INTRODUCTION

Clifford Green comments, "Ethics is unique in being the only ethic written by a Lutheran theologian while engaged in a conspiracy to topple a tyrant." [1] It is fascinating how in Green’s opinion that Bonhoeffer did not abandon his peace ethics after all, even though he attempted tyrannicide. [2]

Richard Hays thinks otherwise, "Is it ever God’s will for Christians to employ violence in defense of justice? The New Testament contains important texts that seem to suggest that this question must be answered in the negative…An often-cited example is Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s agonized decision to participate in a plot to kill Hitler." [3]

This study does not intend to present the arguments for and against tyrannicide, but rather it is an attempt to view Bonhoeffer’s Tyrannicide Ethics and its Vicarious Representative Action (Stellvertretung) through the lenses of ‘Revelation’, ‘Reconciliation’, and ‘Reality.’ [4]
The material for the themes ‘Revelation’, ‘Reconciliation’, and ‘Reality’ will be mainly taken from *Ethics* and supplemented by other Bonhoeffer writings. Subtopics within each concept will be developed such that one leads to another that from the very first premise of ‘Revelation’ to the last statement in ‘Reality’, one could hopefully see the flow of the logic that forms the theological basis for Bonhoeffer’s *Tyrannicide Ethics*, and his tyrannicide in reality. [5]
Revelation is manifested to human beings and is knowable

Taking the position that revelation is nonobjective, it follows that God always remains subject and will always evade humanity’s cognition. Revelation must somehow be manifested to human beings and be knowable to them. Also, God’s revelation is also knowable in Christ. Since God is the subject of the cognition of revelation, revelation can be understood with God as the subject. This cognition of revelation is called ‘believing’, and what is revealed is Jesus Christ, and he subject of understanding is God as Holy Spirit. God is in revelation only in the act of understanding oneself. [7]

God’s being in the revelation

Revelation, which places the I into truth, which gives understanding of God and the self, is a contingent event that is to be affirmed or denied only in its positivity received as reality. Revelation is an event that has its basis in the freedom of God, positively as the self-giving or, negatively, as the self-withholding of God. [8]

Revelation is God’s reality revealed in Christ

The revelation of Christ becomes real among God’s creatures, and this reality is God’s revelatory word. [9] Revelation is both the beginning and the completion, and revelation enters into time not just apparently but actually. The revelation of God is God’s word became history. [10]
God’s reality revealed in Christ becoming real

Instead of asking “How can I be good? And “How can I do good?”, we should ask “What is the will of God? God is the ultimate reality, and he is present everywhere. The ultimate reality is the revelation in Christ becoming real among God’s creatures. Since it is the ultimate reality, the decision about life as a whole depends on our relation to God’s revelation.

The ultimate or final reality is also the first reality which is God as the first and last – the Alpha and Omega. The goodness of God is the first question we may ask if we want to probe the meaning of the goodness of human being and the world. The answer to the question of good can be found only in Christ. Since God’s word has been revealed, we can live no other way than from the true reality of the word of God. God’s reality revealed in Christ becoming real among God’s creatures is what matters.

Good is reality and is participating in God’s reality revealed in Christ

The question of good becomes the question of participating in God’s reality revealed in Christ. Good is not setting arbitrary determination along the lines of an ethic of motives or an ethic of consequences, but good is reality, which is seen and recognized in God. Good is the real itself, that is, the real that has its reality only in God. The person is good means that the person and the work together are good since the good desires the whole of motives and works. Creation is the indivisible whole according to its origin. To participate in the indivisible whole of God’s reality is the meaning of the Christian question about the good.
The revelation is the present proclamation of Christ in the church

It is the proclamation of Christ's death and resurrection within and for the community of faith. It is also the manner which the contingent character of revelation makes itself known ‘from outside.’ It follows that the revelation for those in the church, is not interpreted as ‘having happened’, but is present, and is qualified as future for the church is the present Christ. In the proclamation of the community of faith for the community of faith, Christ is the corporate person of the community of faith. For this reason, the idea of the church is conceived in personal term – God reveals the divine self in the church as person. [11]

Summary of Revelation

The knowledge of revelation is prior to faith, and revelation, which is God's word, is manifested to us which is knowable and can be understood with God as the subject. God is free to reveal, the revelation of Christ becomes real among us, and we cannot live in a way other than from the true reality of Christ. The revelation is the proclamation of the death and resurrection of Christ for us and within our community. Christ as the corporate person for our community of faith, is revealed personally to us as present, and is also as future for the church. The ultimate reality is the revelation of Christ becoming real among us.

Discerning the will of God, and taking into consideration the ultimate reality helps us to make decisions in life which are dependent on our relation to the revelation of God. Before we ponder what is goodness in our own terms and the world, the question of the goodness of God must be asked first. Good is reality, and is participating in the indivisible whole of the reality of God as revealed in Christ.
The reconciliation of the God who became human in Jesus Christ

The centrality of Christ is the core of Bonhoeffer’s ethic of one reality constituted by the reconciliation of the God who became human in Jesus Christ. The reconciliation of God and humanity wrought by God’s becoming human in Jesus Christ is Bonhoeffer’s premise, his methodological starting point, and functions as an axiom in *Ethics*. The Christian is not a person of eternal conflict. [12]

We are reconciled not only by Christ, but in Christ (Eph. 1:4). If we believe that in Christ we are reconciled with God, then the mediator of this reconciliation must represent not only the reconciling divine love, but also at the same time the humanity that is to be reconciled, the humanity of the new Adam. In order for the church, which already is completed in Christ, to build itself up in time, the will of God must be actualized ever anew, now no longer in a fundamental way for all people, but in the personal appropriation of the individual. For faith, the reconciliation and justification of the world are established in reality in the revelation in Christ, though faith is possible only within the actualized church. [13]

God has reconciled the world to Himself in Christ in the church
A church is a community of like minded Christians. The inter-relationship between God, man and church is best understood in the concept of I-You. One has to go back to Act and Being which points towards the Other, and is also central to understanding the nature of Bonhoeffer’s shift towards a new paradigm for theological method. [14]

The reconciliation is an ontological reality

The reconciliation of God and world, God and humanity, is in Jesus Christ an ontological reality, and at the same time the reconciliation of God and the world is a reality by which human beings are transformed or con-formed to this reconciliation, and it thereby forms them. [15]

The love of God for the world does not withdraw from reality into noble souls detached from the world, but experiences and suffers the reality of the world at its worst. The God-man Jesus Christ, the reconciler, steps into the middle between God and the world, into the center of all that happens. There is no longer any reality, any, world, that is not reconciled with God and at peace. [16]

God establishes a most intimate unity with his unfathomable love, the unfathomable mystery of the love of God for the world by becoming human – a real human being, and that God wills that we be human, real human beings also. [17]
What matters is participating in the reality of God and the world in Jesus Christ

The reality of God and the reality of the world meet in Jesus Christ. We cannot speak of reality while ignoring Jesus Christ. In Christ, we are invited to participate in the reality of God and the reality of the world at the same time, and the two go hand in hand. There is no real Christian existence outside the reality of the world and no real worldliness outside the reality of Jesus Christ. Like all of creation, the world has been created through Christ and toward Christ and has its existence only in Christ (John 1:10; Col.1:16).

Worldliness does not separate one from Christ, and being Christian does not separate one from the world. God and the world reconciled in Christ. Still, that which is Christian is not identical with the worldly.

The church is the space claimed by God’s revelation in Jesus Christ

God’s revelation in Jesus Christ claims space in the world that God embraces the whole reality of the world in this narrow space called church in which its ultimate foundation is revealed. The church is the place where it is proclaimed and taken seriously that God has reconciled the world to Himself in Christ. The space of church is to testify to the world that it is still the world – the world that is loved and reconciled by God.
The world is not divided between Christ and the devil; it is completely the world of Christ since even the devil, albeit, unwillingly, must serve Christ, and, willing evil, must ever again do good, since God has reconciled the whole world with himself in Christ.

The church can only defend its own space for the salvation of the world – to be witnesses of Jesus Christ to the world. The divine mandate of the church is the commission of allowing the reality of Jesus Christ to become real in proclamation, church order, and Christian life – in short, its concern is the eternal salvation of the whole world. When that witness has become silent, is a sign of inner decay in the church-community.

**The church-community’s relation to the world**

It is completely determined by God’s relation to the world. Even though the world struggles with the church-community, it is the task and the essence of the church-community to proclaim to this world its reconciliation with God that even the lost and condemned world is being drawn ceaselessly into the event of Christ.

There is no part of the world, no matter how lost, no matter how godless, that has not been accepted by God in Jesus Christ and reconciled to God. The only difference between the church-community and the world is that the former believes in the reality of being accepted by God – a reality that belongs to the whole world.
Christ has died for the world, and Christ is Christ only in the midst of the world. It is nothing, but unbelief to give the world less than Christ if one takes seriously the incarnation, the crucifixion, and the bodily resurrection of Christ.

**Summary of Reconciliation**

The reconciliation of God and humanity takes central stage. We are reconciled with God who became human in Jesus Christ, and who mediates between divine love and humanity. God has reconciled the world to Himself in Christ in the church, in which the reconciliation of God and world, God and humanity is an ontological reality in Christ. The love of God is manifested as the God-man Jesus Christ, the reconciler, suffers the reality of the world stepping into the middle between God and the world so that the reality of God and the reality of the world meet in Jesus Christ. In order to build up the church, the will of God must be carried out. We must participate in the reality of God and the reality of the world at the same time, even though we are still distinct from the world.

The church is the place or a space claimed by the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and the church is mandated to testify the reconciliation between the God and world as reality to the world including the lost and the condemned, and be concerned with the salvation of the whole world. Even though God has accepted and reconciled with the whole world no matter how godless it is, only the church believes in this reality, but the church still has to give the world nothing less than Christ.
The church mandate is supreme among divine mandates

The relationship of the world to Christ is manifested in the four divine mandates: work, marriage, government, and church, and the practice of the Christian life can be learnt only under these four mandates of God. By establishing justice, and by the power of the sword, government preserves the world for the reality of Jesus Christ. Everyone owes obedience to this government – according to the will of Christ. While the government mandates presupposes the work and marriage mandates, the church mandate reaches into all the other mandates.

The witness of the church to the world is in full response to the whole mandates, and this claim can the human person fulfil this reality. The witness of the church is to deal with the mandates as whole people before God the Creator, Reconciler, and Redeemer – the reality in Jesus Christ.

The mandate of the church to allow the reality of Jesus Christ to become real

The church is God’s new will and purpose for humanity. God’s will is always directed toward the concrete, historical human being. Revelation of God’s will is necessary because the primal community, where God speaks and the word become deed and history through human beings, is broken. Thus, the church is already completed in Christ, just as in Christ its beginning is established. [18]
In Jesus Christ God creates a new humanity; it is a reality, not merely a potentiality. It is an ontological reality in Christ; it becomes a social and historical reality in the church-community by the action of the Holy Spirit. This reconciliation functions as an axiom in the Ethics. [19]

The church confesses that it has misused the name of Christ by being ashamed of it before the world and by not resisting strongly enough the misuse of that name for evil ends. The church confesses that it has witnessed the arbitrary use of brutal force, the suffering in body and soul of countless innocent people, that it has witnessed oppression, hatred, and murder without raising its voice for the victims and without finding ways to help them. It has not so proclaimed the righteousness of God that all human justice must see there its own source and essence. By falling silent the church became guilty for the loss of responsible action in society, courageous intervention, and the readiness to suffer for what is acknowledged as right. It is guilty of the government’s falling away from Christ. [20]

The will of God is the realization of the Christ-reality among us and in our world

The will of God is already a reality in the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The will of God has already been fulfilled by God, in reconciling the world to himself in Christ. The question of the will of God is not asking about something hidden or unfulfilled, but about what has been revealed and fulfilled. The will of God, as it was revealed and fulfilled in Jesus Christ, embraces the whole of reality. Faith in this Jesus Christ is the single source of all good.

Partaking in the reality of the fulfilled will of God

Ethics can be concerned with only one thing, which is to partake in the reality of the fulfilled will
of God. Bonhoeffer’s ethics never rested on principles. An ethic of disposition or intention is just as superficial as an ethic of consequences.

Individual’s responsibilities

Before the issue of partaking in the reality of the fulfilled will of God can be dealt with, one must try to understand Bonhoeffer’s view of individuals’ responsibilities for their communities (e.g., their nation) in vicarious representative action, and in order to do that, one need to reach back from *Ethics* to *Sanctorum Communio* since in the latter, it describes the concept of person (individual and corporate) in ethical terms set within a theology of sociality which is fundamental to all Bonhoeffer’s writings including *Ethics*.  

Absoluteness of ethical demand

Bonhoeffer says according to the Stoic school, “*The human being becomes a person by subordination to a higher imperative.*”  

Bonhoeffer emphasizes the absoluteness of the ethical demand as related to the person who is confronted with in related to it. The person enters a state of responsibility or of decision in the ‘moment’ which is the time of responsibility, or concrete time, or time related to God. It follows that, the real claim of ethics is effective only in concrete time. The person exists always and only in ethical responsibility.
Bonhoeffer alleges that those in their own freedom who value the necessary action more highly than their own un tarnished conscience and reputation, who are prepared to sacrifice a barren principle to a fruitful compromise or a barren wisdom of the middle way to a fruitful radicalism, should take heed lest precisely their presumed freedom ultimately cause them to fall. Only at the cost of self-deception can they keep their private blamelessness clean from the stains of responsible action in the world. Those in their simple wisdom keep in sight only the single truth of God.

They belong to God and to God's will alone, clinging to the commandments, the judgment, and the mercy of God, not fettered by principles but bound by love for God, and they are wise who see reality in God since they see the essence of things. Wisdom is recognizing the significant within the factual. Principles are only tools in the hands of God; they will soon be thrown away when they are no longer useful. [25]

Dealing effectively with evil

The man who can combine simplicity with wisdom is the one who is able to deal effectively with evil today. Since true reality is only in God, to combine simplicity with wisdom is to look in freedom at God and at reality and this reality lies in Jesus Christ – the Reconciler of the world. To live lives of simple wisdom, we have to behold the God-Man Jesus Christ. [26]
Vicarious representative action

The idolization of humanity

Is the heights of all wisdom among all people. Anxiety, greed, lack of independence, and brutality are the common characteristics of the overwhelming majority of people that the tyrannical despiser of humanity can take advantage of these base human nature by calling them honorable names such as responsibility instead of anxiety, industriousness in place of greed; solidarity instead of lack of independence, and masterfulness covers up brutality.

Not only that, the despiser despises what God has loved, despises the very form of God become human. With forced tolerance, evil is reinterpreted as good, meanness is overlooked, and the reprehensible is excused. The average person shies away from no, and agrees to the base human nature. One ends up despising the real human being whom God has loved and whose being God has taken on. [27]

God became human

Only because God became human is it possible to know and not despise real human beings. God’s love for human beings resides only in God. Our living as real human beings, and loving the real people next to us is grounded only in God’s becoming human, in the unfathomable love of God for us human beings. [28]
Executing God's judgment on God

Only by executing God's judgment on God can peace grow between God and the world, between people. The secret of this judgment is the love of God for the world, for human beings. To be taken up by God, to be judged and reconciled by God on the cross – that is the reality of humanity. Only in judgment is there reconciliation with God and among human beings. God judges people because of his sheer love for us that God wants us to be able to stand before God. [29]

As judged in the cross of Christ

Only in the cross of Christ, and that means as judged, does humanity take on its true form. The human being, accepted by God, judged by God, awakened by God to a new life. The miracle of Christ's resurrection has overturned the idolization of death that rules among us. One doesn't cling anxiously to life, but neither does one throw it lightly away. One is content with measured time and does not attribute eternity to earthly things. Within the risen Christ the new humanity is borne, the final, sovereign Yes of God to the new human being. The human being, accepted, judged, and awakened to new life by God-this is Jesus Christ, this is the whole of humanity in Christ, this is us. [30]

The form that has overcome the world
The form of Jesus Christ alone victoriously encounters the world. From this form proceeds all the formation of a world reconciled with God. In all formation it is concerned only with the one form that has overcome the world, the form of Jesus Christ. As the form of Jesus Christ himself so works on us that it molds us, conforming our form to Christ’s own (Gal.4:9). Christ forms human beings to a form the same as Christ’s own. To be conformed to the one who has become human—that is what being really human means. The form of Jesus Christ takes form in human beings. They do not take on their own self-determined forms. [31]

Clearly recognized good and evil, and responsibility

Neither an isolated individual who could recognize these, nor is there an absolute criterion exist, nor do good and evil present themselves to us in a pure form. No one can withdraw from human community, and actually, everyone is dependent on everyone else. It follows that human beings necessarily encounter other human beings, and as a result, we are charged with responsibility for the other human beings. The moment one recognizes this, the person lives in reality. The choice, therefore, is no longer recognizing between good and evil, instead it is risked in faith while being aware that good and evil are in the background of concrete historical situation. [32]

Acting in freedom, and in reality

To act out of concrete responsibility means to act in freedom since responsibility presupposes ultimate freedom in assessing a situation before choosing and acting. Responsible action is neither determined from the outset nor defined one and for all; instead, it is born in the given situation taking the situational context into account. This kind of action of the responsible person is most profoundly in accord with reality. Only God’s becoming human, human beings and the world are accepted and affirmed; only God’s becoming human makes possible an action that is genuinely in accord with reality. [33]
The limit of acting responsibly

Acting responsibly, and by grounding responsible action in Jesus Christ, the precise limit of such an action is affirmed. Responsibility is limited in its scope and in its character within the boundary of reality. Action has to proceed in a step-by-step fashion by asking what is possible, and by entrusting the ultimate step to the hand of God within the human domain since God became human, and the responsible action must completely surrender to God both the judgment and its consequence. Ultimate ignorance of one's own goodness or evil, together with dependence upon grace, is an essential characteristic of responsible historical action.

Good in history

Neither the ideological good nor the purity of subjective intention nor even the freedom of responsible action as such is able to fulfill the reality of the good in history since only God makes human action in history good. God incorporates our action into his own hidden plan that pursues the goal of history as it has been revealed in Christ. Thus, what is good in history is God's action alone, and God uses both good and evil to achieve the divine purpose in which, from our standpoint, 'good' might cause harm and the 'evil' might bring good. Judas must act evil in order that the world could reconcile with God. In God's own good, human good and evil are thus overcome.

Distinction between good and evil, and accord with reality

Human being cannot justify themselves by doing good since it is God alone who does the
good. The power of the divine guidance of history leaves human beings dependent on God’s grace. Jesus Christ is the only source of knowledge about the nature and law of history as it is conceived and intended by God. Good is action in accordance with the reality of Jesus Christ, and action in accordance with Christ is action in accord with reality. Action in accord with Christ originate in the very person of Jesus Christ since everything real is summed up in Christ, who is the origin of any and all action that is in accord with reality. [36]

Jesus Christ and vicarious representative action

His entire life, action, and suffering is vicarious representative action, and all human responsibility is rooted in the real vicarious representative action of Jesus Christ on behalf of all human beings. Responsible action is vicarious representative action. The responsibility of Jesus Christ for all human beings has love as its content and freedom as its form. The love that is directed toward real human beings cannot be regulated by any law but takes place in the freedom of personal dedication. Recognizing Jesus Christ as God’s love for the real world with its real history, is conferred the freedom to act responsibly toward the world and within history since Jesus is only concerned exclusively with God’s love for human beings. [37]

Guilt and vicarious representative action

Because Jesus took the guilt of all human beings upon himself, everyone who acts responsibly becomes guilty. Human responsible action participates indirectly in the action of Jesus Christ, but it does in contrast to any self-righteous action based on abstract principles. What we have here is something like a relative sinlessness, which is demonstrated by responsibly taking on another’s guilt. The question of good has to do with claim of the one who fulfills the claim of Jesus Christ, the one in whom God became human, upon history. [38]
Divine commandment for our action

Blessed are they who already stand at the end of the path on which we wish to embark and perceive with amazement what really seems conceivable. Blessed are those who recognize grace is costly. Blessed are those who follow Jesus Christ, who are overcome by this grace. Blessed are those who are in the knowledge of such grace, can live in the world without losing themselves in it. Blessed are those who follow Jesus Christ means living from grace. [39]

The Sermon on the Mount, understood this way, is the law of all actions, contains sayings of Jesus and the interpretation of his existence the reality in which history finds its fulfillment in God’s becoming human, in the reconciliation of the world with God. They are the divine commandments for our action in history that has been fulfilled in Christ. [40]

Unity and love in vicarious representative action

It exists solely in the person of Jesus Christ, in whom God became human, acting in vicarious representative responsibility and entering out of love for the real human being into the guilt of the world. The Sermon on the Mount confronts those who are compelled to act within history with the event of the reconciliation of the world with God in Jesus Christ, thus placing them into genuine Christian responsibility, and this genuine Christian responsibility encompasses all activity within the world. Love is the reality of being drawn and drawing others into God’s community with the world, which has already been accomplished in Jesus Christ. The Sermon on the Mount as the proclamation of the incarnate love of God calls people to love one another, and thus rejecting everything that hinders fulfilling this task, and it also confronts a person with the necessity of responsible historical action. It regards us as responsible for others and knows nothing of persons as isolated individuals, and it calls individuals to love, whose source is the love of God, towards others that encompasses all of reality. Only when the becoming human of God’s love is taken seriously can it be understood that God’s love for the world also includes
political action, and that the worldly form of Christian love is therefore able to take the form of a person fighting for self-assertion, power, success, and security, and political action means taking on responsibility. [41]

Summary of Reality

The church mandate is the most important divine relationship between the world and Christ. The church witnesses to the world through us in full response to the whole mandates of work, marriage, government and church bearing in mind Jesus Christ the Creator, Reconciler, and Redeemer is the reality. The mandate of the church is to allow the reality of Jesus Christ to become real. God’s will is always directed to human beings historically, and the revelation of God’s will is necessary to restore the broken link between God and the first community. In Christ, the beginning of the church is established. The church is God’s new will and purpose for humanity. A new humanity is created in Jesus Christ. However, the church (the German Reich Church) became ashamed of the name of Christ, and did not resist the misuse of that name for evil purposes. The church, thus, became guilty by keeping silent and was responsible for the government’s falling away from Christ.

Since the will of God as revealed in Christ, as reconciliation between and world and Himself in Christ, is already a reality, the will of God, therefore, embraces the whole of reality, and faith in Jesus Christ is the single source of all good.

Partaking in the reality of the fulfilled will of God is paramount. Principle is no obstacle for ethical action which is the individual’s responsibility for their communities or nation in vicarious representative action. The person exists always and only in ethical responsibility, and those in their simple wisdom keep only the single truth of God in sight. Those in their simple wisdom,
beholding the God-Man Jesus Christ, are able to deal effectively with evil. Such persons belong to God and to His will alone. They are bound by love for God, and they see the reality in God.

Tyrants despise base human nature and take advantage of their anxiety, greed, lack of independence, and brutality. Tyrants despise Jesus Christ. Without grounding our love in God, it is not possible to love the person next to us. Only by executing God’s judgment on God is peace able to grow between God and the world, and between people. Judgment is necessary for reconciliation between God and human beings, and we are judged in the cross of Christ because of God’s sheer love. The new humanity is born within the risen Christ who accepted, judged human beings, and we in turn are awakened to new life.

The new form, the form of Jesus Christ, has overcome the world, and from this form proceeds all the formation of a world reconciled with God. We are conformed to the form of Jesus Christ. Humans are truly humans when we conform to the one who has become human.

Good or evil do not present to us in a pure form. We are responsible (responsibility is not determined from the outset nor rigidly defined for life, rather it is contextual) for others, and instead of recognizing between good and evil, we should risk in faith, act in freedom, and this kind of action is most profound. It is in accord with reality. The limit of acting responsibly is affirmed in Jesus Christ. The action is entrusted in the hand of God, and the responsible action surrendered to God in judgment and in consequence. Ultimately one can ignore one’s own goodness or evil while depending on grace, acting out a responsible historical action.
Only God makes history and He incorporates our action into his own hidden plan towards the fulfillment of his goal in history which has been revealed in Christ. God uses both good and evil for his purpose. Even Judas’ betrayal was for the ultimate good. Since it is God alone who does good that we cannot justify ourselves by doing good. We are always dependent on the grace of God under his divine guidance. Action in accordance with Jesus Christ is action in reality since Christ is the origin of all actions that are in accord with reality.

Historically, Jesus Christ suffered for us vicariously, and therefore, all human responsibility has its base in the real vicarious representative action of Jesus Christ on behalf of us. Love and freedom are the content and form of Jesus Christ’s responsibility for all human beings. Responsible action is vicarious representative action. Recognizing God’s love in Jesus Christ, we are free to act responsibly toward the world.

Jesus Christ took the guilt upon himself vicariously. Our responsible action participates indirectly in the action of Jesus Christ taking on relative sinlessness. Good has to do with the one who fulfills the claim of Jesus Christ. The sayings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount are the divine commandments for our action in history that has been fulfilled in Christ.
The Sermon on the Mount calls us who recognize costly grace to follow Jesus - a divine command. We can live in the world without losing ourselves in it. Whoever lives from grace and who follow Jesus Christ are blessed. The Sermon on the Mount interprets the existence of Jesus as reality in that God and the world have been reconciled.

Unity and love exist solely in Jesus Christ, God who became human, and who acted vicariously in love for human beings into the guilt of the world. The Sermon on the Mount challenges those who are compelled to act within history in the reconciliation of God and the world in Jesus Christ, and this genuine responsibility encompasses all activity in the world.

Love which has been accomplished in Jesus Christ, is the reality that draws others or being drawn into the church. The Sermon on the Mount, a proclamation of the incarnate God’s love, calls people to love each other, in which anything that comes in the way is rejected. The source of our responsibility for others is the love of God that encompasses all of reality. Love understood this way calls for as one of the options political action that the worldly form of Christian love transform a person who will fight assertively, for power, success and security. Political action means taking on responsibility.
SYNTHESIS

Having gone through the journey of ‘uncovering’ Bonhoeffer’s thoughts from Revelation, Reconciliation to Reality, we have reached the point where we should reflect on the milestones along the way to appreciate how fascinating this journey has been. Then we will turn to the Bonhoeffer experts to see what do they have to say on his thoughts.

Bonhoeffer reminds us right from the very beginning that we should find out what the will of God is, rather than finding out what and how we can do good. Immediately, we are faced with the fact that God freely reveals to us the revelation of Christ becomes real among us. It becomes real in the church. The church is where the reality of God is manifested, and the church is where the reconciliation between God and man in Christ, and God and the world take place. The German Reich Church failed miserably, and was responsible for the German government’s drifting away from Christ.

Taking part in the reality of God to fulfil the will of God is an individual responsibility. The individual, who recognizes costly grace, who follows Jesus, who is responsible for others, beholds faith in Jesus Christ which is the sole source of all good, and keeps the single truth of God in sight, is able to deal effectively with evil, can risk in faith, and act in freedom which is in accord with reality.

Acting in the love of God, entrusted to God, surrendered to God and in his grace, the individual can base all human responsibility on real vicarious representative action since Christ already suffered for us vicariously. Political action as a consequence of taking vicarious representative action acting responsibly as called for by God's love allows an individual to fight assertively, for power, success, and security. Ultimately it is God himself who makes history, and who alone
does good.

Findings of Bonhoeffer experts

Godsey simplifies the three periods of Bonhoeffer’s theological development as centred on *Jesus Christ as the revelational reality of the church* in the first period, *Jesus Christ as the Lord over the church* in the second period, and *Jesus Christ as the Lord over the world* in the last or third period. The Christocentric concept of reality that Bonhoeffer developed in the *Ethics* best sums up the motif of the third period, and this ultimate reality is reality in Jesus Christ. In Christ, the reality of God and the reality of the world come together.

Clifford Green comments that Bonhoeffer’s Christian peace ethic is intrinsic to whole theology which cannot be separated from his Christology, and his understanding of the church amongst other things. His Christian peace ethic is defined by his heavy commitment of faith in Christ. [42]

Lisa Dahill talks about discernment that Bonhoeffer does not focus only on the “cost” of discipleship, his whole life was a stoic journey toward martyrdom. An imagery of polyphony allows one to understand Bonhoeffer’s legacy how attentive listening takes place in Christian life, and the soaring beauty of a life firmly anchored in *cantus firmus* even in life’s grave threat. [43]
Bernd Wannenwetsch explains what is responsible living is to respond to life at the very place where one finds oneself placed. Concrete responsibility is never lose sight of the whole, and every answer to life must be given in reference to Christ. Living a responsible life will eventually lead to the doctrine of justification. [45]

John Wilcken is convinced that Christ, church, and world are the three central ideas of his mature theology. The church is consisted of human beings in whom Christ has taken form, and the church, listening and proclaiming God’s Word, serves the world and calls it into fellowship of Christ’s body. [46]

Dallas Roark utters that the goal of Christian ethics is the new man, the restored man, the reconciled man, the man in God. [47]

Hans Pefifer is sure that an order in “Ethics as Formation” contains to key to understanding Bonhoeffer’s ethics. [48]
James Burtness tells us that Bonhoeffer’s emphasis upon the future let him concentrate on the consequences of action rather than on the motives. [49]

Ernst Feil reveals his understanding of an important transition in Bonhoeffer’s theology as the “Christ for us” in *Discipleship* to the “Christ for others” in *Ethics*. God’s original goal of the community of Christ became the world such that the community and world could no longer be separated and are related to one another in Christ. [50]

Larry Rasmussen advocates that, “Bonhoeffer’s is a thoroughly Christocentric ethic in which the Gestalt Christi has correspondence with reality because reality itself has a Christocentric structure. To act in accordance with reality is to act in a manner fitting to the particular setting as that is viewed in light of Christ as the reality. Ethics is done contextually because the ways Christ wins Gestalt among men vary with time and place. Ethics is personalist-relational ethics. The supreme importance of the Gestalt of reality is that it is the Gestalt Christi. The concrete command is the command of Jesus Christ, the true Man. He is the giver of forms among men. And he comes to men through other men; revelation is cast in human sociality.” [51]

Overall comments

While all Bonhoeffer scholars agree that Bonhoeffer’s theology is Christocentric, they look at it from slightly different angles.
Godsey’s classification of Bonhoeffer’s theology into three distinct periods is similar to “Revelation, Reconciliation and Reality” as covered in this paper: Jesus Christ as the revelational reality of the church; God and the world reconciled in Christ, as the Lord over the church; and Jesus Christ as the Lord over the world as reality. Other themes such as Christian peace ethic, imagery of polyphony in Christian life, responsible living in Christ, “Christ, Church, and World”, “The new man, the restored man, and the reconciled man”, concentrate on the consequence of action rather than the motives, “Christ for us; Christ for others”, and acting contextually in reality are helpful in enriching our understanding in Bonhoeffer’s theology.

The author of this study is convinced that Bonhoeffer did not ‘twist’ his theology to justified tyrannicide, and that he did not take a sudden turn in his thoughts abandoning his peace ethics. Through the lenses of “Revelation, Reconciliation and Reality”, his final political action merely meant to take on responsibility that he believed in because of costly grace. Bonhoeffer was not concerned with how to be good or how to do good, but was occupied himself only with how to fulfill the will of God as revealed in Christ, reconciled in the church between God and the world, which to him was the reality. He entrusted himself to God. He surrendered to God in his grace. He bore vicarious representative action following Jesus’ own example of vicariously suffering for us, and took the guilt upon himself. Tyrannicide therefore was a divine command for him to act in the love of God. The consequence he left it up to God since only God makes history and who alone does good.

CONCLUSION

Bonhoeffer concluded with this remark before execution, “This is the end; but for me, also the
Stanley Hauerwas is positive that Bonhoeffer attempted to reclaim the visibility of the church as the necessary condition for the proclamation of the gospel in a world that does not treasure Christianity. [52]

Huntermann laments that, “The willingness to make basic ethical distinctions on what is really good and really evil, even when one must sacrifice and give up what one wants, is just as rare today as it ever was.” [53]

Larry Rasmussen and Renate Bethge joined effort in writing, "Largely missing in North American Protestant life and culture are a distinct ecclesiology and a clear ethic as part of the understanding of “church.”" [54]

Geffrey Kelly and Burton Nelson point out that, "Bonhoeffer’s spirituality that challenges us to “dare peace” stands as a bracing reminder to America’s gung-ho “patriots” that war, however well orchestrated by skilled politicians, brilliant military strategies, and smooth spinners of presidential policies, is still a denial of the gospel teachings of Jesus Christ." [55]
Rachel Muers thinks how the future generation is to live is unanswerable theoretically because we cannot know the needs, desires or aspirations of a future generation, but it can be answered partially in and through all present actions, institutions, and ways of life. She adds, "As the responsibility of the present towards future generations is debated in philosophy or economics formulated in international law, advocated by environmental movements, and used to add force to political rhetoric on all sides, theological engagement with the question can reveal the deeper implications of all these conversations."

From my last study on “Cheap Grace, Costly Grace, Discipleship and The Cross”, I have made the conclusion that many of us live in cheap grace, grace without the cross, and grace without the living, incarnate Jesus Christ. Restoring the costly grace is as urgent today as it was in Bonhoeffer’s time. Even though Bonhoeffer’s tyrannicide cannot be justified biblically according to Richard Hays, his spirit of following Jesus Christ as his true disciple, carrying the guilt, acknowledging Christ as the revealed reality, that the world has already been reconciled with God through Christ is to be commented upon.

The consensus from Huntermann, Rasmussen, Bethge, Kelly, and Nelson is people are not doing according to the gospel teachings of Jesus Christ, especially in the U.S. where they pay lip service to Bonhoeffer’s ‘peace ethics. Muers has a point in saying that theological reflection is needed to propel our cause, and for the future generation to know how to live.

I totally agree with Hauerwas that in order to restore the costly grace, we must reclaim the
visibility of the church, since only the church can proclaim the gospel in an increasingly godless world in general, and in the United Kingdom, France and Germany in particular that I am looking forward to serving my full time field service in France and England this coming July and August contributing to the effort of reclaiming the visibility of the church and doing my part in theological reflection even though my endeavour will be insignificant as compared to the total but it is worth doing. [57]

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[4] *Ethics*, p.12. Tyrannicide is defined as “venturing a free action that rests solely on one’s own responsibility, the only sort of action that can meet evil at its heart and overcome it.”
Much of the main ideas in ‘Revelation’, ‘Reconciliation’, and ‘Reality’ are extracted from *Ethics*, pp.47-75.

*Act and Being*, pp.107-108.

*Act and Being*, pp.91-92.

*Act and Being*, p.82.

*Ethics*, p.49.

*Sanctorum Communio*, p.143.

*Act and Being*, pp.110-112.

*Ethics*, pp.5,7,9-10.

*Sanctorum Communio*, pp.142-144.

*Act and Being*, p.12

*Sanctorum Communio*, pp.141-147, 157-161.

[17] *Ethics*, p.84.


[28] Ethics, pp.87.

[29] Ethics, p.88, 90.


[31] Ethics, pp.92-95.

[32] Ethics, pp.219-221.

[33] Ethics, pp.221-224.

[34] Ethics, pp.224-225.


[37] Ethics, pp.231-233.

[38] Ethics, pp.233-235.


[45] Bernd Wannenwetsch. ‘*Responsible Living*’ or ‘*Responsible Self*’: Bonhoefferian *Reflections on a vexed Moral Motion*, pp.131-132.


[57] I have either personally witnessed the dechristianization of these three European countries, or been informed from reliable sources.