



Centre for
**Christian
Living**

HOW TO FIND YOUR BEST SELF



Wednesday 8 March 2017



PART 1

WHO AM I TO JESUS CHRIST?

David Höhne

1. Introduction

a. The selfie generation

b. The Modern and Romantic selves

i. The thinking self

Descartes' "I think therefore I am"

ii. The choosing self

Kierkegaard

iii. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's contribution

A necessarily short account of a tragically short life

2. Bonhoeffer's diagnosis for the modern self

a. The truth about God and the world

b. Bonhoeffer's critique of the Modern Romantic selves

c. *The cor curvum in se—the “heart turned in on itself”*

3. Bonhoeffer’s critical self-examination

a. *Who are you?*

i. Christ the “counter reason”—*gegenlogos*

Who are you then that you so ask? Are you in the Truth that you so ask? Who are you, you who can only ask about me because through me you are justified, the divinely gifted?¹

b. *Being placed in the truth*

i. Christ as the centre—“for me, in my place, where I should stand.”²

He stands at the boundary of my existence and still in my place. That is an expression for the fact that I am separated from the I that I should be by an inexcusable boundary. The boundary lies between my old and new I, thus in the centre between me and me. As the boundary Christ is at the same time my recovered centre.³

¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Berlin 1932-1933*, ed. Larry Rasmussen, trans. Isabel Best and David Higgins, vol. 12, *DBWE* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 305.

² *Ibid.* 324.

³ *Ibid.* See also Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, trans. Reinhard et. al. Krauss, vol. 6, *DBWE* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 83.

ii. Exposing closedness

iii. Christ as *pro me* (for me)

An ultimate thing, a touching of no human being, doing or suffering. The dark human life, barred from inside and outside, always deep in an abyss and hopelessness, losing itself in the pit, is torn open with power, the word of God breaks in; the human recognizes God and the neighbor for the first time in redeeming light.⁴

iv. The final enemy of the self is the grace of God

Christ as the perfect human is the barrier between me and God.

[At the cross] human glory comes to its ultimate end in the image of the battered, bleeding, spat-upon crucified one.⁵

v. The self is a gift of God in Christ

Christ as God for me is the promise of my self, kept in trust with God.

Christian life means being human in the power of Christ's becoming human, being judged and pardoned in the power of the cross, living a new life in the power of the resurrection.⁶

⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 146.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 159.

PART 2

WHERE DO I ENCOUNTER MY BEST SELF?

Tony Payne

1. Who is the new me?

a. *Christ the man-for-others reveals God to me ...*

b. *... and reveals myself to me*

2. Where do we encounter Christ?

a. *In Christian community, we meet the Word from outside*

Christians encounter both death and life only in the Word that comes to them from the outside, in God's Word to them ... It can only come from the outside. In themselves they are destitute and dead. Help must come from the outside; and it has come and comes daily and anew in the Word of Jesus Christ, bringing us redemption, righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.

But God put this Word into the mouth of human beings so that it may be passed on to others. When people are deeply affected by the Word, they tell it to other people. God has willed that we should seek and find God's living Word in the testimony of other Christians, in the mouths of human beings. Therefore, Christians need other Christians who speak God's Word to them. They need them again and again when they become uncertain and disheartened because, living by their own resources, they cannot help themselves without cheating themselves out of the truth. They need other Christians as bearers and proclaimers of the divine word of salvation.¹

¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together; Prayerbook of the Bible*, trans. Daniel W. Bloesch and James H. Burtness, vol. 5, *DBWE* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 32.

b. What does Bonhoeffer mean by ‘community’?

Christian community means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. There is no Christian community that is more than this, and none that is less than this. Whether it be a brief, single encounter or the daily community of many years, Christian community is solely this. We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ.²

c. In Christian community, we are set free to love others through Christ

Only Christ in his Word tells me what love is. Contrary to all my own opinions and convictions, Jesus Christ will tell me what love for my brothers and sisters really looks like. Therefore, spiritual love is bound to the word of Jesus Christ alone ...

Spiritual love recognizes the true image of the other person as seen from the perspective of Jesus Christ. It is the image Jesus Christ has formed and wants to form in all people.

Therefore, spiritual love will prove successful insofar as it commends Christ to the other in all that it says and does. It will not seek to agitate another by exerting all too personal, direct influence or by crudely interfering in one’s life. It will not take pleasure in pious, emotional fervor and excitement. Rather, it will encounter the other with the clear word of God and be prepared to leave the other alone with this word for a long time ... This spiritual love will thus speak to Christ about the other Christian more than to the other Christian about Christ.³

² Ibid., 31.

³ Ibid., 44.

3. From personal aspiration to being Christ for others

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery ...

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love ...

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Gal 5:1, 6, 13-14)

4. Implications and applications

Works referenced

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Ethics*. Translated by Reinhard et. al. Krauss. Vol. 6. *DBWE*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.

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The Psalms in the Christian life (Andrew Shead)

Wednesday 30 August, St Cuthbert's

Naremburn Anglican Church

Honour and shame (Dan Wu)

Wednesday 25 October, Moore Theological College

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