When Jesus sends out the twelve and the seventy-two, they do all the same sorts of things that Jesus has been doing in his ministry (see Matt 10, especially vv. 24–5). However, as becomes increasingly clear over the course of the narrative, this imitation means that their lives will be conformed to the pattern of Jesus' life in his suffering, rejection, death, and resurrection (cf. Luke 9:23ff). The way of Jesus' disciples is the way of the cross and empty tomb because this is the way of Jesus. All of Jesus' other instructions for his disciples find their meaning only in light of this. This is one reason why the synoptics focus so much on the disciples' struggle to understand who Jesus is (cf. Matt 8:27). The issue is not merely that the disciples must have an accurate Christology, as vital as that is. The issue is that the disciples must know who Jesus is and what it means for him to be the Messiah before they can understand what it means for them to be Jesus' disciples and therefore carry out Jesus' mission.[2] Therefore, we can see that the synoptics have a unique answer to the question of what it means to be a faithful Israelite within Second Temple Judaism because they have a unique understanding of the nature and purpose of Israel's Messiah.

Thus, illuminating the synoptic redefinition of the nature and purpose of Israel's Messiah according to Jesus' death and resurrection will also illuminate the synoptic understanding of discipleship. To that end, this article will demonstrate how the synoptic Gospels use the death and resurrection of Jesus to subvert and redefine Second Temple expectations about the Messiah and thereby redefine what it means to be a faithful member of the people of God.

Methodology

This article will use a narrative approach to analyze the synoptics and their understanding of the nature and purpose of the messiahship of Jesus, that is, their Christology. This means that this article will build its case not from detailed exegesis of individual passages but from an analysis of the narrative dynamics of the entire gospels. This narrative approach is appropriate because the synoptic texts are narratives. As biblical scholar Frank Matera writes, "In the case of the Gospels, Christology unfolds through narrative. Each of the Evangelists tells a story of Jesus, and at the end of the narrative, the perceptive reader or listener will have learned something about Jesus and his work."[3] In particular this article will focus on the narrative role of the death and resurrection of Jesus. This is not the same thing as a focus on the passion narratives. As any perceptive reader is aware, the death and resurrection of Jesus loom over the entire narrative of each of the synoptics from the beginning. Thus this article will seek to describe how the death and resurrection function in the narrative of the synoptic Gospels and then address the implications for discipleship.

Key texts will be selected and analyzed from throughout the synoptics that demonstrate how the death and resurrection of Jesus form the narrative-Christological center of the entire story. These key texts will be treated in parallel. That is, as opposed to analyzing how the Markan narrative as a whole engages in this pattern and then Luke and then Matthew,[4] each moment as it appears in each of the synoptics will be analyzed as a single unit. These units are 1) Introductions/Infancy narratives, 2) Peter's confession, and 3) Passion and Resurrection narratives. The purpose is not to harmonize or gloss over important differences between the synoptics. Important differences will be noted insofar as they are relevant to the present analysis. Rather, the purpose is to show how all the synoptics engage in the broader narrative strategy of subverting and recasting messianic expectations even when they do so differently.

This article will proceed according to the following outline: 1) a discussion of relevant cultural and historical contextual factors, 2) an analysis of the synoptics, and 3) conclusions regarding synoptic messiahship and discipleship.

Second Temple Messianic Expectations

It is somewhat difficult to know what exactly Jews in the Second Temple period believed about Messiah figures. Second Temple sources are rare and do not always talk about messianic expectations. Even when they do, they are not always as precise as we might like them to be. As J. H. Charlesworth writes, "Early Jewish literature...cannot be mined to produce anything like a checklist of what the Messiah shall do."[5] It is also not necessarily true that our sources reflect what average Jews believed during this period[6] because 1) these writings are inevitably produced only by those with the money and education to do so, and 2) some writings come from sectarian communities (e.g. Qumran) and may express sectarian views rather than mainstream views.

Partly because of this paucity and indeterminacy of source materials, many scholars of previous decades have downplayed the prevalence and coherence of messianic reflection in the sources available to us.[7] For example, William Scott Green writes, "In early Jewish literature, 'messiah' is all signifier with no signified; the term is notable primarily for its indeterminacy."[8] However, more recent scholars such as John Collins and Matthew Novenson have rejected this argument.[9] Novenson argues that the tendency to downplay messianism is an overreaction to nineteenth- and twentieth-century tendencies towards discussing messianism in terms of a history of ideas.[10] Collins argues that "there was no Jewish orthodoxy in the matter of messianic expectation, and so we should expect some variation.... However...variation was limited, and...some forms of messianic expectation were widely shared."[11]

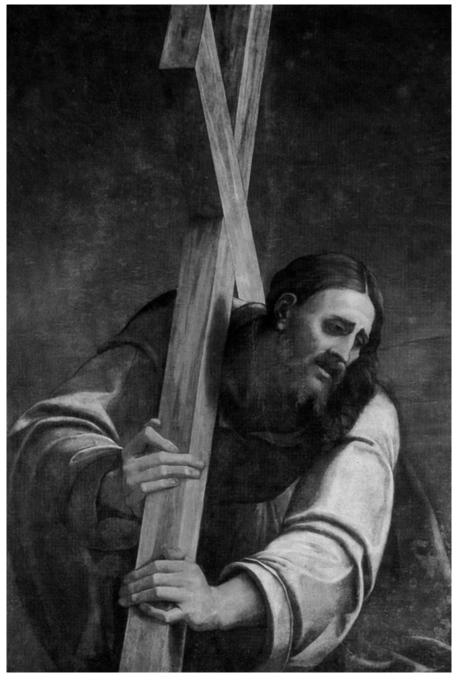
Accordingly, we should be wary of having too strict a definition of "Messiah" so that we do not ignore our sources' various ways of talking about messianic hope.12 Therefore, it is unnecessary to limit ourselves to instances of the word meshiach ("anointed") and its cognates. Eschatological figures of hope are variously discussed in priestly, prophetic, or kingly terms, often without ever using "anointing" words.13 That is why this article uses the language of "broadly messianic expectations." The expectations with which this article is concerned are messianic in the sense that they fit into the literary and theological trope of eschatological figures of hope, even if they do not use "Messiah" language. This means that when identifying the synoptic tendency to elicit, subvert, and recast messianic expectations, we should avoid being too strict about what "counts" as messianic expectations. Second Temple messianic language was diverse, thus the synoptic engagement with these expectations is also diverse.

Messianic expectations typically focus on a renewal and restoration of Israel's fortunes. Messianic figures are those who either effect this renewal or administrate it once the renewal has come. Therefore, these figures are commonly fulfillments of earlier biblical figures, such as kings, prophets, and priests. Sometimes the parallel with earlier figures is rather general; other times the parallel is with a specific figure, especially David (e.g., Ps 2). The hope was for God to do again what he had once done through earlier figures in Israel's history. For example, just as God was with David to give him victory over the Philistines, so also did many Second Temple Jews hope that God would give the future son of David victory over whoever was occupying Israel at the time. Accordingly, Second Temple Jews understood their role as faithful members of the people of God in terms of this future hope, whether or not it was specifically tied to a Messiah figure. For example, the Maccabees believed that their future free from Gentile rule called them to fight back against their Gentile rulers. Their hope in the resurrection gave them the courage and reason to withstand their martyrdom (2 Macc 7:14).

Second Temple messianic expectations creatively engage with the Hebrew scriptures. The Hebrew scriptures describe a variety of potential messianic figures, such as the Son of Man (Dan 7), the future son of David (Ezek 34), or the eschatological return of Elijah (Mal 4). Kingly or Davidic emphases were particularly common but not universal.[14] It is not uncommon for Second Temple texts to mix together messianic titles and motifs, for example, 4 Ezra[15] and 1 Enoch.[16] Some texts from Qumran seem to envision two Messiahs, one priestly and another kingly.[17] Thus, the New Testament's mixing together of distinct traditions of messianic figures is typical in Second Temple literature.

Finally, and most importantly, late Second Temple Jewish texts tend not to feature themes of suffering and death prominently in their messianic reflections. John Carroll and Joel Green note that "the hoped-for Davidic or royal Messiah, the priest Messiah, the eschatological prophet like Moses—these figures, each with its own history of significance in Israel's past, are attested in the literature of Second Temple Judaism, but the motif of suffering is integral to none of them."[18] Dunn argues that while figures like the suffering servant of Isaiah are "potentially messianic ideas," they do not seem to function as such in the literature before Jesus' death.[19] Instead, what is more typical are Messiahs who gloriously conquer the enemies of Israel (cf. Ps 2) and establish justice and righteousness in the land (Ezek 34:23ff). Psalm of Solomon 17 is typical in this regard: "And he will have gentile nations serving him under his yoke, and he will glorify the Lord in (a place) prominent (above) the whole earth. And he will purge Jerusalem…(for) nations to come from the ends of the earth to see his glory" (vv. 30–31).[20]

In summary, Messiah figures are not put to shame; they are the ones who put the proud and arrogant to shame. They are not rejected by the people of God; they are embraced by the people of God. They are not killed, rather they destroy those who oppress the righteous. The following statement from 1 Enoch is a representative example of this pattern: "[The Son of Man] shall depose the kings from their thrones and kingdoms. For they do not extol and glorify him, and neither do they obey him, the source of their kingship. The faces of the strong will be slapped and be filled with shame and gloom. Their dwelling places and their beds will be worms" (46:5–6). Because of this, the story of Jesus, a crucified Messiah, would seem exceedingly strange to Jews familiar with contemporary messianic expectations.



"Christ Carrying the Cross" by Sebastiano del Piombo {{PD-US}}. Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

The Problem of the Cross

In his seminal work on the socio-historical significance of crucifixion in the ancient Mediterranean world, Martin Hengel concludes that "a crucified messiah, son of God or God must have seemed a contradiction in terms to anyone, Jew, Greek, Roman or barbarian, asked to believe such a claim, and it will certainly have been thought offensive and foolish."[21]

The issue is that in the ancient Mediterranean world, for both Jews and Gentiles, crucifixion was deeply associated with shame. The punishment was reserved for the lowest classes, especially slaves, as well as political enemies. For Jews in particular crucifixion was not associated only with shame before human beings but also rejection by God (Deut 21:23). This means that the biggest issue with the story of Jesus is not necessarily that he suffers and dies; there were categories for the martyrdom of the righteous. The issue is that he suffers such a horribly *shameful* death because he is rejected by Israel's leaders and apparently abandoned by God (Matt 27:46). As Hengel writes:

> Jesus' death was not in itself a stumbling-block for the Jews, since it was possible that God's Messiah might also suffer martyrdom—but the form of his death was another matter, for he had not died because of his loyalty to the Jewish law; on the contrary, the tradition was that he had been arraigned before the Jewish court as a blasphemer and a law-breaker, and the judgement of that court was apparently confirmed by the fact that he had been crucified, his body exposed naked on a tree.[22]

One of the remarkable features of the synoptic witness is how the shame of the cross is not explained away. The shame, rejection, and death of the cross is not treated as a problem to be solved but as the heart and center of the Gospel. Thus, it was necessary for the synoptics to subvert and recast Second Temple messianic expectations so that the messiahship of Jesus could be seen to be constituted by his shameful suffering and death.

The Synoptic Thematic Pattern of Subverted Expectations

The synoptics tend to engage with messianic expectations by eliciting, subverting, and recasting these Second Temple messianic expectations. First, the synoptics call forward various broadly messianic expectations. Sometimes this happens through titles, such as *christos,* ("Christ") or *huios tou anthropou,* ("Son of Man"). Other times this happens through events, such as the infancy narratives or the baptism of Jesus. Elsewhere this happens through interaction with the Old Testament, whether explicit quotations or implicit echoes. Finally, the manner of Jesus' teaching and ministry and the resulting conflicts help the reader to see that Jesus is no ordinary rabbi, as does, for example, the healing and forgiving of the paralytic lowered through the roof (especially Mark's account: 2:1–12). In episodes like this Jesus exercises an authority that is not exercised by Israel's teachers, a fact pointed out by the synoptic writers (cf. Matt 7:29). This unparalleled authority and the accompanying acts of power signal to the crowds and others that somehow Jesus is a fulfillment of biblical patterns (e.g., Luke 7:16).

Secondly, these expectations are subverted and brought into paradoxical tension with Jesus. For example, the rejection of Jesus in Matthew's infancy narrative or the so-called messianic secret motif in Mark all subvert the expectations previously elicited by contradicting them or going against them in some way.

Finally, these expectations are recast according to the narrative of Jesus' death and resurrection; for example, Jesus' statements about how it is necessary for him to be rejected, to suffer, die, and rise again (e.g., Matt 16:21, Luke 17:25, 24:44) or Jesus' call for his disciples to take up their cross (Matt 1:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23) both recast messianic expectations according to the crucifixion.

This pattern is not an outline for the narrative structure of the synoptics; rather, it is a recurring thematic pattern that can be found in whole or in part in individual pericopes and across the entire narrative of the synoptics. An awareness of this pattern highlights the distinctive picture that the synoptic narratives paint of Jesus' identity and mission.

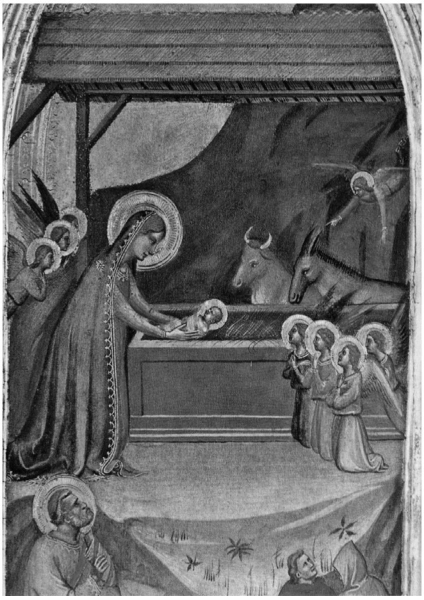
Recasting Messianic Expectations through Cross and Resurrection

Introductions and Infancy Narratives

The beginnings of the Gospels are structurally important for establishing the expectations for what the narratives will say about Jesus. For example, the prologue of John's Gospel is often recognized for serving this function and is notable for its strong Christological statements. While the synoptic beginnings take a different literary strategy, they serve a similar narrative and Christological function.

In general, the beginnings of the synoptics tend to focus on fulfilling parts one and two of the pattern discussed above. They both elicit broadly messianic expectations and subvert or question these expectations. There is not much explicit recasting toward death and resurrection at this stage of the narrative. Rather, at this stage the focus is on establishing the narrative tension regarding how Jesus fulfills and subverts messianic expectations.

"Geburt Christi" by Bernardo Daddi {{PD-US}}. Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons



Matthew's Gospel begins with a genealogy that explicitly locates Jesus in the line of both Abraham and David. This suggests that Jesus will be the fulfillment of the covenantal promises given to both Abraham and David. The genealogy divides Israel's history into three periods of fourteen generations, the period from Abraham to David, the period from David to the Babylonian exile, and the period from the Babylonian exile to Jesus (1:17). This sets up Jesus as a figure at least as pivotal as Abraham, David, or the exile and restoration. Jesus is continually portrayed as the fulfillment of Israel's story.

Matthew's infancy narrative is uniquely filled with direct quotations of the scriptures that are said to be fulfilled by the events of Jesus' life (e.g. 1:23, 2:6, 2:15). Jesus is set up from the beginning as the fulfillment of all of Israel's scripture (cf. Luke 24:27). This is not mere proof-texting of fulfilled prophecy but has deeply messianic implications. As Novenson emphasizes, messianic expectations and reflection were largely "a vast, sprawling ancient...project of scriptural interpretation."[23] Thus, in demonstrating Jesus to be the fulfillment of scriptural texts, Matthew is demonstrating Jesus to be the fulfillment of messianic expectations, even if he has not yet made it clear what exactly this will look like.

Luke raises numerous expectations for Jesus through a series of events, songs, and characters. The angel Gabriel proclaims to Mary that Jesus "will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever" (1:32–33). Jesus is explicitly identified as the messianic son of David who will fulfill the promises given to David. Additionally, the announcement of a miraculous birth by an angel is strongly reminiscent of other birth announcements in the Old Testament, especially Samson's (Judges 13). Later, Mary's song echoes the hopes found in Israel's prophetic writings that God will overturn the social order by bringing down the proud and uplifting the downtrodden (Luke 1:46–56, cf. Ezek 21:26). At the presentation of Jesus in the temple, he is praised by two people, Simeon and Anna, who are both eagerly waiting for God to fulfill his promises to Israel (Luke 2:25 & 2:37–38). Much like Matthew, the beginning of Luke's narrative is grounded in expectations from the Old Testament scriptures. His strategy is different, but the effect is much the same.

While Mark contains no infancy narrative, the beginning of this Gospel still serves a similar narrative function to the infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke: it sets up expectations for Jesus and his significance. Mark's opening line, "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (1:1) establishes two of the key titles that will be foundational for the revelation of Jesus' identity and mission throughout this Gospel. Jesus is "Christ" and "Son of God." Throughout the narrative Mark emphasizes the inability of human beings to see and understand who Jesus is. Thus the confession of Peter that Jesus is the Christ (8:29) and the confession of the centurion that Jesus is the Son of God (15:39) come at pivotal moments in the revelation of Jesus' identity and mission to the world. The first verse of Mark's Gospel establishes the terms that will be critical for this.

Yet amid the expectations set up in the beginnings of these narratives, it is clear that Jesus is not a messianic king who will be accepted and acclaimed by all of Israel. In Matthew Jesus is not worshipped by Herod or the chief priests and scribes. Herod even seeks to kill Jesus but is prevented from doing so. Unlike Matthew, Luke focuses more on how Jesus is acclaimed and accepted by many in Israel. However, the words of Simeon make it clear that Jesus will also face opposition: "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed" (2:34). Mark does not have the clear subversions of expectations in the beginning of his narrative like Matthew and Luke. However, a similar effect is achieved through the prevalence of the motif of the messianic secret, which first appears in 1:25. While Jesus' identity is proclaimed 1) in the title of Mark's Gospel, 2) by John the Baptist, and 3) by the voice from heaven, this identity is immediately forced into secrecy by Jesus. Thus, this Christological tension drives the plot forward into the dramatic scene at 8:27ff and the passion narrative.

Peter's Confession

The next moment in the synoptics to be analyzed is Peter's confession (Matt 16:13–28, Mark 8:27–9:1, Luke 9:18–27). This moment is critically important because it is 1) one of the clearest self-contained instances of the pattern being discussed and 2) a structurally and thematically critical turning point in each of the synoptics, especially since this pericope features the first of Jesus' several death and resurrection predictions. It is my contention that this passage is paradigmatic for how the synoptics use the death and resurrection of Jesus to engage with broadly messianic expectations.

After asking his disciples who *others* say that he is, Jesus asks his disciples what they think. Peter proclaims either, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God" (Matt 16:16), "You are the Christ" (Mark 8:29), or "The Christ of God" (Luke 9:20). In Matthew Jesus explicitly commends Peter for his confession. In Mark and Luke, Jesus' approval of Peter's confession is implied in the wording of Jesus' injunction to stay silent about this, which is shared by Matthew. Following this Jesus begins to teach his disciples that he must suffer, be rejected, killed, and raised again on the third day. In Matthew and Mark Peter then takes Jesus aside and rebukes him. In Matthew Peter says, "May the Lord be merciful to you. May this never happen to you."[24] In turn, Jesus rebukes Peter, "Get behind me, Satan" (Matt 16:23, Mark 8:33). All of the synoptics then proceed with Jesus' call for his disciples to take up their cross and follow him.

Peter's confession fulfills the pattern discussed above in the following way: Jesus' question and Peter's answer elicit various messianic expectations associated with the title "Christ." Of course, Peter does not explicitly confess anything other than this title for Jesus. But it should be kept in mind that this title is a loaded term. It is a confession not just of who Jesus is but of what Jesus will do as God's messianic agent, that is, both identity and mission.[25] In any case, Peter's reaction to Jesus' first death and resurrection prediction indicates that his understanding of the term, "Christ," is wholly incompatible with Jesus' suffering, rejection, death, and resurrection. Because Peter's confession is kept non-specific, this episode shows the extent to which almost any late Second Temple understanding of messianic figures is confounded by the passion and resurrection of Jesus. Thus, the point of the narrative is not necessarily that Jesus is problematic for only particular kinds of messianic expectations but that Jesus is problematic for any messianic expectations that do not have room for the shame, rejection, and crucifixion of Jesus' passion.[26] This is not to say that Peter's confession is entirely wrong, but it is critically "inadequate":

> For a *brief* moment, Peter and the disciples see everything clearly, for their eyes have been opened. They finally understand what the reader already knows: that Jesus is the Shepherd-Messiah. But it will soon become apparent that even though Peter's confession is formally correct, it is inadequate. Jesus is the Shepherd-Messiah.... But he is also the Messiah who must suffer, die, and rise from the dead before he returns as God's glorious eschatological agent.[27]

In this pericope the steps of subverting and recasting messianic expectations happen simultaneously in Jesus' death and resurrection prediction and in Peter's reaction to it. The subversion is less strong in Luke's account since he does not include Peter's rebuke of Jesus. The recasting continues when Jesus proclaims to the disciples and the crowds that all who wish to be his disciple must take up their cross and follow him. The most literal meaning of this is that Jesus' disciples should be prepared to face martyrdom. Although in saying that they should take up their cross "daily" (9:23), Luke makes it explicit that this has everyday and metaphorical meanings, as well. In any case, discipleship to Jesus is redefined according to Jesus' messiahship. Jesus takes the path of shame, rejection, and death, and so will his disciples. Jesus' disciples will struggle to comprehend what this means for them throughout the rest of the synoptics (e.g., Luke 9:46ff). Time and again, however, Jesus redirects them back to this truth. However, they will not truly understand until after Jesus' resurrection.

Structurally, this episode represents a turning point in each of the synoptics. This is the first of Jesus' death and resurrection predictions, which continue as he travels to Jerusalem. While the synoptics have strongly implied that something of this nature will happen to Jesus, this is the first explicit mention of it. While Jesus has confused his disciples before, this is the first time they have been utterly confounded by the shame, rejection, and death awaiting Jesus, and it will not be the last.

Passion and Resurrection Narratives

The present section will focus on the passion and resurrection narrative starting with the trial of Jesus or, in the case of Luke, the denial of Peter (Matt 26:57–28:20, Mark 14:53–16:8, Luke 22:54–24:53). These are rich narratives with much to be analyzed; however, the focus here will be on how this narrative functions to recast messianic expectations according to the pattern of Jesus' shame, rejection, and death. This section will show how the synoptic passion narratives recast notions of Jesus' messiahship through the extensive use of irony and paradox. Jesus' crucifixion is portrayed as a mock coronation. However, because readers of the Gospel are aware that Jesus truly is the Messiah and that suffering, rejection, death, and resurrection are all part of the divine plan for Jesus' messiahship, they are able to see that this is actually a real coronation.

In the trial scenes numerous expectations are flipped upside-down. In Matthew the allegedly scrupulous leaders of Israel seek false testimony against Jesus (26:59). Jesus' enemies are the ones who unwittingly speak the truth about him while Peter, Jesus' most zealous disciple, is too ashamed to admit that he even knows him. The representatives of the Gentiles (Pilate, Pilate's wife, the centurion) believe Jesus to be an innocent or perhaps even a righteous man while Israel's leaders reject him as a blasphemer. This is the exact opposite of typical messianic expectations where the Messiah crushes the wicked Gentile kings who oppose him while he is acclaimed by righteous Israel (cf. Psalm 2, 1 Enoch 46, Psalm of Solomon 17:21ff).

Kingly language and imagery dominate the trial scenes and later mockery of Jesus. In Matthew 27:27–30 Jesus' kingly claims are mocked when he is crowned with a crown of thorns, given a scepter of reed in his right hand, and clothed in a scarlet robe. The sign put above Jesus' head that proclaims him to be the King of the Jews makes it clear that Jesus has earned the ultimate public shame of the cross precisely because of his claim to be Israel's king.

The taunts Jesus endures during his crucifixion focus on his apparent inability to save himself: "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him" (Matt 27:42). Jesus' fate as the crucified one is seen as proof positive that he is not any of the things he claimed to be. Yet for readers who know that the rejection and crucifixion are part of the divine plan, the taunts, accusations, and mocking all speak the truth unwittingly. As Morna Hooker writes, "The truth about Jesus is found in the mouth of Jesus' accusers, who refuse to accept that it is the truth."[28] Jesus refuses to save himself not because he is powerless but because he exercises his power in weakness. The shame, rejection, and death of the crucifixion in the synoptic narratives are not an obstacle to Jesus' messiahship but the heart and center of it; they are the means by which Jesus lives out the path of shame and rejection that he spent much of the synoptic narratives teaching his disciples.

This is made abundantly clear when at the death of Jesus, the sky darkens, the earth shakes, and the curtain of the temple tears from top to bottom. When this happens, the centurion overseeing Jesus' crucifixion proclaims either "This man was the Son of God" (Matt 27:54, Mark 15:39) or "This man was innocent" (Luke 23:47). In the context of the Gospel narratives, the centurion's confession highlights "the necessary correlation between Jesus' identity and his crucifixion. Without the passion, Jesus cannot be understood."[29] While no one watching Jesus' crucifixion is able to see what is really going on, immediately after his death, a pagan Gentile is able to see Jesus for who he really is. This narrative point is particularly strong in the Gospel of Mark, where this is the first time that a human character has proclaimed Jesus to be the Son of God, the title used to describe Jesus in both the opening verse of that Gospel and Jesus' baptism.

The synoptic resurrection narratives vary considerably in content and length. All include the empty tomb story with the announcement made by one or two figures. Luke and Matthew both include resurrection appearances, whereas Mark records none. In Luke's account Jesus must open the minds of the disciples so they can see how it was "necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory" (24:26). Matera is helpful on the implications of this:

> That the risen Lord must open the minds of his disciples to understand the fuller meaning of the scriptures suggests that there is something unique about Jesus' messiahship that goes beyond Israel's messianic expectations. As a result, the early church and the New Testament writers began a process of defining messiahship in terms of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.[30]

One detail shared in some way by all three accounts is that Jesus is referred to by the angel at the tomb as "Jesus the crucified" (Matt 28:5, cf. Mark 16:6, Luke 24:7).[31] Jesus' identity cannot be separated from the crucifixion. The risen Jesus is still the crucified Jesus. Resurrection does not nullify or reverse the crucifixion as if it were an aberration from the messianic plan. Rather, resurrection is the next step in the messianic plan that necessarily includes crucifixion as a crucial step.[32] The resurrection narratives make it clear that the crucifixion was not an accident overcome by the resurrection but that the resurrection is the fulfillment of Jesus' crucifixion.

Thus, the passion and resurrection accounts show that whatever is good and true about the synoptic readers' prior messianic expectations, they must be reinterpreted within the story of Jesus as the one who is rejected, suffers, dies shamefully, and is resurrected by his Father.

Messiahship and Discipleship

As has already been explored, the synoptics are quite explicit that the path taken by Jesus' disciples is to follow in the path that Jesus himself takes. Because Jesus does not reject the shame and rejection that await him at the cross, his disciples are to stand strong when they undergo persecution and suffering for Jesus, something they failed to do when Jesus was arrested. Because Jesus comes as a servant, the disciples are to reject jockeying for position and power and instead of seeking to become the greatest of all, they are to seek to become the servant and lowliest of all (cf. Luke 22:24ff). Other instructions that Jesus gives to those who would follow him, such as the instructions from the Sermon on the Mount, fit into this paradigm of letting go of personal honor and accepting shame and rejection (e.g., Matt 5:38ff, 5:43ff). Jesus teaches his disciples to live according to the new social logic of his kingdom. Those on the outskirts of Jewish social life, such as tax collectors and prostitutes, are brought into the center when they repent at the hearing of the good news. Those held in the highest esteem such as the teachers of the law or even one's own family are pushed to the margins when they fail to listen to the Word of God made flesh (Mark 3:35, Matt 23). The kingdom takes its shape from the king of the kingdom: Jesus. And Jesus is defined first and foremost as Jesus the Crucified. Thus, the pattern of Jesus' life becomes the pattern for his disciples' life.

However, the disciples do not immediately understand this. They understand rightly here and there, yet still imperfectly and insufficiently. They fail to understand who Jesus is and the power available to them through him (Mark 8:1ff), and they reject those whom Jesus would bring close (Matt 19:13ff). Their hard hearts have not yet been softened by the ministry of their Lord. Moreover, when the disciples object to the women anointing Jesus at Bethany shortly before his death, they fail to understand the situation precisely because they do not understand that her act prepares Jesus for his death and burial (Matt 26:12). The disciples embark on a similar journey to that which the synoptics invite their readers. The disciples' expectations of the Messiah shatter when they come crashing against Jesus, who resolutely takes the path of suffering, rejection, and death. Their shattered expectations cause them to lose hope and scatter when Jesus is arrested. It is only once they are confronted with the resurrected and crucified one that they are able to reconstruct their notions of what sort of Messiah Jesus is and thereby what sort of disciples they are. As Jack Dean Kingsbury observes in Matthew's Gospel:

> the conflict Jesus has with the disciples becomes intense. It has to do with the disciples' imperceptiveness, and at times resistance, to the notion that servanthood is the essence of discipleship. Not until the end of Matthew's story is this conflict

> resolved. When Jesus appears to the disciples atop the mountain in Galilee, he finally leads them to adopt his evaluative point of view on discipleship.[33]

This evaluative point of view is no less vital for those who are part of Jesus' church today. We too are surrounded by competing notions of what it means to be a faithful member of Jesus' church. The only way to cut through this confusion is to be confronted with what sort of savior Jesus is. Every false or insufficient answer that falls on this cornerstone will be shattered to pieces. Yet the crucified and resurrected one is still able to guide his disciples and reorient them to the path that leads to both the cross and the empty tomb. And he reminds us that we cannot have the one without the other.

Endnotes

1 All translations of the Old and New Testaments will be taken from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

2 Cf. the fundamental misunderstanding of James and John when a Samaritan village rejects them in Luke's Gospel: 9:51ff.

3 Frank J. Matera, *New Testament Christology.* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 3.

4 This sequential methodology is generally the norm for analysis of Christology in the New Testament, e.g. Morna D. Hooker, *Not Ashamed of the Gospel: New Testament Interpretations of the Death of Christ.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994); John T. Carroll and Joel B. Green, *The Death of Jesus in Early Christianity,* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995); and Matera, *New Testament Christology.*

5 J. H. Charlesworth, "From Messianology to Christology: Problems and Prospects," in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity.* Ed. James H. Charlesworth. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992): 6.

6 John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls.* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 18.

7 For example, Morton Smith, "What Is Implied by the Variety of Messianic Figures?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 78, no. 1 (1959): 66–72 or Charlesworth, "From Messianology to Christology."

8 William Scott Green, "Introduction: Messiah in Judaism: Rethinking the Question," in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era*. Ed. Jacob Neusner, William Scott Green, and Ernest S. Frerichs, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 4.

9 Collins, *The Scepter and the Star* and Matthew V. Novenson, *The Grammar of Messianism: An Ancient Jewish Political Idiom and Its Users,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

10 Novenson, *The Grammar of Messianism,* 6.

11 Collins, *The Scepter and the Star,* 18.

12 Novenson, *The Grammar of Messianism,* 28.

13 Collins, *The Scepter and the Star,* 17. See also Novenson, *The Grammar of Messianism,* 273.

14 N. A. Dahl, "Messianic Ideas and the Crucifixion of Jesus," in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*. Ed. James H. Charlesworth. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992): 386.

15 Michael E. Stone, "The Question of the Messiah in 4 Ezra," in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era.* Ed. Jacob Neusner, William Scott Green, and Ernest S. Frerichs. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987): 213ff.

16 George W. E. Nickelsburg, "Salvation without and with a Messiah: Developing Beliefs in Writing Ascribed to Enoch," in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era.* Ed. Jacob Neusner, William Scott Green, and Ernest S. Frerichs. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987): 63.

17 Shemaryahu Talmon, "Waiting for the Messiah: The Spiritual Universe of the Qumran Covenanters," in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era.* Ed. Jacob Neusner, William Scott Green, and Ernest S. Frerichs. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987): 125.

18 Carroll and Green, *The Death of Jesus in Early Christianity,* 171.

19 James D. G. Dunn, "Messianic Ideas and their Influence on the Jesus of History," in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity.* Ed. James H. Charlesworth. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992): 369.

20 All translations from the Pseudepigrapha are from ed. James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* 2 vols. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983).

21 Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion: In the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross.* Trans. John Bowden. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), Chapter 1: "The 'Folly' of the Crucified Son of God." Kindle.

22 Hooker, *Not Ashamed of the Gospel,* 12.

23 Novenson, *The Grammar of Messianism,* 17.

24 My translation. The first clause, "Ιλεως σοι κύριε," is often translated "Far be it from you, Lord" based on a handful of instances of this phrase in the LXX. For an explanation of the relevant issues and a defense of the translation used here, see Jeffrey A. Gibbs, *Matthew,* vol. 2. *Concordia Commentary.* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2018), 830ff.

25 Gibbs, *Matthew,* vol. 2, 814.

26 Cf. Gibbs, *Matthew,* vol. 2, 838.

27 Matera, *New Testament Christology*, 17.

28 Hooker, *Not Ashamed of the Gospel,* 87.

29 Carrol and Green, *The Death of Jesus in Early Christianity,* 29.

30 Matera, *New Testament Christology,* 244.

31 My translation.

32 Cf. Edwin K. Broadhead, "Jesus the Nazarene: Narrative Strategy and Christological Imagery in the Gospel of Mark." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 52 (1993): 14.

33 Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Mathew as Story*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 130.

Sanctification and Ecclesiology in Bonhoeffer

Gregory Moffitt

Greg Moffitt is a doctoral candidate at Concordia Seminary and is from King George, Virginia. He completed his undergraduate education at Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, Virginia, where he earned a BA with a double major in political science and philosophy. He then earned a MA in religion and a STM at Concordia Theological Seminary. He also enjoys playing the piano and serving as a church organist.

Introduction

The question of the nature of the Christian community is complex, with far-reaching implications. For instance, the way in which we conceive the Christian community impacts how we think about questions such as the sanctification of the individual as he or she lives out their vocation as a part of the community. In this paper I will examine how Dietrich Bonhoeffer discussed the Christian community, focusing particularly upon how he discusses questions concerning ecclesiology and sanctification in his *Discipleship* and *Life Together*.

Historical Background

It is first necessary to discuss Bonhoeffer's historical background since an understanding of the challenges which Bonhoeffer and the German Confessing Church were facing sheds a great deal of light upon his theology. Bonhoeffer was born in Breslau, Silesia, which was at that time a part of Germany.[1] Bonhoeffer began his study of theology at the University of Tübingen in 1923, although, initially, his courses at the university were more focused on philosophy than theology; this greatly impacted Bonhoeffer's theology and thought.[2] Bonhoeffer, along with most of the other theology students at that institution, studied under Adolf Schlatter, who was an exegete of the New Testament, and Bonhoeffer used his commentaries extensively throughout his life.[3]

One of the most important events in history which would influence much of Bonhoeffer's theology was the rise of the Nazi regime. Hitler came to power on January 30, 1933. That year would prove to be the most chaotic year for Bonhoeffer


Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Sigurdshof (1939). Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons / CC-BY-SA 3.0

and also one of the most important influences upon his later thought and writing. He began the year with ecumenical work. The Universal Council for Life and Work and the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches were holding meetings consisting of their governing bodies. Their goal was to merge these groups and Bonhoeffer's collaboration was essential in achieving this outcome. Bonhoeffer then publicly addressed some of his concerns with the rise of Hitler on February 1 of that year when he was asked to discuss "the younger generation's altered view of the concept of *Führer*" on a radio show.[4] After Hitler came to power, Bonhoeffer was one of the first theologians to recognize Hitler's policy against the Jews as a problem for the church; his greatest contribution to this discussion was his subsequent essay concerning the church and the Jewish question.

Hitler's rise to power forced Bonhoeffer to discuss the role of the church concerning political matters; Bonhoeffer defined three ways in which the church ought to interact with the state: the church can call the state out for what it does and make it responsible for its actions, the church has the obligation to assist the victims of the state's actions, and the church may engage in direct political action.[5]

Another important influence upon Bonhoeffer's theology, particularly upon his ecclesiology, was the seminary run by the Confessing Church, the primary church that was resisting Hitler. Bonhoeffer's seminary was located in Finkenwalde and it trained pastors for the Confessing Church. Since this seminary was resisting the Nazi regime, it faced increasing resistance from the government.[6]

Another problem that faced the seminary was Bonhoeffer's students becoming legalized with the state, which they did through consistories of the provincial churches. They did it in order to avoid persecution and the consistories made this process easy for ordinands of the Confessing Church, as an ordinand only needed to declare that he wanted to be assigned a pastorate in a legal church.[7] Much of the persecution which the Confessing Church faced came from the German Evangelical Church with the Nazi regime behind them. This happened by the issuing of several orders and decrees which attempted to severely limit the activities of this church, such as prohibiting them from holding worship services in unconsecrated buildings and preventing them from taking up a collection for imprisoned Confessing Church members.[8]

Bonhoeffer's next major accomplishment was the composition of *Discipleship* in 1936. The foundations of *Discipleship* go back to Bonhoeffer's time in London and New York. The first inspiration for this book had been his conversations with Jean Lasserre in New York. Much of the material for *Discipleship* also came from his lectures at Finkenwalde.[9]

Overview of Bonhoeffer's Anthropology

With this historical introduction in mind, I shall now begin to discuss the primary questions concerning Bonhoeffer's teaching on ecclesiology and sanctification. However, in order to understand the relationship between sanctification and ecclesiology in Bonhoeffer's *Life Together* and *Discipleship,* we must first discuss his doctrine of sanctification in general, paying particular attention to other theological considerations which shape and influence his doctrine of sanctification. For Bonhoeffer, sanctification is conformity to Christ, that is, being united to Him in the church community. We shall now examine the background of his thinking concerning this matter.

The first area we must consider that influences Bonhoeffer's doctrine of Christian formation is his anthropology. There are two subcategories of Bonhoeffer's anthropology: his theological anthropology and his philosophical anthropology. Generally, theological anthropology is concerned with the meaning of humanity's fall in Adam, restoration in Christ, and life in anticipation of Christ's return. On the other hand, philosophical anthropology concerns itself more with questions that identify the manner in which body, spirit, mind, and soul interact. These differing approaches to anthropology share some commonalities, such as the fact that both theological and philosophical anthropology have to concern themselves with the widespread and devastating effects which the fall has had upon the entire human being, both body and soul.

Bonhoeffer's theological anthropology flows from his Christology, especially Christ's work in and through the resurrection. With the significance of Christ's life, death, and resurrection at the forefront for Bonhoeffer, he emphasizes God's full and complete renewal of human beings in Christ, who is the new Adam, and he applies the work of Christ as the reality for all of humanity.[10] Bonhoeffer's theological anthropology affects his theological exposition of other doctrines, such as his view concerning conversion and justification. In particular, since all mankind was completely renewed through Christ's resurrection and brought into His body, mankind is not renewed through individual conversion. In other words, the renewal of all mankind through the death and resurrection of Christ is all-encompassing, and, therefore, justification is not the renewal of the Christian's being since all mankind has been renewed in Christ. Instead, through the Holy Spirit, that which Christ has accomplished is imputed to Christians on account of their faith. So the whole world is renewed and reconciled to God, but Christians alone benefit from Christ's work.

Bonhoeffer's teaching on anthropology informs the nature of Christian formation in his theology. Christian formation cannot refer to growth in human nature since it has already been wholly renewed both in and by the work of Christ in His resurrection. The reason why Bonhoeffer emphasized this point is because if it is denied, then the totality of Christ's work is at least partially denied. This could lead to seeking a means of renewal outside of Christ. Bonhoeffer's philosophical anthropology operates under similar assumptions and works in the same general manner. This is most clearly articulated by Bonhoeffer in his *Act and Being,* where he explores the relationship of the human being to self and Christ.[11]

Bonhoeffer's philosophical anthropology rejects the categories and distinctions of body, soul, spirit, and mind, even as it simultaneously affirms their existence. For Bonhoeffer, human beings simply exist, and they only exist as a unified whole which is composed of body, soul, spirit, and mind, which is constituted in and through the Christ encounter. His views concerning these matters also affect his teaching on Christian formation. First of all, this means that formation in Christ will not speak of shaping the soul as if it could occur as a distinct activity. This means that there is no room to grow or become more complete, because, theologically speaking, one is already everything in the death and resurrection of Christ. Furthermore, on a philosophical level, for Bonhoeffer being is not something that increases or is formed in the first place. This affirmation should not be taken to mean that Bonhoeffer does not appreciate the reality that, through discipleship to Christ, the Christian is progressively changed; there is a tension in Bonhoeffer's thought between the fact that the Christian's entire being has already been renewed and the fact that the Old Adam still persists in Christians. This has implications concerning Bonhoeffer's doctrine of sanctification since, although Bonhoeffer clearly realizes that Christians are made complete and perfect in Christ, he nevertheless insists upon "costly" grace and discipleship in which the Christian becomes increasingly faithful to the call of Christ to true discipleship. The fundamental distinction which Bonhoeffer makes is that he explicates this "completeness in Christ" in reference to different theological categories than in typical accounts of "progressive sanctification." Living the Christian life is not seen by Bonhoeffer as any sort of progression in being or soul, but rather as a "progressive" or increasing fidelity to the renewed and sanctified state that has already been achieved through Christ's resurrection.

Therefore, Christians grow in a way of being, not in "being" itself. This is a significant point, as Bonhoeffer shifts the conceptual field of talk to the nature of formation in Christ and how the church participates in it. Bonhoeffer's Christology, particularly his view that we are entirely completed already in Christ's victorious resurrection, drastically shapes his view of anthropology and both of these redefine "progress" in Christian life.[12]

Bonhoeffer's Approach to Sanctification

In light of Bonhoeffer's anthropology, we can now discuss Bonhoeffer's doctrine of sanctification. For Bonhoeffer, sanctification is more frequently discussed in relation to the church community than to the individual, although he sees both the individual and communal aspects of sanctification to be important. Holiness and sanctification are best viewed as having been perfected in Christ and not as something into which one incrementally and progressively grows. This means that sanctification is a binary reality; either one is dead in sin or one has been made into the new man. Being part of the true church means that one is sanctified. It is a reality that is established in Christ, into which Christians live more faithfully as they put off their old way of being. Therefore, the church is not to be encouraged to grow into a state of existence which it has not yet achieved, such as being more "holy" than it was previously. Instead, the Christian community should be reminded and admonished concerning what they already are and exhorted to increase in their *faithfulness* to their current identity in Christ. Again, Bonhoeffer wants to emphasize that Christians are already holy because of Christ's work and that the only growth that can occur is for Christians to more fully realize this holiness in their lives.

For Bonhoeffer, both the sanctification of the church as well as the individual can be conceived of in terms of space, since within Christ's body God has created a place in the world that is separated from sin and in which purity of life is realized and this "holy space" is the church, where the baptized live as new humanity, as Christ's presence. In other words, the community's purity of life increasingly reflects and expresses, but does not increasingly or progressively generate, God's holiness.[13] For instance, if one is musically gifted, practicing the instrument one plays can make one more fully realize that gift and use it to its full potential, but this practicing does not give the gift in the first place.

Nevertheless, sanctification in Bonhoeffer's theology is seen at times as a process, and he explicates and develops it by putting sanctification into categories of marks or fruits. This terminology permits Bonhoeffer to discuss "progress" in the Christian life but avoid advocating for a development or increase of God's sanctification beyond what Christ has achieved. These marks are divided into several groups. The first mark of sanctification is that it "manifests itself in a clear separation from the world." Secondly, sanctification must "prove itself through conduct that is worthy of God's realm of holiness." This would include loving your neighbor and living in a Christ-like manner. A third mark of sanctification is that it "will be bidden in waiting for the day of Jesus Christ."[14]

While these are general marks of sanctification, Bonhoeffer also discusses marks of the sanctification of the church. First, the church must recognize the visible space that it inhabits. This refers to both God's established holy space and to the rest of the world where it remains sealed and preserved until Christ's return. In other words, the first mark of the church's sanctification is its existence in that there is a church that is faithfully living away from darkness toward the light, so that it can stand under God's judgment. This means that the church's members will strive to avoid all worldly things which are contrary to God's will. The second mark of the church's sanctification concerns the manner in which the church proves its sanctification through conduct worthy of the body of Christ. The church lives out of the daily fruits of the Gospel in which they exist, in which a break with their former way of life has occurred. Christians move away from their former, sinful, ways and develop moral character appropriate to their identity.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer with confirmands, March 21, 1932 in Friedrichsbrunn. Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons / CC-BY-SA 3.0

We have now discussed at some length what Christian formation is not for Bonhoeffer. Now we shall discuss what it is. Bonhoeffer understands "Christian formation" as being grounded within the body of Christ, in that Christ's body has a specific incarnate, cruciform, and resurrected shape. Therefore, true Christian formation is Christ conforming the church into sameness with Himself. Crucial to Bonhoeffer's understanding of Christian formation is the "social" or "communal" notion of Christian formation. Similar to his anthropology, it frames and informs all subsequent discussions concerning Bonhoeffer's thought on this topic. For Bonhoeffer the social form of Christ is an ongoing topic of discussion throughout his works. However, this subject receives its greatest and most thorough treatment in his doctoral dissertation, *Sanctorum Communio*. This work develops both the theological and social nature of community and shows that the true church is Christ existing as community. Bonhoeffer argues that communities have a collective will. McGarry points out that an epiphenomenon[15] occurs through this, which Bonhoeffer calls a community's objective spirit. Bonhoeffer argued that a community's objective spirit could be treated as a collective person and as a result be given a personal character.[16]

Bonhoeffer puts his sociological work into dialogue with his theological anthropology through the biblical categories of both fallen humanity in Adam and restored humanity in Christ. For Bonhoeffer, humanity in Adam is the collective person representing the will turned in upon itself as community. In other words, a community of individuals that are willing an existence with "self" at its center can be sociologically treated as a collective individual and humanity in Adam is the "will-to-self," a collective person that exists as community. Only the collective person of Christ existing as church and community can supersede the collective person of Adam. Consequently, Bonhoeffer conceptualizes Christ's work as being the second Adam, renewing through his obedience that which Adam destroyed as a consequence of his disobedience. God's community, which is the collective body of Christ, is the collective person emerging by means of a new community, one consisting of renewed individuals in Christ who do the will of God. In *Sanctorum Communio*, Bonhoeffer demonstrates that the church is Christ existing as community because the church community is truly Christ's body. Although Bonhoeffer never treats the sociological presence of the church in the same manner after the completion of *Sanctorum Communio*, Bonhoeffer nevertheless continues to be concerned with Christ's presence in the world through his church. He also never departs from the social understanding of Christ's presence in the world.

Sanctification and Ecclesiology in Life Together and Discipleship

In *Life Together* Bonhoeffer begins to describe the nature of the church and to articulate his ecclesiology by stating what the Christian community is not and cannot be in view of its belonging to Christ. He states that "the Christian cannot simply take for granted the privilege of living among other Christians. Jesus Christ lived in the midst of his enemies. So Christians, too, belong not in the seclusion of a cloistered life but in the midst of enemies. There they find their mission, their work."17 For Bonhoeffer, the Christian church cannot cut itself off from the world around it. Although he saw this as a general principle, it is particularly applicable to his own time and context, particularly since he wrote this work in 1938, which was a period of great distress and temptation for the Confessing Church. Bonhoeffer warns and cautions against either compromising one's Christian identity to the world or isolating oneself from the world so as to not proclaim the Gospel of Christ. For Bonhoeffer, the oneness of the Christian community exists even though it is scattered amongst unbelievers since its oneness rests in the death and resurrection of Christ. In order for a Christian community to be genuine, it must be centered in Jesus Christ. No Christian community can abandon this foundation and remain a

Christian community.[18]

Bonhoeffer then proceeds to explain the implications of this definition of a Christian community. First, this means that a Christian is dependent upon others in the community. Secondly, it means that a Christian comes to others only through Jesus Christ. Additionally, Bonhoeffer asserts that we have been chosen in Jesus Christ from eternity, accepted in time, and united for eternity.[19]

Bonhoeffer then discusses the implications of this view of Christian community for justification and sanctification. Concerning justification, Christians no longer seek their salvation, deliverance, and justification in themselves, but in Jesus Christ alone. Bonhoeffer states that Christians no longer live by their own resources, that is, by accusing themselves and justifying themselves, but rather they trust in God's accusation and God's justification, which is God's Word pronounced upon them. Therefore, the Christian's righteousness *coram Deo* is an alien righteousness.[20]

Bonhoeffer then discusses the relationship between community and sanctification; he emphasizes that these are both gifts from God and not cultivated by man's efforts or work. As a result, only God knows the real condition of both our sanctification and the Christian community; human judgment is often in error. Bonhoeffer contends that what appears weak and insignificant to us may be great and glorious to God. He states, "Just as Christians should not be constantly feeling the pulse of their spiritual life, so too the Christian community has not been given to us by God for us to be continually taking its temperature." Christian community is not an ideal we have to realize but rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate.[21]

From all of these passages in *Life Together*, we observe how vital a Christ-centered community is for Bonhoeffer and that Christians must exist in community for each other for the sake of Christ rather than for the sake of having a community. Sanctification and the church community are inseparable since it is only in the community of the church where true Christian sanctification occurs. Bonhoeffer's conception of the Christian community raises important questions for the 21st century church. In particular, in light of the pandemic, how can the church function as community when its members cannot or choose not to meet together? This necessitates a reimagined idea of community; while obviously in an ideal world the Christian community would meet in person, the church needs to address circumstances that prevent this from happening. Bonhoeffer's idea of the Christian community can be realized in a number of ways, including online gatherings. This is a reality which the church will likely need to contend with even after the pandemic given the prevalence of online resources that are available and the fact that some members may choose to continue to attend online. This obviously presents a number of problems, the most serious problem being the devaluation of the Lord's Supper. Ultimately, the church needs to recognize that it is possible for Christian community to be realized in a number of ways, including through virtual gatherings. However, it also needs to be stressed that it is impossible to experience Christian community to its fullest extent without in-person gatherings, since the Lord's Supper is a vital part of the Christian community.

Now we shall examine Bonhoeffer's conception of sanctification, ecclesiology, and their interaction with each other in his *Discipleship*. In this work, Bonhoeffer frames sanctification in terms of discipleship, that is, in obeying Christ's call to follow Him. However, we should first consider Bonhoeffer's theology of the cross since self-denial and bearing the cross are essential elements of Bonhoeffer's conception of true discipleship.

Bonhoeffer argues that both self-denial, which is not knowing or caring about oneself for the sake of Christ, and bearing the cross are essential elements of discipleship. Concerning Christ's command in Matthew 16:24 that his followers "take up their cross," Bonhoeffer states, "The grace of Jesus is evident in his preparing his disciples for this word by speaking first of self-denial. Only when we have really forgotten ourselves completely, when we really no longer know ourselves, only then are we ready to take up the cross for his sake. When we know only him, then we also no longer know the pain of our own cross."[22]

Bonhoeffer then discusses the meaning of bearing the cross. Unlike some theologians, Bonhoeffer limits the idea of bearing the cross to suffering which comes from our allegiance to Jesus Christ alone; he excludes such things as misfortune, disease, or any other ordinary suffering.[23] Bonhoeffer warns against seeking one's own cross, but rather asserts that God appoints a cross for every disciple. Bonhoeffer then discusses the manner in which bearing the cross applies to the community as well as the individual; since members of the church community are called to bear each other's burdens, it follows that they also bear each other's crosses.[24]

Now we shall examine both the individual and the communal aspects of discipleship in Bonhoeffer's thinking. Understanding both facets of his view of discipleship is vital to a proper understanding of his writing. Concerning Bonhoeffer's view of the relationship between discipleship and the individual, he stresses the necessity of each person to individually follow Christ, and no one can rely upon others to do the works of discipleship on their behalf. He states that Christ's call to discipleship calls each person as a unique and distinct individual.[25] He then argues that any such discipleship entails a radical break from the world and at times from those with whom the disciple was previously acquainted. This must be done in order that following Christ remains of utmost importance.[26]

In closing, sanctification and ecclesiology are dominant themes in

Bonhoeffer's theology. In both *Life Together* and *Discipleship*, sanctification is seen in ecclesiological terms in that sanctification only takes place in the church community faithfully following Christ and being conformed to Him. The sanctification of the individual can only take place in the context of the church, of which the individual is a part and through which he becomes a disciple and follower of Christ. Bonhoeffer's statement that Christian sanctification can only take place in the church community has very important implications. The North American tendency to view Christianity in individualistic ways runs counter to the biblical conception of Christian community as expressed by Bonhoeffer. This is an implication of Bonhoeffer's thought because he asserts that members of the Christian community are dependent upon each other. This means that the Christian cannot function in isolation.

Additionally, the way in which Bonhoeffer discusses sanctification can provide a helpful antidote to concerns which are frequently expressed by Lutherans concerning progressive models of sanctification. Some Lutherans are afraid that talk of the Christian increasing in holiness makes our salvation a synergistic process; Bonhoeffer's idea of sanctification assuages this concern, since in his thought the sanctification of the Christian community is already a completed reality in the death and resurrection of Christ. Now all that is left to do is for Christians to more fully realize this reality in their lives. This allows us to talk about Christian growth without minimizing the completeness of the believer's restoration in Christ. For Bonhoeffer sanctification is not about increasing in degrees of holiness but rather living out one's new identify more fully.

Endnotes

1 Ferdinand Schlingensiepen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer* 1906–1945: *Martyr, Thinker, Man of Resistance,* (New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 1.

2 Schlingensiepen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer,* 18.

3 Schlingensiepen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer,* 19.

4 Schlingensiepen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer,* 125.

5 Schlingensiepen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer,* 126.

6 Schlingensiepen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer,* 202.

7 Schlingensiepen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer,* 203.

8 Schlingensiepen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer,* 205.

9 Schlingensiepen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer,* 206.

10 Joseph McGarry, "Conformed to Christ: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Christian Formation," *Journal of Spiritual Care,* Vol. 5, no. 2, (2012): 226-242, 227.

11 McGarry, "Conformed to Christ," 228.

12 McGarry, "Conformed to Christ," 230.

13 McGarry, "Conformed to Christ," 229.

14 McGary, "Conformed to Christ," 234.

15 An epiphenomenon is a secondary phenomenon which is caused by, and coincides with, the primary phenomenon.

16 McGarry, "Conformed to Christ," 232.

17 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together and Prayerbook of the Bible,* G. L. Müller, A. Schönherr, & G. B. Kelly, Eds., D. W. Bloesch & J. H. Burtness, Trans. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works,* Vol. 5, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 27

18 Bonhoeffer, *Life Together,* 31.

19 Bonhoeffer, *Life Together,* 31.

20 Bonhoeffer, *Life Together,* 31–32.

21 Bonhoeffer, *Life Together,* 38

22 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*. M. Kuske, I. Tödt, G. B. Kelly, & J. D. Godsey, Eds., B. Green & R. Krauss, Trans. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works,* Vol. 4. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 86.

23 Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship,* 86-87.

24 Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship,* 88.

25 Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship,* 92.

26 Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship,* 93–94.

Poetry

Hayden August Brown is a second-year MDiv student from Morton, IL. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in theological languages from Concordia University Chicago in 2019. He is currently preparing for his wedding in June and his upcoming vicarage year.

A Christ Poem

Hayden Brown

Down! Down! Down to earth!
That serpent, serpent on the tree
This Godman comes in human birth
This cursed curse He embodies

The flood-tide roars beneath the dove
His blood is wine; His body bread
Those bitter tears from Heav'n above
In, wíth, under, lift up the dead

The giant, lo! So high he stands!
No lion speaks, no word he'll say
Your song won't fell; these young
   man's hands
'Twixt angel hands their lyres play

For forty years this forti'th night
A fig tree withers here alone
No hope, no fear, our endless plight
Builders reject the cornerstone

Sin kills, corrupts! It poisons through
It's grace—yes grace—by grace
   You save
The Apple core, the morning dew
No vict'ry mine but death, the grave

But vict'ry mine, this sinful slave
Like bread from Heav'n, what I to you?
Yes, vict'ry won, Your life You gave
These jars of clay Breath doth renew

A faith moves mountains
   tall and grown
His two-edged sword,
   His wond'rous might
God says, "My ways are not your own"
Our champi'n champions our fight

O elder Judge so judged that day
Must smooth, sleek stone
   between the bands
No harm will come, I AM his stay
To God be praise! These are His lands!

Both at once, a miracle said
Wipe clean! Wash clean,
   my soul thereof
This Sunday morn, God's people fed
These wicked sins to drown in love

A serpent not, no serpent He
No, farther still! To hell 'neath Earth!
Became a curse as cursed me
Then up to right in Easter mirth!

ויאמר אלהים

Christian Dollar

What words were they,
  in the beginning?
Before adjective, detail, or description?
Spoke into being: "Be into being."
For Whom and by Whom all

What words were they,
  in the beginning?
Chants of Sabaoth!
"Fire—Earthquake—Whirlwind!"
Dead Leviathan!
The wind, the waters,
  the chaos—pacified.

What words were they,
  in the beginning?
Whispers of Lovers—given to
  Each-Other?
Anselm's Trinity,
Moans of Ecstasy!
Conceived and birthed and wet.

What words were they,
  in the beginning?
Muttered under breath?
The careful Inventor winding
  the clock,
and writing instructions
for those coming after.

What words were they,
  in the beginning?
Wish for the future?
The hope for here-after
A prayer now answered!
No longer alone: now loved by another.

What words were they,
  in the beginning?
An unconscious groan—
half thought of in a dream?
Hurled out like a sneeze!
The Breath of the Lord not
  returning empty.

What words were they,
  in the beginning?
No cry did he make—
Cracking and half mature—
A hoarse parable—
Seven Words—A Cry!
The wail of a Child.

Behind the Mask of God

Cody MacMillan

Utter pest of cotton robes
Wet with passing *ruah*
Covered breath and muffled tone
To try the mask of God

‘neath the eyes and covered nose
Held loosely ‘hind his ears
Cheeks beset and markets closed
To every name but Fear

Now every heart take courage
To ponder each its steps
Lest he turn from narrow door
To wicked right or left

Muzzled sheep to wander lost
And dash among the fields,
‘til at once the Shepherd calls
As Master for a meal

Table prepped and oil runs
Like rivers raging bold
Fable now the Lamb to come
Who liberates the Scroll

Amen say the falling four
To glory Power’s might
Letting saints in hallowed doors
And tongues of every tribe.

Back from Death in snowy robes
To raise their holy *ruah*
Gathered breath and blessed tone
Behind the mask of God

Expense for Just Their Kind

Cody MacMillan

Mocking God with gluttoned tongue
Pompous powers seek the Sun
Godlike wonders run amok
Their towers rake the earth

Tribes of weak and mighty men
Rise and climb to high ascent
Hide their crime by Heaven's pen
To ground their bases firm

Children stolen, bought, and sold,
Sail in Babel's darkened boats
Cold and crammed with broken souls
On transatlantic tomb

Worked and beaten by the whip
Hearsed and hearing Holy Writ
Burning skin with chattel script
Salt-planted, rancid wounds

Grace is cheap for wretched fiends,
Fetching Fate with damning deeds
Catching Judgement fast asleep
To set for Love a price

Serpent's breath to catch their heels
Heaven's dev'lish rebels wheel
Wretched, shameful, snakish deals,
Expense for just their kind