A LOVE SUPREME: BONHOEFFER’S THOUGHT
APPLIED TO A THEOLOGY OF LOVE

by

Michael Austin Kamenicky, B. A.

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ABSTRACT
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Michael Austin Kamenicky
Lee University, 2018

Christian love is a broad and diverse theological category. Therefore, it is helpful to look back at sources from Christian history that provide a novel contribution to the theological understanding of love. This project will attempt such an examination of Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s theology in order to discern his unique contribution to a theology of love. It goes about this task by interpreting Bonhoeffer’s theology of love within his own historical context. Within this established context, it examines the evolution of the motif of love within the development of Bonhoeffer’s brief but varied career. This line of inquiry leads to a presentation of Bonhoeffer’s Christocentric theology of love, which highlights how loving God integrates human life such that earthly loves are harmonized with the love of God. This project will then present two contemporary ethical sources, James K. A. Smith and David Bentley Hart, who can provide a constructive counterpart for Bonhoeffer’s theology of love. Smith contributes an erotic anthropology, whereas Hart contributes an aesthetic metaphysics of difference. Finally, this thesis will examine the Pentecostal orthopathic tradition developed by Steven Jack Land. This tradition can serve to critique the lack of pneumatological emphasis in Bonhoeffer’s thought, and thereby expand the theological horizon of his theology of love even further.
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INTRODUCTION

Love has served Christianity as a central theological trope since its beginning in the early theology of John and Paul. Their scriptural contribution has been worked out in the theological literature of the last two-thousand years in an overwhelming number of manifold theological forms. This current project intends to add to this ongoing conversation through dialogue with Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The dramatic events of Bonhoeffer’s life have overshadowed his unique and poignant theological work in much of the popular imagination. Nevertheless, his work remains creative and potent. The first chapter of this work will attempt to demonstrate the distinctiveness of his theology for the purpose of clarifying and developing a Christian theology of love. The second chapter will further develop Bonhoeffer’s ideas through the contributions of helpful interlocutors. The third chapter will then explain how Bonhoeffer’s distinct theological and ethical contribution coheres well with recent Pentecostal theological developments.

The first chapter summarizes and compares various prominent theologies of love. Søren Kierkegaard, Anders Nygren, C. S. Lewis, and Paul Tillich represent four views of love that have dominated the protestant conversation throughout the twentieth century. The former three of these thinkers differ in significant ways, but nevertheless all represent a tradition within Protestantism that is characterized by a dialectical tension between Godly agapeic love and earthly erotic love. Tillich, on the other hand, exposits a distinctive ontological view of love that anchors it in the power of being. While Bonhoeffer’s early theology definitely participates in the tradition of denigrating eros in favor of agape, his later theology demonstrates a theological shift and thereby makes a distinctive contribution to the development of a theology of love. In his later works, Ethics and Letters and Paper from Prison, Bonhoeffer develops an account of the Christian life that does attempt to take seriously the reconciliation of God with humanity.
accomplished by Christ. This results in a vision of Christian love that does not mitigate earthly love, but rather undergirds and refines it, bringing it in tune with divine love. In this way God’s love for humanity can serve as the center of life as it tunes the natural loves of humanity to itself. Bonhoeffer, therefore, represents an innovation upon various protestant theologies of love.

The second chapter investigates various thinkers who’s ethical and theological systems compliment Bonhoeffer in a constructive way. James K. A. Smith develops a comprehensive love-based ethic by constructing an erotic anthropology. This means that Smith believes that humans are fundamentally shaped by that which they love. The erotic formation that Smith describes includes individual virtue, action, and cultural construction. His expansive vision of loving God as orienting all aspects of human life toward him nicely compliments Bonhoeffer’s own vision of love. David Bentley Hart, in his exposition of a distinctly Christian metaphysics, also provides a constructive compliment to Bonhoeffer’s theology by explaining how loving God inculcates the Christian with a particular vision of difference. This particular vision causes the Christian to see otherness as a supreme instance of beauty. Hart’s emphasizing of difference helps to clarify Bonhoeffer’s notion that love for God throws humans into many different aspects of life at once, thereby leading to a polyphonic life.

The third chapter dialogues with Pentecostal theology in order to explain how Bonhoeffer’s theology of love can be clarified and informed through the pneumatological insights of Pentecostal theology. James K. A. Smith has explicitly characterized Pentecostal anthropology as erotically defined. This account is reliant on theology developed by Steven J. Land. Land developed the notion of orthopathy to explain the affective center of the Pentecostal holiness tradition. Chris E. W. Green further nuances this account by asserting that holiness should be conceived not as separation from the world but as service to the world. The
orthopathic tradition of Pentecostalism is further explored through a hermeneutic lens by Cheryl Bridges Johns, Casey S. Cole, and Caroline Redick. These three scholars have highlighted different aspects of orthopathy, including social consciousness, natural empathy, and romantic *eros*. This vision of orthopathy coheres with Bonhoeffer’s vision of love for God as conditioning and refining human love. Additionally, the orthopathic vision is ethically comprehensive, including personal virtue, action, and social transformation. This vision of orthopathy is always anchored in a pneumatology that is sorely lacking in Bonhoeffer’s own theology of love.

The present project intends to highlight aspects of Bonhoeffer’s work and bring them into dialogue with the broader theological conversation regarding love. I hope to demonstrate that Bonhoeffer’s unique theological perspective makes a genuine contribution to the theological investigation of love. In turn, I desire to further enrich his theological contribution through showing how the pneumatological insights of my own Pentecostal tradition contribute to broadening the perspective of Bonhoeffer’s theology of love.
CHAPTER ONE:
BONHOFER IN CONVERSATION WITH PROMINENT THEOLOGIANS OF LOVE

Introduction

A comparative analysis of various perspectives on the Christian doctrine of love is a demanding task. Most theologians and Christian authors inevitably touch on the theme of love in some form or another in the course of their work. This present study, however, will endeavor to review several of the classic accounts of Christian love, paying close attention to the ways that the authors of these texts conceive of the relationship between the love of God and participation in the particularity of the world. I have ordered this study around the topical development of the conversation, and as such my interlocutors are ordered thematically rather than chronologically. I will begin by presenting Kierkegaard’s model of agapeistic love as duty, versus eros as self-interest. I will proceed to explicate Anders Nygren’s widely influential model of agape as others-oriented love, demonstrated particularly in the crucifixion. In so doing, I will pay special attention to the manner in which Nygren underscores the distinction between agape and eros, to the point wherein the latter is considered to be antithetical to Christian love. After this I will examine C. S. Lewis’ vision of Christian love as the telos of a pedagogy provided by earthly and erotic loves. I will then examine the ontological theology of Paul Tillich, wherein he anchors all love in the ground of being. Finally, I will examine the later theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, as he develops a theology of love beginning in his Ethics and continuing through his Letters and Papers from Prison. In these works he subtly develops a theology of love that takes the incarnation seriously in its affirmation of earthly particularity. While keeping agape central to the Christian life, he explains the needed participation of Christians in the particularities of life and desire. Thus, I hope to place Bonhoeffer’s nuanced model of the interplay between agape
and *eros* into the ongoing discussion of Christian love in 20th century protestant theology. I believe that bringing Bonhoeffer into this discussion introduces a fuller perspective on Christology and a broader, more livable ethical basis for the alternatives that will be considered.

**Kierkegaard: Love as Duty**

Søren Kierkegaard’s vision of Christian love, found in his 1847 book *Works of Love,* foreshadowed and influenced much of the subsequent protestant discussion on the topic.

Fundamental to Kierkegaard’s presentation of love is the strict differentiation between Christian love and human love. The former, existing in a state of total selflessness, cannot help but expose the selfishness of the later.\(^1\) The difference between human love and Christian love is fundamentally secured, for Kierkegaard, by the nature of Christian love as a command. He continually quotes Christ’s love commandment emphasizing the fact that it is given imperatively as “you shall love.”\(^2\) For Kierkegaard the nature of love as a command upends the natural human understanding of love. Human love exists in fallible spontaneity and thus cannot be commanded. The nature of Christian love as a commandment removes love from the contingencies of histories and situations and enshrines it as an eternal duty.\(^3\) He explicitly connects the nature of love as duty to Christian love’s infallibility in the face of contingency: “only when it is duty to love, only then is love eternally secured against every change, eternally made free in blessed independence, eternally and happily secured against despair.”\(^4\) This love exists in the believer as pure selflessness, and this selflessness can only be secured by enshrining love as duty and abstracting

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2 Ibid., 40.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., 44.
it from contingency, thus whether or not an action is an action of love is totally reliant on the intention of the agent, and is not contingent on circumstances or consequences.\textsuperscript{5}

Kierkegaard explicitly pits his notion of Christian love against the commonly understood notion of love propagated by the cultural and literary world. His pugnacity on this point is difficult to understate: “Be honest, admit that to most people perhaps, the poets glowing descriptions of erotic love, of friendship seem far higher than the poor: ‘you shall love.’”\textsuperscript{6} The counterintuitive nature of Christian love is grounded in Kierkegaard’s emphatic point that the gospel speaks “not about men but to men.”\textsuperscript{7} This vision of revelation as counterintuitive is grounded in and necessitated by his negative opinion of human love. This human love he calls “erotic love.”\textsuperscript{8} Kierkegaard understands eros along with philia as merely projections of self-love onto social relationships.\textsuperscript{9} For Kierkegaard his negative opinion of erotic love is embodied in the poetic slogan that love “cannot love without the beloved.”\textsuperscript{10} The fact that this love is contingent on the object is the betrayal of true love since it opens up the possibility of coming to an end. It makes love fickle and fallible rather than being grounded in the eternal. Erotic love grounded in its object “does not swear by something higher but really swears by something which is less than

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., xiv, 25. The deontological nature of Kierkegaard’s love invites comparison’s to Kant’s categorical imperative. This similarity is even pointed out by George Pattison in the introduction to the HarperCollins edition of Works of Love. Like the categorical imperative it Love, for Kierkegaard, is based on the purity of the will and ought to be regarded as a duty, obligatory in and of itself regardless of its consequences. Love does not seek out a certain outcome but is the embodiment of a selfless orientation (xiv).

\textsuperscript{6} Kierkegaard, Works of Love, 44.

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., 31. This statement and this way of conceiving of the relationship between Christian truth and natural life are reflected in other parts of Kierkegaard’s corpus. It is well known that Kierkegaard is often summarized as presenting faith as a leap that cannot be necessitated by reason. Thus, he does not believe that Christian truth is discernable from observation of the natural world. Another famous reference from Kierkegaard’s corpus that correlates to his model of love is found in [Søren Kierkegaard, Attack upon ‘Christendom,’ tans. Walter Lowrie (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1944), 11] wherein he provides a loquacious diatribe against those who would equate worldly success with the values of the New Testament, prompted by the funeral homily of Bishop Mynster.

\textsuperscript{8} Kierkegaard, Works of Love, 25.

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.
itself." Kierkegaard does, however, admit that spontaneous human love bears a certain hedonistic luster “to most people perhaps, the poets glowing descriptions of erotic love, of friendship seem far higher than the poor: ‘you shall love.’” The ecstasy of this love results in the possibility that it can end or be changed. Kierkegaard describes the possibility that spontaneous love can be turned into jealousy. In this possibility the self-interest of eros is laid bare.

In contrast to his negative characterization of the spontaneous aspects of love, Kierkegaard advocates for a “disinterested” model of love grounded not in the character of the beloved, but in the character of God. Kierkegaard points out that in the command to love one’s neighbor, the disciples are not commanded to love a particular neighbor, but all people as their neighbor. This impartiality totally dethrones the preferentiality of both erotic love and friendship. Kierkegaard makes it clear that neighbors are not to be distinguished from one another, for “if you confuse another man with your neighbor, there has essentially been no mistake in this, for the other man is your neighbor also.” Thus the goal of neighbor-love grounded in the command of God is equality, making no distinctions. Passions and preferences exclude certain individuals from erotic and philia love, whereas love taken as a solemn duty makes no distinctions between attractive and unattractive neighbors. This love can only be attained by prioritizing the love of God: “Fundamentally love to God is decisive; from this arises love to one’s neighbor.” The love for the neighbor that arises out of love for God exists as a

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11 Ibid., 45.
12 Ibid., 44.
13 Ibid., 49.
14 Ibid., xiv, 45.
15 Ibid., 59.
16 Ibid., 65.
17 Ibid., 70.
18 Ibid.
spiritual reality rather than a bodily one.\textsuperscript{19} Thus for Kierkegaard true Christian love involves eschewing bodily and social realities in the name of dutifully regarding all human persons as equal.

Within his esoteric picture of true love as a spiritual, eternal reality that refuses to participate in the partialities and contingencies of the physical and social world, Kierkegaard has a nuanced view of the way that love is to be expressed within the particularities of life. Kierkegaard sees love as an attitudinal reality and as such it cannot be empirically observed; it can only be known by its “fruits.”\textsuperscript{20} These fruits are not typified by a deontological list of actions or words because “There is no word in human language…of which we could say ‘when a man uses this word, it is unconditionally proven thereby that there is love in him.’”\textsuperscript{21} One person may use a word or preform an action in a way that expresses love and another may do or say the same thing and not express love. The decisive factor is not what deed is done but how it is done.\textsuperscript{22} Thus Kierkegaard views love as an unconditional attitude on the part of an individual that eschews their personal interest and pleasure in favor of impartiality, seeking to express itself in the taxis of human realities by acting in a way that is loving. Nevertheless, the equality entailed by love is not mapped to a certain list of objectively loving actions since “one can perform works of love in an unloving, yes, even self-loving way, and when this is so the works of love are nevertheless not the work of love.”\textsuperscript{23} Thus the specificity of love is achieved in action but the reality of love exists as purely mental. The bodily actions motivated by love are not identifiable with love, they are merely love’s byproduct.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 69.  
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid, 30.  
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
Nygren: Love as Agape

Modern Christian discourse on love is rife with the use of the specific New Testament term “agape.” The popularization of this word (alongside a specific way of defining it) can be traced back directly to Swedish theologian Anders Nygren’s 1930 magnum opus *Agape and Eros*. Nygren’s vision of agape as the exclusively Christian form of love has influenced Christian education and proclamation throughout the world. Nygren is in large part responsible for popular Christian sentiments in favor of self-giving agape over and against eros.

Nygren begins his study by carefully explaining his methodological starting point. He claims, unlike Kierkegaard, that one cannot develop a distinctly Christian vision of love from the commandment of love. This is because the dual command “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all the heart” and “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” has the potential to be a projection screen for merely human understandings of love. The inadequacy of the commandment to establish the distinctiveness of Christian love is also demonstrated by the presence of both of the parts of the dual love-commandment in the Old Testament. According to Nygren, “In Judaism love is exclusive and particularistic: it is directed to one’s ‘neighbor’ in the original and more restricted sense of the word.” The commandment that Nygren thinks expresses the genuine exceptionality of Christian love is the commandment to “love your enemy.” Nygren believes that this statement entails a total inversion of worldly systems of value,

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24 Thomas Jay Oord, *Defining Love: A Philosophical, Scientific, and Theological Engagement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press), 33.
27 Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1969), 61. It should be noted that both Kierkegaard and Nygren are concerned to undermine human intuition as a source of genuine knowledge about love. The difference in methodology, however, is apparent in that while Kierkegaard believes that the command to love itself is adequate to establish Christian love’s distinctiveness, Nygren does not and thus turns to Christology.
28 Ibid., 63.
and is wholly reliant on God’s logically-prior love of sinners. This reorientation of value wrought by Jesus is reliant “not a new conception of God, or new ideas about God, but a new fellowship with God.” This fellowship with God is fundamentally defined by “agape,” rather than retributive righteousness. This new fellowship demonstrates the difference between the Jewish and Christian visions of love. According to Nygren the former is merely a part of the law, whereas the latter transcends the responsive requirements of the law.

After establishing that agape is distinctive, Nygren discusses the specific characteristics that constitute its distinctiveness. The first characteristic that Nygren highlights is that agape is “spontaneous and ‘unmotivated.’” This is demonstrated by God’s love for sinners. God’s love of humanity is not motivated by the character of humanity, but the character of God. God’s love, unlike human love, is not “controlled by the value of the object.” This totally self-reliant love is possible only for the Divine. The spontaneity of Divine love is related directly to the second characteristic of agape, which is that it is “indifferent to value.” This places a moratorium on any consideration of value, positive or negative, as motivating the bestowal of God’s love. Nygren believes that disconnecting love and value ensures that no limitation can ever be placed on God’s love. The only correspondence between value and agape that Nygren allows is established by Nygren’s third characteristic of agape, which is that agape is creative. Nygren believes that agape, which loves what is inherently without value, creates value in that

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29 Ibid., 66.
30 Ibid., 68. In Nygren’s text the quoted material is italicized for emphasis.
31 Ibid., 70.
32 Ibid., 74.
33 Ibid., 76.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid., 77.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., 78.
which it loves. Nygren’s fourth characteristic of *agape* explicitly connects his vision of *agape* to protestant soteriology: “*Agape* is the initiator of fellowship with God.” Nygren understands *agape* as God’s initiation of a relationship for which humanity can take no credit and has no part in establishing. The four characteristics listed above form the core of Nygren’s model of *agape*, establishing it as totally distinctive from all human intuition about the nature of love.

Within the biblical text, Nygren finds his initial support for his specific definition of *agape* in the parables of Christ. The parables of the Prodigal Son and the Laborers in the Vineyard are especially relevant. In the former the father welcomes the son back despite his vicious behavior, and in the latter various workers are all treated equally despite having contributed varying amounts of work. Nygren highlights the lack of correspondence in these stories between the merits of individuals and the treatment they receive from authority figures. These parables are revelations of the spontaneous quality of divine love, they are not mere descriptions of human kindness. They reveal God’s love as irrational and non-calculating.

Nygren regards Paul as the ultimate expositor of the notion of *agape* that was implicit in Christ’s life and teachings. The centrality of love in Pauline theology is a direct consequence of Paul’s conversion from persecutor to apostle, which serves as an example par excellence of the

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39 Ibid. Nygren constructs this point in contrast to theologians such as Adolf Von Harnack who believe that God’s love is motivated by the inherent value of human nature.

40 Ibid., 80; Coakley, *The New Asceticism*, 45.


42 Ibid.

43 Ibid., 82-89. Oord, *[Defining Love*, 44], and Stephen G. Post [“Conditional and Unconditional Love,” *Modern Theology* 7, no. 5 (October 1991): 437] have both pointed out that in the parables both the prodigal son and the vineyard laborers do exhibit patterns of behavior that put them in positions to receive grace (The son in returning home and the workers by showing up and working). Thus while what they receive is still grace by virtue of its superabundance in being more than they deserve, it nevertheless still corresponds to certain actions on the part of the recipients.

spontaneous character of God’s *agape*.\(^45\) Paul is responsible for *agape* becoming the technical term for Christian love.\(^46\) Paul’s greatest contribution to the Christian notion of *agape*, however, is the centrality of the cross typified by his statement in Romans 5:8 “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”\(^47\) Thus Paul’s understanding of the cross is added to all the synoptic material as the supreme expression of *agape*.\(^48\) Christ has died for sinful humans and thereby demonstrates the selflessness of God’s love.\(^49\) The cross reveals that *agape* is not a mere ideal, but an objective reality.\(^50\) For Paul, the only subject of Christian love is Christ and it is thus impossible for Christians to have it without supernatural intervention. He describes Paul’s notion of love as “‘pneumatic fluid’, which is ‘shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost which was given unto us.’”\(^51\) Nygren believes his vision of love to be a reclamation of this Pauline vision of love in order to combat idolatrous notions of erotic human love.\(^52\)

For Nygren, human “love” can only be an expression of self-love. In contrast to *agape* which is spontaneous, disinterested, and downward-oriented, *eros* is motivated, self-interested, and upward oriented.\(^53\) *Eros* is motivated by acquisitive intent towards the value of its object. It

\(^{45}\) Ibid., 110.
\(^{46}\) Ibid., 113.
\(^{47}\) Ibid., 117.
\(^{48}\) Ibid.
\(^{49}\) Ibid., 118.
\(^{50}\) Ibid., 120.
\(^{51}\) Ibid., 129.
\(^{52}\) Nygren is significantly warier of what he interprets to be the Johannine model of love. He believes the John’s main contribution to Christian theology of love is the notion that “God is love” [Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 151]. This is not a mere slogan but is a statement about the true nature of God wherein God’s fundamental nature is the mutual love between the Father and the Son. While Nygren wants to affirm this statement he somewhat cautious of its tendency to weaken the Christian vision of agape as unmotivated love because it cannot be said that the Son is inherently worthless (152). Another aspect of Johannine love that Nygren is wary of is the emphasis of John the love within the community of brethren. This limitation of love presents a threat to the unmotivated character of Pauline agape because it implies the condition of one being a member of the community is necessary in order to be worthy of love (155). Nygren believes that John’s theology strikes a Hellenistic note that introduces the heretical possibility of wedding Christian *agape* to the Greek *eros* motif (159).
does not have agape’s selfless lack of desire for the value of the object. Nygren equates eros with the concept of gnostis which Paul and the early church apologists argued fiercely against.\textsuperscript{54} Nygren summarizes the mystical selfishness of eros and gnostis: “Eros is the soul’s longing and yearning to attain to the blessed vision of the perceptible world and its beauty, while gnostis is nothing other than the ‘vision of God’ itself.”\textsuperscript{55} Nygren accuses this desire for beauty, even the beauty of God, of being intrinsically egocentric.\textsuperscript{56} The Catholic notion of caritas is an illegitimate amalgamation of the eros and agape motifs resulting in the heresy of works righteousness.\textsuperscript{57} Central to Luther’s theological reform, therefore, was re-separating agape from eros.

Since humans are irrevocably caught within their own self-seeking, acquisitive, and erotic impulses, they can only truly love by first being loved by God. Even upon becoming aware of God’s love for them through the revelation of Christ, humans are still incapable of loving God with spontaneous love. Their only reciprocity is possible by faith, enabled by the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{58} Consequently humans cannot love their neighbors in any human sense. Thus, the love that Christians are commanded to have for their neighbors is not their love at all, but the agape of God. This is because “Christian love is not produced by us, but has come to us from heaven. The subject of Christian love is not Man, but God Himself, yet in such a way that the Divine love employs man as its instrument and organ.”\textsuperscript{59} Only by becoming a channel of God’s love can the

\textsuperscript{54} Nygren, Agape and Eros, 134.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid, 143.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid. Here Nygren makes a fundamental ethical error by separating the good from the beautiful in God. In God goodness and beauty are united. As will be demonstrated in chapter 2 of this project, human ontology is such that they are made to desire God and to recognize the God as beautiful. This aesthetic recognition of God allows one to see and appreciate the beauty of the world as it reflects the beauty of God.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 722.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 728.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 734.
Christian genuinely love their neighbor, rather than God in the neighbor: “In relation to God and his neighbor the Christian can be likened to a tube which by faith is open upward, and by love downward.” Christian love is not a process by which the individual can reciprocally love God; instead “the stream of love must be directed downwards.” In faith the human can receive everything from God’s love and thereby allows the divine love to flow into the world. Nygren does not believe that love is enhanced by specificity or responsiveness. Human individuals serve as instruments of the love of God and contribute nothing to that love’s formation or augmentation. Agape is the ultimate principle of self-giving and therefore undoes any attempt at self-love or self-affirmation. All self-love constitutes an erotic pursuit of that which is higher. Thus only by giving themselves as vessels for God’s own downward oriented self-giving can humans participate in the life of God.

Nygren’s vision of love has been widely influential on both academic and popular visions of Christian love. His work innovates on Kierkegaard’s dichotomy between Christian love and worldly love by intimately uniting his definition of agape with a reformed soteriology. By doing so Nygren not only claims that Christian love is counterintuitive to the natural human, but that it is impossible. Humans do not contribute to love, rather they can only be its objects. Even the commandment to “love thy neighbor as thyself” is truly a covert command to become a vessel of the love of God. Thus, God’s love is not possible within history or as a general ethical mandate

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60 Ibid., 735. Nygren presents Augustine as the primary proprietor of the view that the Christian is to love God in the neighbor.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid., 741.
63 Ibid. 740
but only exists by the intervention of God. Humans are not to love the world with the “love of desire” but the self-giving love of agape.\(^{64}\)

**Lewis: Earthly Love as Pedagogy for Agape**

Both Kierkegaard and Nygren begin their explorations of the nature of Christian love by first defining agape and then using its starting point for defining and critiquing earthly love. By way of contrast, C. S. Lewis’ theology of love, as presented in his 1958 classic *The Four Loves*, begins by expositing the various forms of natural human love before finally moving into a discussion of agape. The initial dichotomy that Lewis makes is between “Need-love” and “Gift-love.”\(^{65}\) These are not two different types of loves, since all of the four of the titular loves can be expressed as both need and gift.\(^{66}\) This means that love is expressed in both selfless giving and humble admission of one’s need for God and for others.\(^{67}\) In addition to need and gift, Lewis adds appreciation as a third mode of expressing love. “Gift-love” is expressed by the subject giving of itself unto the object of love, “Need-love” is expressed by one’s admission of need for the beloved, and “Appreciative love” deems the object of love “very good.”\(^{68}\) All three of these expressions of love can be applied to both God and others:

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\(^{64}\) Ibid., 157. Gene Outka has developed Nygren’s work on agape and synthesizes it with others in [Gene Outka, *Agape: An Ethical Analysis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972)]. Outka summarizes the synthesized meaning of agape as “equal regard” (9). This means that agape is an ethical principle that regards the neighbor in spite of any particular quality the neighbor may or may not possess (11). This means that one loves all humans equally and without preferentiality, according to the general characteristics shared by all humans (12). Because Outka’s notion of agape is an ethical principle he expresses that it may be exhibited by non-Christians (206). For an application of Outka’s ethical paradigm to a particular moral situation see Gene Outka, “Social Justice and Equal Access to Healthcare,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 2 (1974): 11-32.


\(^{66}\) Ibid. Lewis was originally going to disparage “Need-love” in favor of bolstering “Gift-love,” but he ultimately came to the conclusion that both of them were required in order to express love. He summarizes this saying “It would be a bold and silly creature that came before its Creator with the boast ‘I am no beggar. I love you disinterestedly’”(4).

\(^{67}\) Ibid.

\(^{68}\) Ibid., 16.
Need-love cries to God from our poverty; Gift-love longs to serve, or even to suffer for, God; Appreciative love says: ‘We give thanks to thee for thy great glory.’ Need-love says to a woman ‘I cannot live without her”; Gift-love longs to give her happiness comfort, protection--if possible, wealth; Appreciative love gazes and holds its breath and is silent, rejoices that such a wonder should exist even if not for him, will not be wholly dejected by losing her, would rather have it so than never to have seen her at all.69

While these three expressions of love must be differentiated in order for Lewis to formulate his theory of love, he admits “the three elements of love mix and succeed one another, moment to moment.”70

The first three of the titular four forms of love are affection, friendship, and eros. Affection is learning to appreciate the people who are in one’s life due to no particular special volition of one’s own, such as family members and fellow citizens.71 Friendship, by way of contrast, is volitional and selective. Friends necessarily withdraw from general human togetherness into the embrace of their own private, special communion.72 This special communion is predicated on shared interest and mutual appreciation.73 Eros fixates on a particular beloved, this individual is needed, appreciated and sacrificed for. Lewis is careful not to identify eros strictly with sexual desire, but he does restrict the term to a romantic context: “Without Eros sexual desire, like every other desire, is a fact about ourselves. Within Eros it is

69 Ibid., 17.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid., 37
72 Ibid., 60.
73 Ibid., 72.
rather about the Beloved.”

Thus, eros is most fully expressed when need, gift, and appreciation are all directed towards a specific individual in a romantic fashion.

Despite his uplifting of the natural capacities of humans to love, at least in a limited fashion, he does not believe that mere natural loves are an adequate replacement for the love of God. He therefore pushes against the romantic notion that natural bliss is an adequate replacement for religious devotion: “Nature cannot satisfy the desires she arouses nor answer theological questions nor sanctify us. Our real journey to God involves constantly turning our backs on her.” Epistemologically, this means “true philosophy may sometimes validate an experience of nature; an experience of nature cannot validate a philosophy.”

Because human loves cannot on their own naturally lead to love of God, the love of God initially appears antithetical to earthly love. He admonishes that “the rivalry between all natural loves and the love of God is something a Christian dare not forget. God is the great Rival, the ultimate object of human jealousy.”

The fourth, ultimate form of love that rounds off Lewis’ work is “Charity.” “Charity” is fundamentally the “Gift-love” of God for his creation. This divine “Gift-love” differs from human “Gift-love,” inasmuch as natural gift love is partial to bestow its love only on those objects that it finds to be attractive, whereas divine “Gift-love” loves the even those humans that are characteristically unlovable. This love is initially bestowed upon humans by God, and by

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74 Ibid., 95.
75 Ibid., 17.
76 It is worth noting that Lewis’ robust vision of earthly love likely stemmed from his career studying the history of western literature. Thus, he was intimately familiar with the motif of love as it appears in the western literary tradition, having written a substantial study of the motif’s evolution. See C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
77 Lewis, The Four Loves, 21.
78 Ibid., 20.
79 Ibid., 39.
80 Ibid., 128.
grace can operate in human beings. The “Gift-love” that people receive from God by grace can then be extended to their fellow persons.\textsuperscript{81} Despite the picture of divine love as ultimately counterintuitive, Lewis does see a definite correlation between natural and spiritual love since “all natural affections… can become rivals to spiritual love: but they can also be preparatory imitations of it, training….of the spiritual muscles which Grace may later put to a higher service.”\textsuperscript{82} Thus while grace is altogether necessary for the actualization of divine “Gift-love,” rightly utilized natural loves can prepare an individual to receive and bestow self-giving charity. Lewis takes this correlation between natural love and charity even further by saying “divine Love does not substitute itself for the natural …The natural loves are summoned to become modes of Charity while also remaining the natural loves that they were.”\textsuperscript{83} This relationship between earthly and heavenly love is incarnational because “as Christ is perfect God and perfect man, the natural loves are called to become perfect charity and also perfect natural loves.”\textsuperscript{84}

In addition to this bestowal of charity God bestows on humans “a supernatural Need-love of Himself and a supernatural Need-love of one another.”\textsuperscript{85} This means that in addition to the disinterestedness of divine charity, humans rightly express a healthy “Need-love” for God, a proper expression of this love “does not dream of disinterestedness.”\textsuperscript{86} This “Need-love” is the charitable transfiguration of the natural human need for God and one another.\textsuperscript{87} Lewis’ elevation of “Need-love” as genuine love pairs nicely with his cursory affirmation of earthly love. His

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 24  
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 133.  
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 133-134.  
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 129.  
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 134.
project is characterized by an effort to unite human lived reality with Christian teaching on love and for that reason it is novel within the taxis of protestant theologies of love.

By elevating “Need-love” but also choosing not to denigrate natural love, Lewis differs from all of the other thinkers that this study has previously examined. Unlike Kierkegaard and Nygren, who see earthly love as fundamentally antithetical to Christian love, Lewis sees earthly love as preparatory for Charity. Lewis, therefore, walks a difficult line between emphasizing the grace of God as necessary for genuine love while also emphasizing the relevance of this grace for the realities of human lives and relationships.

Tillich: Love as Ultimate Unity Embodied Dialectically

In *The Protestant Era*, Paul Tillich presents love as the ground for ethics, specifically in the sense of *agape*. He posits that love is a unique foundation for ethics because it “offers a principle of ethics which maintains an eternal, unchangeable element but makes its realization dependent on continuous acts of a creative intuition.” Love has the unique property of being able to “transform itself according to the concrete demands of every individual and social situation without losing its eternity and dignity and unconditional validity.” This makes love the only ethical standard that is able “to appear in every kairos.” This is the unique property of love, since neither laws nor ideals are inherently capable of transcending the *kairos* that produced them. The uniqueness of love resides in the fact that it is not an emotional state but an “ontological power that is the essence of life itself, namely the dynamic reunion of that which is

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89 Ibid., 154-5.
90 Ibid., 155.
91 Ibid., 156.
92 Ibid.
The principle of love is what undergirds the principle of equality in rationalistic-progressive ethics. This emphasis on the ethical flexibility of love necessitates the construction of laws and institutions, without which ethics cannot become an actual power within society. Thus love, embodied in institutions, gives birth to justice within a particular historical context. Love is, therefore, more fundamental than justice because it is the foundation of justice.

In his work *Love, Power and Justice*, Tillich elaborates that in much of the public discussion of love, *eros* and *agape* are differentiated as two different types of love. Tillich prefers to understand them as different qualities of love. To *agape* and *eros*, he adds *libido* and *philia*. All of these qualities are present, to some extent, in every act of love.

He summarizes the ontological foundation of love, asserting that “life is being in actuality and love is the moving power of life.” Thus love drives all that is towards everything else in a reunification which presupposes the separation of a more original unity. Because of this original unity, “love cannot be described as the union of the strange but as the reunion of the estranged.” This ontological movement toward the other expresses itself in emotion. *Eros* is present in genuine love as that quality of love which recognizes value and appreciates beauty. Without *eros*, love towards God and neighbor is replaced with obedience to God, which is not the same thing. *Eros* unites with *philia* in concepts like participation and communion; it allows the reunion of the separated to

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93 Ibid., xxi
94 Ibid., 156.
95 Ibid., 159.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid., 160.
99 Ibid., 5.
100 Ibid., 25.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid., 27.
103 Ibid., 30-1. He provides the astute observation that *eros* is often depreciated by those theologians that depreciate culture. He refers to this false piety as a “self-deifying attitude” since the theologian “uses millennia of linguistic culture in order to express his rejection of culture” (30).
take the form of communities and friendships. The union of the estranged also requires libido, defined as desire for personal fulfillment, since both the self and others come into fulfillment in reunion. Agape is “the depth of love in relation to the ground of life.” It is love that orients itself according to the ultimate unity of all things in being itself, thus it is the quality of love by which love is most clearly seen as an ontological power.

In accordance with his ontological analysis of love, Tillich provides an explanation of the ontological unity of love with power and justice. This ontological unity is predicated on the fact that both power and justice are also ontologically based. Power is fundamentally “the power of being,” continually overcoming non-being. Justice is the form “in which power of being actualizes itself in the encounter of power with power.” Power implies a compulsory element because it requires self-assertion. This compulsory element is not unjust, so long as it does not work to destroy the object of compulsion but rather works towards its fulfillment. Love’s ontological unity with power and justice is what keeps Tillich from understanding love as complete self-surrender. He believes that any self-surrender that diminishes the self’s power of being refuses to give justice to the self and therefore “is not genuine love because it extinguishes and does not unite what is estranged.” This is because “chaotic self-surrender does not give justice to the other one, because he who surrenders does not give justice to himself.” Justice to

104 Ibid., 32.
105 Ibid., 33.
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid., 40.
109 Ibid., 67.
110 Ibid.
111 Ibid., 69.
112 Ibid.
113 Ibid.
oneself affirms one’s own power of being and accepts it as an intrinsic claim to justice. This self-affirmation makes the reunion of the estranged possible.\footnote{Ibid.}

The ontological union between love and justice means that “love does not do more than justice demands, but love is the ultimate principle of justice.”\footnote{Ibid., 71.} Justice preserves instances of the power of being, so that they can be reunited in love.\footnote{Ibid.} The unity of justice and love is expressed in personal relations in listening, giving, and forgiving. All three of these actions express the intertwined truths of the intrinsic claim to justice, and the tendency of this intrinsic claim to result in the reunion of estranged individuals.\footnote{Ibid., 84.} Forgiveness most fully expresses both love and justice because in reconciliation the intrinsic claim of all beings to justice is most fully expressed.\footnote{Ibid., 86.}

All three of these ontological powers are theological and therefore can be theonomous because “God is… being-itself.”\footnote{Ibid., 107} Love is present within God’s self in the Trinitarian interpretation of the living God, because in the Son “God separates Himself from Himself, and in the Spirit He reunites Himself with Himself.”\footnote{Ibid., 107.} This demonstrates agape into its fullness because it reveals love as rooted in the divine life.\footnote{Ibid., 110} To see love, power, and justice as rooted in the divine life reveals their ultimate unity.\footnote{Ibid., 111} This ontological clarity allows agape to ground eros, which has the dangerous tendency to become superficial and merely aesthetic. Agape

\footnote{Ibid.}
continually refers *eros* to its ultimate ground, mitigating this danger.  

*Agape* also equalizes the preferential love of *philia* because “*agape* loves in everybody and through everybody loves itself.”

Tillich further elaborates on the notion of love loving itself in his posthumous *A History of Christian Thought*. When discussing the innovation of the Christian notion of love, Tillich reiterates that *agape* and *eros* are not truly two separate and opposed realities. He then proceeds to demonstrate how the Christian notion of God deconstructs the dichotomy of subject and object. He claims that for Christians, love is not a subjective feeling directed toward an object because “it is not that objects are ultimately loved, but through our love toward them love itself is loved.”

This is because the divine ground of being is love itself. He believes this to be Augustine’s primary innovation, that one must not love things for their own sake, but one must love the divine ground in them, with full recognition that it is the divine ground operative in the self that makes this love possible. Thus it is love loving itself that is operative in Christian love. This, in Tillich’s mind, remains true to the Christian understanding of God in that God is “the supporting power of being” thus making any “deistic fixation of the two realities—God and the world—impossible.”

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123 Ibid., 118.
124 Ibid., 119.
126 Ibid.
127 Ibid.
128 Ibid.
Bonhoeffer’s Developing Theology of Love

Comparing Bonhoeffer’s contribution to a Christian theology of love with those of the aforementioned figures is a uniquely challenging task. Unlike the other scholars examined in this chapter, Bonhoeffer never wrote any single work that comprehensively summarized his theology of love at length. Additionally, as will be examined shortly, his characterization of Christian love underwent significant renovation over time. Despite the fragmentary nature of his contribution, love was a significant theme that hovered over Bonhoeffer’s entire corpus.¹³⁰ Several scholars have examined the development of Bonhoeffer’s theology of love before; however, they were both written before the new revised critical editions of Bonhoeffer’s works now available in the *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* series, and neither of them emphasize both Bonhoeffer’s distinctive contribution to the broader conversation and his theological development over time.¹³¹ For these reasons it is now fruitful to revisit the primary sources from Bonhoeffer’s corpus in order to ultimately assess in a more comprehensive manner just what Bonhoeffer’s contribution is to a Christian theology of love.

¹³⁰ John D. Godsey, “Bonhoeffer’s Doctrine of Love,” in *New Studies in Bonhoeffer’s Ethics*, ed. William J. Peck (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen, 1987), 189. He continues “Thus one must remain mindful in dealing with the concept of love in Bonhoeffer’s thought, as in the thought of most Christian theologians, that in reality involves such broad subjects as God’s grace, election, reconciliation, justification, and sanctification, on the other hand, and human gratitude, reverence, loyalty, and responsibility, on the other.

¹³¹ John D. Godsey’s contribution is such that he examines several classic theologies of love, including Nygren, Kierkegaard, Outka, and Barth before turning to Bonhoeffer’s contribution to a theology of love [Godsey, “Bonhoeffer’s Doctrine of Love,” 190]. In his argument Godsey emphasizes the commonality that Bonhoeffer shares with Nygren in the utterly self-giving counterintuitive account of love [Godsey, “Bonhoeffer’s Doctrine of love,” 113]. Godsey methodologically prioritizes synthesis in his reading of Bonhoeffer’s corpus, leading him to the conclusion that Bonhoeffer’s basic doctrine of love did not change much over the course of his life [Godsey, “Bonhoeffer’s Doctrine of Love,” 213]. The result is that he prioritizes Bonhoeffer’s early work in his account of Bonhoeffer’s doctrine of love. This view is countered by Terrence Reynolds, who emphasizes the development that Bonhoeffer’s theology underwent towards the end of his life. Reynolds points out that prior to 1939 Bonhoeffer had an ambivalent account of erotic desires, whereas after 1939 he shifted to a view of Christian love where earthly desires were to be encouraged [Terrence Reynolds, *The Coherence of Life Without God Before God: The Problem of Earthly Desires in the Later Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989), 1]. This is clearly demonstrated in *Ethics*, where Bonhoeffer initially makes his transition, and *Letters and Papers from Prison*, where he further develops this idea [Terrence Reynolds, “Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Encouragement of Earthly Love: A Radical Shift in His Later Theology,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 41, no. 3 & 4 (1987): 72].
In Bonhoeffer’s doctoral dissertation, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*, published in 1930, Bonhoeffer provides a uniquely Protestant ecclesiology that takes seriously both the primacy of the Word of God and the integrity of the community. In order to demonstrate the uniqueness of Christian community, Christian love must be defined in sharp contrast to “love” as it is understood within secularity. He attempts to derive this differentiation from scripture: “We have two infallible points of reference for what the New Testament calls love: the first, defined positively, is the love of God revealed in Christ; the second, defined negatively is our self-love.” Bonhoeffer does not partake in an abstract exercise in theologizing about an idealized virtue, but rather exposit love as the animating principle of the Church’s existence, that being the self-donating love of Christ. He summarizes this love in five principles: (1) “Christian love is not a human possibility,” (2) “It is possible only through faith in Christ and through the work of the Holy Spirit,” (3) “Love, as a volitional act, is purposeful...The purpose of love is exclusively determined by God’s will for the other person, namely, to subject the other to God’s will,” (4) “It loves the real neighbor, not because it would derive pleasure from that person’s individuality, but because the neighbor as a human being calls on me as the other who experiences God’s claim in this You of the neighbor,” and (5) “Christian love knows no limits.” All of this can be summed up succinctly as “*Love for our neighbor is our will to embrace God’s will for the other person.*” By making his understanding of genuine love the exclusive property of Christ, Bonhoeffer is able to make it the exclusive property of the church community, and as such can claim, in contrast with the predominant Protestant

133 Ibid., 167-170.
134 Ibid., 171.
consensus, that “a Christian comes into being and exists only in Christ’s church-community and is dependent on it, which means on the other human being.”

In this community of God, “we are hidden not only to the world, but even to ourselves.” Because of his emphasis on love as volitional self-giving in confrontation to human erotic tendencies, the editors of the *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works Series* have postulated that one of Bonhoeffer’s major influences in *Sanctorum Communio* was Kierkegaard via Barth.

Bonhoeffer further develops this model of love in *Life Together*, published in 1939. In this work he doubles down on his distinction between *agape* and *eros* established in *Sanctorum Communio*.

He summarizes this by contrasting spiritual and earthly reality: “The basis of all pneumatic, or spiritual, reality is… the Word of God in Jesus Christ. At the foundation of all psychic, or emotional, reality are the dark, impenetrable urges and desires of the human soul.”

This distinction between the two realities is funded by their different types of love: “The bright love of Christian service, *agape*, lives in the spiritual community; the dark love of pious-impious urges, *eros*, burns in the self-centered community.”

Merely emotional love of neighbor can result in great daring acts of heroism but it stops short of true self-sacrifice because it is always ultimately self-serving. Only in the world of *agape* is freedom created, whereas *eros* can only

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135 Ibid., 190. Bonhoeffer is very clear that the community is to be desired as an end unto itself. Paradoxically, however, the believer is commanded to desire the community for its own sake only because desiring the community for its own sake is the will of God. Thus community is simultaneously an end unto itself and as not an end unto itself (173).

136 Ibid., 173-4. The separation of the church community from the communities of the world is exemplified by those communities who partake of the Eucharist with one another despite not knowing each other. Bonhoeffer does not disprove of this practice because he believes the commitment of the church to Christian love is “most unmistakable where it is protected in principle from being confused in any way with any kind of human community based on human mutual affection.” (246).

137 Ibid., 167n. 124.


140 Life Ibid., 39-40.

141 Ibid., 42.
lead to bondage because the lover desires always to comport the beloved to their own will rather than that which God wills for them.\textsuperscript{142} Thus, \textit{agape} can love the enemy when emotional love cannot. These two competing visions of love are so opposed that “emotional, self-centered love turns into personal hatred when it encounters genuine spiritual love that does not desire but serves.”\textsuperscript{143} In \textit{Life Together}, Bonhoeffer so heightens the \textit{agape-eros} distinction that the editors of the \textit{Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works Series} question the extent to which Bonhoeffer may have been influenced by Anders Nygren, the first volume of \textit{Agape and Eros} having been published seven years prior to the writing of \textit{Life Together}.\textsuperscript{144} At the very least, the vision of Christian love presented in this work has significant commonality with Nygren, insofar as it adheres to a strict binary between \textit{agape} and \textit{eros}.

Bonhoeffer shifted towards secular resistance work until his arrest in 1943. During this time he worked continually on his unfinished magnum opus \textit{Ethics}. In this work, Bonhoeffer provides a multifaceted theological response to the ethical crisis his country was undergoing. The term that Bonhoeffer ultimately formulated for the crisis was “disintegration.”\textsuperscript{145} The state of disintegration that the fallen world finds itself in is the opposite of the true definition of the good. Bonhoeffer describes this notion in the first chapter of the ethics “Christ Reality and Good,” writing that “Human beings, with their motives and their works, with their fellow humans, with the creation that surrounds them, in other words, reality as a whole held in the hands of God—that is what is embraced by the question of good.”\textsuperscript{146} The concept of reality as the answer to the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 44.
\item \textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 43.
\item \textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 40, ff 17.
\item \textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 53.
\end{itemize}
question of the good, over and against disintegration, is, for Bonhoeffer, what differentiates Christian ethics from its alternatives. All other ethics are “marked by the antithesis between ought and is, idea and realization, motive and work,” whereas Christian ethics are to be marked by “the relation between reality and becoming real.”\textsuperscript{147} The need for a Christian ethic that addresses reality in its fullness is due to the fact that “Human beings are indivisible wholes, not only as individuals in both their person and work, but also as members of the human and created community to which they belong.”\textsuperscript{148} True integration into reality, and thus a true ethic that can speak to humans in their disintegration, must make its starting point the reconciliation of God and the world in Jesus Christ, because “in Jesus Christ the reality of God has entered into the reality of the world.”\textsuperscript{149} Thus Christ allows humans to genuinely participate in the world: “In Christ we are invited to participate in the reality of God and the reality of the world at the same time, the one not without the other. The reality of God is disclosed only as it places me completely into the reality of the world.”\textsuperscript{150}

The disintegration and alienation of motives from action, virtue from reality, individual from community, and human community from the rest of creation, is the problem that Bonhoeffer believes that ethics attempts to solve, and he lamented ad nauseum the inability of principles to overcome this disintegration. This is because “reality is not built on principles, but rests on the living, creating God.”\textsuperscript{151} In the chapter “Ethics as Formation,” he explains that “whoever looks at Jesus Christ sees in fact God and the world in one. From then on they can no longer see God without the world or the world without God.”\textsuperscript{152} Bonhoeffer nuances his vision of

\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., 50.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 53.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., 54.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid., 55.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 81.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 82.
Christian love to elucidate his vision of the reconciliation of God with the world: “Not ideals or programs, not conscience, duty, responsibility, or virtue, but only the consummate love of God can meet and overcome reality.”\textsuperscript{153} The mystery of the reconciliation of the world and God is fulfilled in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ because in the crucifixion “the world exhausts its rage on the body of Jesus Christ.” And in the resurrection “the martyred one forgives the world its sins. Thus reconciliation takes place.”\textsuperscript{154} This reconciliation is the substance of reality: “there is no longer any reality, any world, that is not reconciled with God and at peace.”\textsuperscript{155} The ethical task of Christianity does not consist of merely virtue or merely action, but “formation,” which occurs “in being drawn into the form of Jesus Christ, by being conformed to the unique form of the one who became human, was crucified, and is risen.”\textsuperscript{156} This formation is not the attainment of super-humanity, or any sort of transcendence of the human form, but rather the freedom of the human from both contempt and deification; the real human is “the object of the love of God.”\textsuperscript{157} Whereas contempt and deification both demand diversity to be quenched in the name of either elimination or perfection, the reality of God’s love is accomplished in diversity because “the manifold riches of God’s creation are not violated here by a false uniformity, by forcing people to submit to an ideal, a type, or a particular image of the

\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., 83. 
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid. 
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid. 
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., 93. 
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., 94.
human.” This funds the fullness of the Christian ethical life which serves real human beings, rather than “generally valid” principles.

This emphasis on Christ’s relevance to the whole of human life is further developed in his description of penultimate natural life. He defines the “natural” as “that which, after the fall, is directed toward the coming of Jesus Christ.” In the postlapsarian condition, “creation” becomes “nature” within which the uninterrupted, primordial intimacy with God becomes the relative freedom of natural life. Bonhoeffer believes that life itself tends towards the natural and is constantly fending off anything that would destroy or corrupt it as unnatural. This is not unbridled vitalism since life that divorces itself from Christ and would make itself absolute, destroys itself. For life to be ordered toward Christ, it must understand itself as simultaneously an end unto itself and a means to an end, always both, never one without the other. This simultaneous intrinsic and instrumental valuation of human life is expressed ethically in rights (life as an end) and duties (life as a means to an end). Both rights and duties are given with life and both must be expressed for the sake of Christ’s coming. The notion of life as an end in

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158 Ibid. This should be distinguished from the Eastern Orthodox doctrine of “theosis.” The orthodox notion of theosis and its relationship with created difference is summarized excellently by Vladimir Lossky: “Man is a personal being like God, and not a blind nature. Such is the character of the divine image in him…instead of becoming ‘disindividualized’ to become ‘cosmic’ and to merge thus into a divine impersonal, his absolute correspondence of person with a personal God allows him to ‘personalize’ the world.” [Orthodox Theology: An Introduction (Crestwood, NY: Saint Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1978), 70-1]. Thus the theosis of the cosmos, dependent on the theosis of humanity, does not destroy difference but brings it into the fullness of its being.

159 Bonhoeffer. Ethics, 98.

160 Ibid., 171. Here Bonhoeffer notes that the concept of the natural had often been held in contempt by protestant theologians and thus it is worth noting how his notion of the ultimate’s relationship with the penultimate works together with his notion of the natural to construct a version of natural theology that maintains the necessity and integrity of Christology.

161 Ibid., 173.

162 Ibid., 176.

163 Ibid.

164 Ibid., 178.

165 Ibid., 179.

166 Ibid., 180. Here there is much commonality with the same type of paradoxical logic that Bonhoeffer uses in Sanctorum Communio, wherein the community is simultaneously desired for its own sake and not for its own sake.
itself embodies in “a right to bodily joys, without subordinating them to a further, higher
purpose.” In its purposelessness “play is the clearest expression that bodily life is an end in
itself.” Bonhoeffer provides a nuanced rationale for the integrity of human life that is very important for
his holistic theology of Christian love. As he first enumerated in earlier chapters, the love of God
is directed towards real human beings and, in Christ, God embraces real human life. True
Christian love must embrace the whole of life; this prepares the way for Christ and is, therefore,
properly natural. Anything less is a rejection to the reconciliation of God and the world in Christ.

He continues the development of a robust vision of the human life in the chapter “History
and the Good (1).” In this chapter Bonhoeffer describes a vision of responsible participation in
the world. His vision of humans as creatures of history forces him to recognize that the
realization of ethical ideals cannot be accomplished by privatized principles, but only in taking
responsibility for concrete human beings. Just as in the incarnation and crucifixion affirmation
of human life and judgement on human life can exist only simultaneously, so “acknowledgement
of the status quo and protest against the status quo are inextricably connected.” The becoming-
human of God “is why responsible action has to weigh, judge, and evaluate the matter within the
human domain.” This freedom for responsibility is only possible in accordance with reality,
that is, according to its “origin, essence, and goal” in God’s action. Thus responsible action
“allows the world to be the world without ever forgetting that God has claimed this world by

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167 Ibid., 187. It must be noted that this quote takes place within a large pericope specifically addressing the integrity of bodily life which Bonhoeffer sees as crucial for a Christian natural theology since Christianity grants such high dignity to the body (180-90).
168 Ibid.
169 Ibid., 220.
170 Ibid. 223.
171 Ibid., 225.
172 Ibid., 226.
loving, judging, and reconciling it.” This action is “genuinely worldly, and... can only take place where the true nature of the world is recognized.” At the heart of this genuine worldliness is love, which according to Bonhoeffer “accepts what is real just as it is, as proper to love.” Love derives its way of dealing with what is real “from the reality of the real, from its being-loved-by-God.” Because of Christ’s example, true love does not seek to avoid becoming guilty for the sake of its own purity; to do so would be to divorce oneself from the ultimate reality of Christ. Thus concrete, responsible action understands that what is “Christian” and what is “worldly” can only be understood in the unity of Christ. He applies this reconciliation of God and the world to life: “Every attempt to portray a Christianity of ‘pure’ love purged of worldly ‘impurities’ is a false purism and perfectionism that scorns God’s becoming human and falls prey to the fate of all ideologies.”

Bonhoeffer’s second draft of “History and the Good” has less content that explicitly addresses love, but it retreads much of the same ground regarding responsibility. In this version he focusses on the simultaneous “Yes” and “No” of Christ. In the “Yes” and the “No,” Christ both affirms and judges human life simultaneously. This “Yes” and “No” allows the world to be affirmed as having legitimacy while also being ever oriented towards Christ. This becomes the locus of responsible action because such an action is “in accordance with Christ ... because it

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173 Ibid., 228.
174 Ibid., 233.
175 Ibid.
176 Ibid., 234. Bonhoeffer elaborates on human participation in Christ’s guilt bearing: “Even though human responsible action is never the action of someone who is sinless, it nevertheless participates indirectly in the action of Jesus Christ. It does so in contrast to any self-righteous action based on abstract principles” (235).
177 Ibid., 238.
178 Ibid., 241.
179 Ibid., 251.
allows the world to be world and reckons with the world as world, while at the same time never forgetting that the world is loved, judged, and reconciled in Jesus Christ by God.”

The theology of love implicit in Bonhoeffer’s *Ethics* comes to a climax in the chapter aptly named “God’s Love and the Disintegration of the World.” Here Bonhoeffer fully develops his notion of disintegration as the apotheosis of an unnatural life divorced from its origin, essence, and goal in the ultimate reality of Jesus Christ. Within the state of disintegration, disunion with God causes all of human life and society to be fragmented. This includes the moral aspects of humanity: “is and ought, life and law, knowing and doing,” as well as the higher virtues of humanity: “truth, justice, beauty, and love conflict with one another just as do desire and aversion, happiness and sorrow.” This state of fragmentation leads to humans living in continual moral conflict, intensely focused on all the options available, and often paralyzed by the process. It is this attitude of moral rigorism that Jesus critiqued in the Pharisees, since their questions arise out of “the disunion of the knowledge of good and evil,” whereas Jesus’ answer to them “springs from unity with God, with the origin, from a place where the disunion of human beings from God has been overcome.” It is from this place of seeking the will of God that humans can act responsibly, only by discerning the will of God in specific situations and contexts can one overcome disintegration. This will is the will of the living God and thus can never be made part of a system of principles.

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180 Ibid., 264.
182 Ibid., 307.
183 Ibid., 310.
184 Ibid., 311.
185 Ibid., 321.
Bonhoeffer’s definition of disintegration is necessary in order to understand his definition of love, which he defines as “the decisive word that distinguishes the human being in disunion from the human being in the state of origin.”\textsuperscript{186} Within true love “everything is integrated, united, and pleasing to God.”\textsuperscript{187} Love cannot be limited to a particular human behavior, nor can it be reduced to the merely personal, because both of these limitations shortchange Christ’s claim on the whole of reality.\textsuperscript{188} In seeking a biblical definition of love, Bonhoeffer turns to the Johannine maxim “God is love.” Thus, love is Jesus Christ, for Christ is the fullness of the revelation of God.\textsuperscript{189} All love has its origin in God. Christ’s status as the ultimate definition of love prohibits formulating a general definition of love from Christ’s life or teachings.\textsuperscript{190} This love must become known within its historical reality. Bonhoeffer points out that the term agape “is not unrelated to what we mean when we say ‘love.’”\textsuperscript{191} This is not because Christ derives his authority from the popular idea of love, but because Christ “is the foundation, truth, and the reality of love.”\textsuperscript{192} So all “natural thought about love is true and real only insofar as it participates in its origin” and human love can be natural according to his previously enumerated definition.\textsuperscript{193} Because the reconciliation between human beings with God in Jesus Christ is the font of love, this means that the human’s love for God is subsequent to being loved by God.\textsuperscript{194} This status of being loved by God is the unifying center of human being and doing. This is because it is “as whole human beings, as thinking and acting human beings, that we are loved by God in Christ, that we are reconciled with God. And as whole human beings, thinking and

\textsuperscript{186} Ibid., 332.  
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 333.  
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid., 334.  
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid., 335.  
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid., 336.
In this chapter, Bonhoeffer most clearly explains his vision of love against disintegration, which he previously had developed in this work. His notion of humanization as Christ’s love overcoming of disintegration comes into its fullness here.

As described in “God’s Love and the Disintegration of the World,” the human being in a state of disintegration is constantly assaulted by ethical dilemmas and beset by the anxiety entailed in this process. The human being according to their origin forgoes the fallen knowledge of good and evil for the sake of discerning the will of God. The content of the will of God comes to the world from Jesus Christ and is instantiated within history in four mandates: “Church, family, work, and government.” These four institutions must be “with-one-another, for-one-another, and over-against-one-another,” for “None of these mandates exists self-sufficiently, nor can one of them replace all the others.” When these mandates are disconnected from one another, or one tries to dominate another, at that point they cease to be God’s mandates. In allowing these mandates, Christ allows humans to be fully human in all the multi-faceted aspects of their lives. Thus Christ is found in the midst of life, as is proper to his becoming human. “Divine being can be found nowhere else but in human form” – this means that Christianity is not an end unto itself but a means by which humans live as human beings before God. Christ allows the world to be content in being the world through his presence in its midst, since the

195 Ibid., 337.
196 Ibid., 380.
197 Ibid., 393.
198 It is very easy to see how, in his context, Bonhoeffer came to this conclusion. In Nazi Germany the party had proclaimed itself as the totalizing center of German life and thus came to rule over church, family, and work. In this situation it must have become clear that the solution was to proclaim the necessary plurality of earthly institutional life.
199 Bonhoeffer, Ethics, 400.
200 Ibid., 399-400.
world left to its own devices perpetually seeks to replace God with itself.\textsuperscript{201} This is why the plurality of the four mandates is of utmost importance; it keeps any one of them from subsuming Christ’s place and becoming supreme over the others.\textsuperscript{202} In these mandates Christ “does not impose a foreign law on created being, but neither does Christ permit created being to have autonomy apart from Christ’s commandment.”\textsuperscript{203} Thus human individuals must seek Christ in all four of the mandates and only then are they sure to meet him in the midst of their lives. The four mandates then serve as the conclusion of the theology of love in Bonhoeffer’s ethics. Understood within the framework set up in the rest of the work, particularly in “God’s Love and the Disintegration of the World,” God’s love is what integrates humans into the fullness of worldly life. Thus, it is love, being loved by God and loving God and neighbor in return, that thrusts humans into the irreducible fullness of life in the four mandates. Love beckons humanity into the midst of the world, and unto a natural life oriented continually towards Christ in its secular aspects every bit as much as its religious ones.

In his prison letters, written to several recipients from 1943 (when he was first arrested) to 1945 (when he was executed), Bonhoeffer continued to develop theological themes and motifs introduced in his ethics. His notion of the unity between earthly and heavenly reality in Christ is clearly seen in the wedding sermon he writes for his friend and colleague Eberhard Bethge. In this sermon he admonishes Eberhard and his bride Renate not “to speak here all too quickly and submissively of God’s will and guidance.”\textsuperscript{204} It is false piety to not admit that the love between

\textsuperscript{201} Ibid., 401. Again this idolatrous deification should not be confused with the Orthodox doctrine of theosis.
\textsuperscript{202} Ibid., 402.
\textsuperscript{203} Ibid.
them is not their own, as well as admit that it is their own will that has lead them to make this
vow.205 The longing to find earthly bliss in their relationship is “proper both in human and in
God’s eyes.”206 In their wedding God gives “his yes to your yes, God’s will consents to yours,
and God grants you and affirms your triumph and jubilation and pride.”207 In giving his consent,
God appropriates their human love for his purposes, creating something new from it, a
marriage.208 Just as the couple gives the rings to the minister to receive them again, so the human
couple gives their love and receives their marriage from God.209 Despite the beginnings of
marriage in the couple’s love, after God creates a marriage it is the marriage that upholds the
couple’s love. This frees the couple from the anxiety inherent in love and orients that love
towards the kingdom of God.210 Here one can see echoes of ideas that Bonhoeffer developed in
*Ethics* such as the naturalness of life, wherein worldliness is made to serve Christ’s purposes.

Bonhoeffer reveals in his personal letters to his parents the importance that earthly
desires held for him when he was deprived of them. On October 4, 1943 he writes “I don’t share
Diogenes’ opinion that the absence of desire is the highest joy and an empty barrel is the ideal
vessel; why should we foolishly believe what we know is not true?”211 This is by no means an
endorsement of an indulgent hedonism; it is still useful to delay and moderate gratification of
desires, but “it dare not reach a point that the desires die off altogether and one becomes
resigned.”212 He expresses similar sentiments about earthly feelings to a letter to Bethge that
November, claiming that Christians need not feel shame about “a measure of impatience,

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205 Ibid.
206 Ibid., 83.
207 Ibid.
208 Ibid.
209 Ibid., 84.
210 Ibid., 84-7.
211 Ibid., 165.
212 Ibid.
longing, protest against what is unnatural, and a strong measure of desire for freedom and earthly happiness and the capacity to effect change.”  

He here paints the picture of a truly worldly Christian as one of passion and desire, one that enjoys life in all of its diversity.

On the 18th of December 1943 Bonhoeffer wrote Bethge a letter further reflecting on earthly desires and their relationship to the Christian life. He begins with his reflections on separation from the people he loves, saying “we have to experience longing practically to the point of becoming ill—and only in this way do we sustain communion with the people we love.” The Christian response to separation is not to deny desire, but to sustain it, and so not divorce oneself from earthly life. The love of God should not separate humans from earthly things. Christians are to love God “in our life and in the good things God gives us.” Christians ought not to seek an escapist soteriology as a way of excusing themselves from earthly desires, which summarizes humorously: “that a person in the arms of his wife should long for the hereafter is, to put it mildly, tasteless and in any case is not God’s will.” One should love God in the midst of earthly happiness and not “be more pious than God and allow this happiness to be gnawed away through arrogant thoughts and challenges and wild religious fantasy that is never satisfied with what God gives.” Of course all earthly things are temporary, but this is not an excuse to refuse a gift from God. To want to excuse oneself from earthly desires too early is to lose step with God’s timing. This leads later in the letter to reflect on a line from a hymn with the assertion “I will restore all.” He unpacks the meaning of this line, explaining that “in Christ

213 Ibid., 184.
214 Ibid., 227.
215 Ibid., 228.
216 Ibid.
217 Ibid.
218 Ibid., 229.
all things are taken up, preserved, albeit in transfigured form, transparent, clear, liberated from the torment of self-serving demands.”

These notions of loving God in the midst of life and the restoration of earthly desires are related to Bonhoeffer’s controversial notion of religionless Christianity. In a letter to Bethge written on the 30th of April 1944, Bonhoeffer explains that the problem with much religious Christianity is that it speaks of God “where human knowledge is at an end…or where human strength fails.” This places God in the position of *deus ex machina*, as a God that is only effective when humans think they need him, and is constantly losing ground as humans push the boundaries of their capabilities further. Bonhoeffer desires to speak of God “not at the boundaries but in the center, not in weakness but in strength, thus it is not in death and guilt but in human life and human goodness.” Thus it can be said that “God is the beyond in the midst of our lives.” This is the very nature of religionless Christianity. If religion is understood as a human way of dividing one’s particular social group or organization from the rest of the human community, then true Christianity must be religionless in order for it to serve responsibly in the midst of the world. Bonhoeffer believes that this notion of the centrality of God in the midst of human life is endemic to the message of the Old Testament and that the Christian failure to recognize God as the beyond in the midst of life is the result of alienating the Old from the New Testament. Thus, in the context of a theology of love, it is in the midst of the desires of life that God’s love is relevant.

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219 Ibid.
220 Ibid., 365.
221 Ibid., 366-7.
222 Ibid., 367.
223 Ibid., 362.
224 Ibid.
Bonhoeffer wrote the most important and theologically rich exposition of his theology of love in the prison letters to Bethge on the 20th of May, 1944. They were written in response to some specific concerns that Bethge raised about his own spirituality. In a letter Bethge wrote a few weeks prior, he expressed how his separation from his new wife was occupying much of his thought life, and asks Bonhoeffer for advice. In response, Bonhoeffer sought to provide a salve for Bethge’s anxiety. He expresses that “there is a danger in any passionate erotic love, that through it you may lose what I’d like to call the polyphony of life.” He explains what he means by this, writing that God “wants to be loved with our whole heart, not to the detriment of earthly love or to diminish it, but as a sort of cantus firmus to which all the other voices of life resound in counterpoint.” Within this relationship to the cantus firmus, these other voices retain their “full independence” while always still remaining grounded. As a biblical example he gives Song of Songs, which in its passionate romance contradicts “all those who think being Christian is about tempering one’s passions.” Bonhoeffer believes that where the love of God is clear and distinct, as the cantus firmus, earthly love can develop “as mightily as it wants.” He compares this interrelated distinction to the Chalcedonian definition that proclaims Christ’s divine and human natures as “undivided yet distinct.”

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225 Ibid., 369.
226 Ibid., 393. In the English editions of Bonhoeffer’s Letters and Papers from Prison prior to the new edition available in the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works series, a tragic typographical error occurred. In these editions the above quote is rendered “there is a danger in any passionate erotic love, that through it you may love what I’d like to call the polyphony of life.” See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers From Prison, ed. Eberhard Bethge, trans. Reginald Fuller, Frank Clark, and John Bowden (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1997), 303.
227 Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works vol. 8, 394
228 Ibid.
229 Ibid. Parenthetically he asks after this quote “Where is there any such tempering in the Old Testament.”
230 Ibid.
231 Ibid. Regarding this he muses if it is not because of the two natures of Christ that human beings are so comfortable with polyphony in music. It is worth noting that this is a paraphrase of the definition of Chalcedon, which reads: “Following the holy Fathers we teach with one voice that the Son [of God] and our Lord Jesus Christ is to be confessed as one and the same [Person], that he is perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood, very God and very man, of a reasonable soul and [human] body consisting, consubstantial with the Father as touching his Godhead, and consubstantial with us as touching his manhood; made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted;
admonishes Bethge “to let the cantus firmus be heard clearly in your being together…and the counterpoint will always know that it is being carried and can’t get out of tune or be cut adrift, while remaining itself and complete in itself.”232 He explains that “only this polyphony gives your life wholeness.”233 The letter ends with him encouraging Bethge to have confidence in the cantus firmus even in the midst of his separation from his beloved.234 This notion of polyphony as endemic to wholeness provides a new and interesting dimension to Bonhoeffer’s previously explained notion of love against disintegration in the Ethics. Here in Letters and Papers from Prison, he provides a more detailed explanation about how the love of God anchors the person according to the origin, essence, and goal in Christ, while still granting flourishing to all of earthly life. The love of God does not cancel out or forbid earthly loves, but rather brings them into tune with itself.

It appears as if the image of polyphony struck a chord with Bonhoeffer; he expresses the persistence of the idea in a letter dated May 21, 1944. He himself seemed to have related to the image and used it to process his own sorrow at his separation from Bethge. In his suffering, he realized “that sorrow and joy too, belong to the polyphony of the whole life and can exist independently side by side.”235 Thus, this notion of polyphony means that loving God throws the human into the fullness of life, experiencing the differentiated whole of reality integrated into the

begotten of his Father before the worlds according to his Godhead; but in these last days for us men and for our salvation born [into the world] of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God according to his manhood. This one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son [of God] must be confessed to be in two natures, unconfusedly, immutably, indivisibly, inseparably [united], and that without the distinction of natures being taken away by such union, but rather the peculiar property of each nature being preserved and being united in one Person and subsistence, not separated or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Prophets of old time have spoken concerning him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ hath taught us, and as the Creed of the Fathers hath delivered to us” [“The Definition of Faith of the Council of Chalcedon,” (NPNF 2/14:562)].

232 Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison, 394.
233 Ibid.
234 Ibid., 395.
235 Ibid., 369.
whole of the integrated person. Bonhoeffer developed the notion of a full orbed life expressed in the emotions in another letter on the 29th of May. Here he noticed that some of his fellow prisoners were not experiencing the polyphony of life: “When the bombers come, they are nothing but fear itself; when there’s something good to eat, nothing but greed itself.” These individuals are constantly dominated by individual feelings and “are missing out on the fullness of life and on the wholeness of their own existence.” Everything about their lives “disintegrates into fragments.” He therefore once again doubles down on his well-worn model of Christianity against disintegration, claiming that Christianity “puts us into many different dimensions of life at the same time; in a way we accommodate God and the whole world within us.” A Christian life “isn’t pushed back into a single dimension, but is kept multidimensional, polyphonic.” It is necessary to push against one track thinking “in ’preparation for’ or ‘enabling’ faith, though in truth it is only faith itself that makes multidimensional life possible and so allows us to celebrate Pentecost this year, in spite of the air raids.” Thus the love of God, as the facilitator of the polyphonic life, thrusts individuals into the fullness of life and gives them a center from which they can relate to the often overwhelming complexity of life. In the same letter, he relates this to the notion of God as the center of life that he introduced in previous letters. God as the center of life does not separate individuals from their lives but allows them to experience them more fully.

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236 Ibid., 404-5.
237 Ibid., 405.
238 Ibid.
239 Ibid.
240 Ibid.
241 Ibid.
242 Ibid., 406. From this analysis of Bonhoeffer’s major works it seems clear that, contrary to Godsey’s conservative interpretation, his theology of love experienced a significant evolution. While Godsey does admit that Bonhoeffer’s love for the world increased in his later years, he does not acknowledge the fundamental shifts in both Bonhoeffer’s Christology and ecclesiology that facilitate this change. In this regard, Reynolds vision of
All of the themes in Bonhoeffer’s later writings, especially *Ethics* and *Letters and Papers from Prison*, work together to form a theology of love that is markedly different from any of the other figures discussed in this chapter. Of course, Kierkegaard was a major influence on Bonhoeffer’s early theology of love. But in his later work Bonhoeffer undermines the strict separation between Christian and earthly love that Kierkegaard had previously pioneered. Bonhoeffer still believed that Christian truth was, in a sense, counterintuitive and therefore required the revelation of Christ, but the content of that revelation was not turning away from the worldly/bodily reality to the spiritual/mental reality, but rather the truth that in Christ one cannot have God without having the world and cannot have the world without having God.

The ways in which Bonhoeffer differentiates from Kierkegaard apply also (broadly) to Nygren. This cannot be said for the early Bonhoeffer, who agreed with Nygren that the human heart’s limpid substitute for love cannot help but create “dark desires” that ultimately only serve the self. But in his later work there is a perceptible shift in Bonhoeffer’s thinking. While he still maintains a theocentric and Christocentric vision of love, his conviction regarding their implications changes drastically. Nygren’s vision of Christological love prioritizes the Cross because it demonstrates the love of Christ in utter self-annihilating giving. The later Bonhoeffer, however, believed that the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection must be held together in paradoxical unity. Human life must be negotiated within the simultaneous affirmation and judgement placed upon it by Christ. Within this matrix, love of God provides the unity in the center of earthly loves, which are continually trying to pull humans totally toward individual desires and against the unity of life in God. Despite the danger of disintegration, the love of God

Bonhoeffer’s major evolution after 1939 prevails as the more salient position. Reynold’s analysis, however, is imperfect insofar as he overemphasizes the secularity of Bonhoeffer’s this-worldly Christianity.
does not mitigate earthly desires but allows them to truly exist without deifying themselves. The Christian who loves God lives a polyphonous life that allows all of their earthly desires to exist in tune with their love of God, and thus their earthly desires come into the fullness of their being. This is not the weakening of erotic love, but rather its path to fullness and strength through coming into concord with its origin, essence, and goal. The love of God is the difference between earthly loves being noise, and earthly loves being music. Thus, these earthly loves are placed in service of God, as demonstrated clearly in marriage, wherein human romantic love is rallied to God’s purposes. This polyphony throws humans into life’s irreducible diversity, wherein they experience its simultaneous joys and sorrows. This necessary plurality of life has institutional consequences, as embodied in Bonhoeffer’s theology of the four mandates. None of the mandates can be collapsed into one another, just as no single desire can be allowed to dominate human life, no one institution amongst family, work, government, and church. Polyphonic life is a life that participates in all of these different institutions at once. The life of loving God is not, as Nygren believed, defined by a totalizing altruism.\textsuperscript{243} Thus while erotic love can cause one to lose the polyphony of life, within the polyphony of life it is brought into tune with the love of God, expressed in Christ’s reconciliation of the world to God. This is markedly different from Nygren’s simplistic dichotomy between self-giving \textit{agape} and self-serving \textit{eros}.

Lewis’ vision of the relationship between Christian \textit{agape} and human loves is fairly sophisticated; nevertheless Bonhoeffer does provide some significant innovations in this regard. Lewis does grant value and weight to the first three of the four loves and does not disparage them as lascivious, but he does express concern regarding their deification, claiming that they are turn sour only when they are made ultimate. Bonhoeffer expresses similar concerns in his \textit{Ethics}.

\textsuperscript{243} Bonhoeffer, \textit{Letters and Papers from Prison}, 375.
wherein the “Yes” and “No” of Christ brings about true human life that does not deify nor disparage itself but allows it to truly exist according to its origin, essence, and goal. Lewis believed that these earthly loves were pedagogical aides that could teach humans to love God better but could never replace the love of God. Ultimately loving God means turning from these earthly loves for the sake of properly orienting them. Bonhoeffer, on the other hand, has a more simultaneous view of love of the world and love of God. Earthly loves do not, for Bonhoeffer, only teach Christian’s how to love God better, but loving God also teaches Christians how to love the world better, and strengthens earthly and erotic loves by harmonizing them to itself. Thus, God thrusts human beings back into the midst of life, rather than appearing as only the ultimate telos of earthly love; the love of God is the beginning of true worldly love.

Tillich’s notion of love is predicated upon the ontological unity of all created things. Thus when a thing is loved it is not loved as itself but as an instantiation of the power of being. Therefore, while Tillich attempts to overcome the notion of a competitive relationship between God and the world, he does so by undermining love for human beings as such. In Bonhoeffer’s notion of love it is “real human beings” that are loved by Jesus Christ. He explains that “love does not despise what is real for the sake of an idea, but accepts it as a given and as loved by God.”

Jesus Christ is not an instantiation of the deeper principle of the ground of being but the legitimization of the real vicissitudes of human life. It should be noted that Tillich did not intend to devalue the particular and the individual for the sake of the institutional and the ontological, but his notion of love as being itself lends itself to the emphasizing of monism rather than plurality. Tillich relies on an ontological sameness that undergirds all human particularity.

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245 Ibid., 234.
The notion of the love of God as a *cantus firmus*, which Bonhoeffer develops in *Letters and Papers from Prison*, allows contrapuntal earthly loves to retain their “full independence” while still at all times being related to and enriched by the *cantus firmus*.\(^{246}\) This why he compares the relationship of earthly love with love of God to Chalcedonian definition, they are “undivided yet distinct.”\(^{247}\) Thus, while Tillich is very strong in his emphasis on the unity of all love, he does so by reducing all love to the love with which God loves Godself. This does not allow for polyphony since it synchronizes all love into the same ontological melody with no room for the harmonic counterpoint that Bonhoeffer believed was so important.\(^{248}\)

### Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that Bonhoeffer’s theological vision of Christian love is distinct and innovative amongst his peers within 20\(^{th}\) century Protestantism. I have done so by first examining the contributions of Søren Kierkegaard and his vision of Christian love as counterintuitive, Anders Nygren and his vision of *agape* as pure self-giving, C. S. Lewis and his vision of the relationship of earthly loves as preparation for self-giving *agape*, and Tillich with his model of love as an ontological power. I then examined Bonhoeffer’s work and determined that his theology of love evolved over time. At first, he demonstrated significant overlap with Kierkegaard and Nygren. However, as his theology evolved in response to the deteriorating political situation in Germany, he came to emphasize the this-worldliness of Christianity, anchored in the reconciliation of the world and God accomplished by Christ. Bonhoeffer’s mature thinking on love is summarized in his notion of polyphony, wherein the love of God serves as a situating point for human life that allows Christians to experience the fullness of life

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\(^{247}\) Ibid.

\(^{248}\) Ibid.
and desire. This vision of love is unique and has real potential, but it is nevertheless incomplete as a theological project. In the following chapter I will examine the way that Bonhoeffer’s distinct ethical vision can be developed through dialogue with other more recent thinkers.
CHAPTER TWO:

BONHOEFFER IN DIALOGUE WITH CONSTRUCTIVE SOURCES

**Introduction**

In the first chapter I examined various theologies of love in dialogue with the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in order to ascertain the nature of his unique contribution to a robust theology of love. The present chapter is a continuation of this task. I will provide constructive examples of thinkers whose ethical thought harmonizes well with Bonhoeffer’s polyphonic notion of love. The first of these thinkers is reformed theologian and philosopher James K. A. Smith, whose reliance on Augustine makes love central to his anthropology. His “erotic anthropology” provides a useful constructive partner in filling out some of the gaps in Bonhoeffer’s thinking. The second is David Bentley Hart, whose use of Gregory of Nyssa and the tenants of Orthodox Christianity, in dialogue with continental philosophy, leads him to a powerfully compelling vision of the being of the world as anchored by the love of God. His notion of cosmological gratuity is an excellent framing device for explaining the necessity of a polyphonic vision of love. Both of these thinkers provide concrete political and ethical implications for Bonhoeffer’s theology of love.

**Smith’s Erotic Anthropology**

In his *Cultural Liturgies Series*, James K. A. Smith submits a three part treatise on cultural hermeneutics concerned with presenting human persons as essentially lovers. The central argument of the first volume, *Desiring the Kingdom*, posits that “formative practices,” referred therein as “liturgies,” form humans into certain types of people by reshaping what they love.249

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249 James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, Cultural Liturgies (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 25. It should be noted that this model is developed, especially in this volume as programmatic for the development of a new philosophy of Christian education. Smith believes that
His vision of love is unique in that he makes no distinction between love and desire, and as such he eschews the common distinction between agape and eros, writing, “agape is rightly directed eros.” With this in mind he understand human beings as fundamentally erotic creatures: “we are what we love, and our love is shaped, primed, and aimed by liturgical practices that take hold of our gut and aim our heart at certain ends.” To conceive of human beings as primarily thinking or believing beings is to ignore the many non-cognitive ways of being in the world that are essential for human life. He explains that humans do not merely passively perceive the world but that all human perception of the world is conditioned by “ultimate” and “penultimate” loves. “Penultimate” loves are always conditioned by “ultimate” loves, which govern the human’s vision of the good life. One’s ultimate love necessarily constitutes a certain vision of the good life, an ultimate telos which provides a comprehensive vision of human flourishing. A telos includes implicit assumptions about relationships, family, recreation, nature, and work. One’s telos affects present behavior as “we become little microcosms of that envisioned world as we try to embody it in the here and now.” Following this line of implicit affective cognition, Smith believes that Christians should place a moratorium on the term “worldview” in favor of Christian education has become beholden to a model of human personhood conditioned by the enlightenment, wherein humans are understood as formed and defined primarily by their thoughts and ideas. Smith wants to re-embody the paradigm of Christian education so that it focusses more heavily on practices and desires (41). Smith has little sympathy for Cartesian anthropology including its foundationalist epistemology, and its emphasis on self-sufficiency. The potential to critique this anthropophy accounts for much of the promise that Smith sees in postmodern philosophy in his The Church and Postmodern Culture Series. See James K. A. Smith, Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism: Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church, The Church and Postmodern Culture (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006); James K. A. Smith, Who’s Afraid of Relativism: Community, Contingency, and Creaturehood, The Church and Postmodern Culture (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014).  

251 Smith, Desiring the Kingdom, 40.  
252 Ibid., 46.  
253 Ibid., 51.  
254 Ibid., 53.  
255 Ibid., 54.
Charles Taylor’s term “the social imaginary.” This imaginary refers to the most basic way of intuiting the world at an affective level. It is fundamentally pre-cognitive in that the imagination which is formed by love is the very condition for the types of thoughts that one is able to have or accept. Because human loves are malleable, they are able to be formed and deformed by any and all cultural institutions. Smith emphasizes that culture is not a thing forced on humans from the outside but is an activity embodied in institutions that express the ultimate loves of those who create them, and thereby perpetuate themselves and reinforce their implicit desires through embodied practices.

In order to counter deformative cultural liturgies, the church must engage in a mode of proclamation and formation that habituates its participants into a better narrative. Thankfully Smith believes these are already implicit in the historical worship practices of the church. Smith asserts that in these practices there is an implicit sacramentalism, meaning that the means by which God’s grace meets humans are creation and materiality. The usage of material objects as means of communion with God is not an operation of some divine magic, but rather an intensification of “natural sacramentality.” The use of materiality in the divine-human encounter heightens the formative power of the encounter since human loves are formed by embodied liturgy. This sacramental nature of reality is embodied in various Christian practices. Baptism, in its “renunciation of the world,” is not a rejection of the world as such, but

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256 Ibid., 65.
257 Ibid., 66.
258 Ibid., 70.
259 Ibid., 72. Smith does, in the next chapter, offer a distinction between “thick” and “thin” practices. Thin practices are those mundane elements of life, which serve instrumental functions and do not carry much implicit meaning. Thick practices, on the other hand, are meaning-full and formative for an individual’s identity through the conditioning of their affective aim (82).
260 Ibid., 135.
261 Ibid., 141.
262 Ibid., 143.
263 Ibid., 152.
rather of the world’s self-destructive “direction.”264 Thus in baptism Christians are inculcated to redirect their desires in the direction of the kingdom of God, which signals not “the end of the world” but “the end of the world as we know it.”265 In embodied hospitality, the church liturgically embodies human relationships and as such shows that God is concerned with the flourishing of human life, not merely the spiritual or religious aspects of human being.266 Within the Eucharist is an embodied affirmation of the goodness of creation; “this suggests that the kingdom does not involve a cancellation of this-worldly concerns; it is not a wholly other world but rather this world transformed and transfigured.267 The liturgically inculcated renunciation of the “direction, not structure” of the world requires an abstention from certain majority cultural practices due to their deformative liturgical power.268 This abstention is not for the sake of separation but rather to engage in “cultural labor…to unfold cultural institutions that are ordered by love and aimed at the kingdom.”269

In the second book in the Cultural Liturgies Series, Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works, Smith develops the notions introduced in the previous volume. He emphasizes the part that rightly ordered eros has in producing action: “generating good, just, virtuous action is not merely a matter of disseminating the relevant rules or principles; it is more fundamentally dependent upon training affect.”270 The cultivation of affect results in the formation of imagination and is the product of the body/story nexus, meaning that axiological data about the

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264 Ibid., 188.
265 Ibid., 158.
266 Ibid., 169.
267 Ibid., 199.
268 Ibid., 209.
269 Ibid., 210.
world is primarily filtered through the lens of physical practices and embodied narratives. The human affective center conditions the way that an individual perceives any and all situations and limits the number of responses that an individual recognizes as possible. Through embodied habits an individual carries orienting knowledge that narrates the possibilities for their comportment in the world. The body is not merely an object in the world but is the possibility for human encounter with objects; the habits latent in the body constitute what kind of world is perceived. The Christian objective in cultivating a mode of being in the world should therefore be to “inhabit the world as God’s creation.” This goes beyond a merely didactic doctrine of creation, but is constituted by orienting practices that relate the Christian to the world. He uses the term habitus to describe the manner in which the world that humans and communities perceive is not a record of objective reality, but a construction that a community’s affections participate in creating. This habitus is the product of communal formation. The habitus is the possibility of action in the world; it conditions the type of action available to both individuals and communities at a given time. The social body, as well as the individual body, inculcates certain affections that in turn make certain actions possible. Without acquiring a community one cannot acquire a habitus.

Smith elaborates on his notions of the affective framing of perception by explaining that “our bodies make meaning on an ‘aesthetic’ register, without the discursive mediation of words,
concepts, or propositions."\textsuperscript{282} The aesthetic nature of human perception is continually entangled with the notion of desire, especially for Christians who “become a people who desire the kingdom” insofar as they are “a people who have been trained to imagine the kingdom in a certain way."\textsuperscript{283} The aesthetics implicit in practices give birth to an affective imagination that makes it possible to desire the “kingdom” (or any particular vision of the good life).\textsuperscript{284} The liturgy works not just to redirect desire, but to form imagination through its narrative and thereby inscribe its participants into a habitus.\textsuperscript{285} Action is primarily a product of this aesthetic imagination more so than conscious deliberation.\textsuperscript{286} Therefore, it is imperative to cultivate a virtuous imagination in order to perform virtuous actions.\textsuperscript{287} Smith explains the need for virtuous action within the framework of Christian mission. In his paradigm, Christian worship through aesthetic formation continually conditions its participants for the ultimate purpose of mission.\textsuperscript{288} Smith believes that the form of historic Christian worship narrates Christians into the story of God’s redemption of the world and thus prepares them for missional action in the world.\textsuperscript{289} Through the repetition of these practices God forms the church into sanctified people.\textsuperscript{290} This notion of mission is inclusive, and implies vocation and culture making.\textsuperscript{291}

In the third and final instalment of the \textit{Cultural Liturgies Series, Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology}, Smith further elaborates on the theological anthropology he developed in previous themes towards the direction of political theology. One of the first

\textsuperscript{282} Ibid., 110. \\
\textsuperscript{283} Ibid., 125. \\
\textsuperscript{284} Ibid., 127 \\
\textsuperscript{285} Ibid., 139. \\
\textsuperscript{286} Ibid., 141. \\
\textsuperscript{287} Ibid., 157. \\
\textsuperscript{288} Ibid., 166. \\
\textsuperscript{289} Ibid., 174. \\
\textsuperscript{290} Ibid., 182. \\
\textsuperscript{291} Ibid., 157.
implications of Smith’s thought for political theology is that the political arena “is more like a repertoire of rites, than a ‘space’ for expressing ideas.” 292 The comprehensive nature of Christian eschatology and theology of creation relativizes the political, reveling it to be narrow in its relevance. A Christian theology guided by the doctrines of creation and *eschaton* must “realize that much of what constitutes life of the *polis* is modes of ‘life in common’ that fall outside the narrow interests of state and government.” 293 For this reason Smith expresses a preference for the term “public theology” rather than “political theology” to describe a Christian account of shared “social-economic-political life.” 294 Thus the church’s critique of culture cannot be directed solely at governmental life, especially because “in the current configuration of globalized capitalism, the state has in many ways been trumped by the forces of the market and society.” 295 A Christian theology formed by the doctrine of creation and incarnation, and attendant to the erotic nature of human beings, “will appreciate the many layers and folds and features of a flourishing society.” 296 There are, therefore, institutions and communities beyond the state necessary for human flourishing. 297 Because both the church and state are liturgically formative institutions, they are both attempting to inculcate participants with a vision of the good life; this does not, however, mean that they are mutually exclusive or antithetical. Nevertheless, the church’s eschatological hope prevents it from dissolving their separation. 298 Because the state is not a neutral party, it consists of practices oriented towards an ultimate vision that is to some extent different from the church. The church, however, cannot resign itself from public life in an

293 Ibid., 11.
294 Ibid.
295 Ibid., 12.
296 Ibid., 13.
297 Ibid.
298 Ibid., 16.
attempt to rightly order the loves of a society.\textsuperscript{299} Smith believes that more than any organizational or deontological characteristic, what most distinguishes the city of God from the earthly city is the \textit{telos} toward which each aims its love.\textsuperscript{300} Despite this teleological focus, Smith pushes against idealism in favor of an emphasis on historical context in policy formulation, claiming that “the same policy proposal could be faithful in one age and unfaithful in the next, a creative way to bend society toward shalom in one context and a distorted, unjust strategy in another.”\textsuperscript{301} This strategic policy formation is not restricted to government, since “a healthy society comprises a plurality of spheres that together—and in sync—contribute to the common good.”\textsuperscript{302} He critiques Reinhold Niebuhr for the abstraction of his public theology, affirming rather that the Christian message is implicit with a type of humanism that calls people into their “natural” selves in Christ; as such the vision of the coming kingdom is applicable to all of human life.\textsuperscript{303} The critique of the church is, however, never a flat rejection of the world. Even if the world cannot perfect its love, it can inculcate a vision of the good life that is more than less oriented toward shalom; thus the Christian project is not all or nothing.\textsuperscript{304} The church must

\textsuperscript{299} Ibid., 35.
\textsuperscript{300} Ibid., 51.
\textsuperscript{301} Ibid., 125.
\textsuperscript{302} Ibid., 126.
\textsuperscript{303} Ibid., 164. Reinhold Niebuhr differs from Smith insofar as he believes that Christian love is a virtue, which can only be truly actualized in small groups. The absolutism that it demands eschews the careful computation of relative needs required to approximate justice in larger groups [Reinhold Niebuhr, \textit{Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics} (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1960), 52]. Even though the realization of this love is an impossibility, it is nevertheless the ideal of love that makes the approximation of justice possible within society. This impossible ideal can only be approximated by being resolutely believed [Niebuhr, \textit{Moral Man}, 81]. He revisits this dichotomy between love and justice in \textit{The Nature and Destiny of Man}, where he maps it on to the Lutheran nature-grace distinction (nature corresponding to the historical possibility of justice and love corresponding to the ideal possibility of love) [Reinhold Niebuhr, \textit{The Nature and Destiny of Man}, vol. II: Human Destiny (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1946), 246]. For the application of this distinction to the moral dilemma of pacifism see Reinhold Niebuhr, “Why the Christian Church is Not Pacifist,” in \textit{The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr: Selected Essays and Addresses}, ed. Robert McAfee Brown (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 109.
\textsuperscript{304} Smith, \textit{Awaiting the King}, 218.
constantly negotiate the boundary between the “Yes” and the “No” that Christ imposes on all human culture in order to be faithful.

**An Integration of Smith and Bonhoeffer’s Theologies of Love**

Smith’s immensely helpful constructive project can provide Bonhoeffer’s ideas with a good deal of support. By describing people as fundamentally erotic creatures, Smith explains why an adequate vision of loving God must give an account of earthly desires. This vision of humans as beings whose loves are formed and oriented towards a *telos* can also explain, in a way that Bonhoeffer never got the chance to, how loving God directly relates to the harmonization of earthly desires. In Smith’s paradigm of loving God and envisioning life with God as the good life, all earthly desires are framed and one can love the world rightly. This is distinctly similar to Bonhoeffer’s metaphor of the *cantus firmus* wherein one must “let the cantus firmus be heard clearly…only then will the sound be complete and full, and the counterpoint will always know that that it is being carried and can’t get out of tune or be cut adrift.”

Thus one’s desires, harmonized to the love of God, give life polyphony, which “gives our life wholeness.”

This vision of life’s wholeness, which Bonhoeffer first developed in *Ethics*, is also supplemented by Smith’s erotic anthropology, insofar as Smith avoids sequestering love into the arena of an ideal or making love merely a maxim of action. Instead Smith’s teleological vision

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306 Ibid.
307 This is the error of ethicist Joseph Fletcher. Fletcher attempts to develop an ethical paradigm that takes seriously Bonhoeffer’s rejection of principles. Fletcher refers to his paradigm as “situation ethics” [Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1975), 17]. He believed that Christian ethics ought to be guided by *agape* alone, which he defines as “good will at work in partnership with reason, seeking the neighbor’s good radically, nonpreferentially” [Joseph Fletcher, *Moral Responsibility: Situation Ethics at Work* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1967), 16]. This *agape* is continually brought to bear on individual situations. Individual actions are weighed with regard to their optimificity, which is determined only by the consequences of action [Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*, 120]. This means that discrete actions are faced individually in isolation from a broader integrative matrix of character or society. For a critique of Fletcher from the perspective of virtue ethics see [Stanley Hauerwas, *The Work of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 72-3] and
of human love serves to integrate the individual within their lived life. As such, love conditions the ultimate concern of a person thorough the liturgical orientation towards an ultimate, eschatological vision of the good life. But this teleological orientation conditions action through the cultivation of a *habitus*, and therefore frames the possibilities of contingent situations. Love cannot be, as Fletcher claimed, a maxim of action in and of itself; the object of ultimate love matters. Action is situated in the framework of earthly loves conditioned by the ultimate vision of the good life, to which an individual’s love is oriented. Thus being in a state of having one’s loves ordered is what grants unity to an individual as well as a community. This coheres with Bonhoeffer’s vision that Christian love is a state of being that is to be contrasted with disintegration.\(^{308}\)

Additionally, Smith’s view of love as comprehensive of the whole of life works out in a vision of human flourishing in society that is not centered on merely one social sphere. Smith repeatedly cautions against attempts to collapse society into its governmental or economic characteristics. He lists the examples of “the church, commerce, schools, and families” as extra-governmental and extra-ecclesial institutions that are important for a flourishing human society.\(^{309}\) Loving God ultimately works itself out in various penultimate ways and informs the construction of various cultural institutions. It is no great leap to see the connection between Smith’s vision of culture-making as multi-institutional and Bonhoeffer’s theology of the four mandates. While Bonhoeffer is more apt to specify the church, government, work, and family as the four institutions, the sentiment that a healthy society is comprised by an intentional plurality of institutions is common to both thinkers. This adds another shared dimension to Bonhoeffer

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\(^{308}\) Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 332

\(^{309}\) Smith, *Awaiting the King*, 126.
and Smith’s visions of love. For Bonhoeffer, love for God throws one into many different dimensions of life, since in Christ God and the world can only be found together. Thus his theology of the four mandates fits into his theology of love as the political aspect of polyphony. Smith can help to fill out this picture by providing a rationale for how loving God conditions the construction of institutions. In Smith’s vision the liturgical character of culture means that all of its institutions and practices are charged with implicit visions of the good life. This not only means that cultural institutions have de-formative power, but also re-formative potential. Love for God forces engagement in these institutions since they cannot be said to be merely neutral, and as the product of human activity all can be subject to interrogation regarding their ultimate aim, as well as reoriented toward a more fitting telos. This is not a vision for total transformation; Smith makes it clear that the eschatological hope of Christianity keeps its reformatory impulses from being triumphalistic. The Christian project is not all or nothing, and demands compromise, as the church cannot by sheer force fully inculcate the world with a Christian telos. It can, however, foster positive change and reform that brings the goals and policies of institution more in line with the vision of the good life typified by shalom.

Hart’s Polyphonic Account of Christian Metaphysics

In his doctoral dissertation, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth*, David Bentley Hart attempts to provide an exposition of the Christian faith that serves as a kind of aesthetic apologia for its unique account of reality. This aesthetic vision understands Christ as the supreme object of desire, and in keeping with this emphasis on desire he employs the term “infinity” which he defines as “what one desires when one seeks to see the totality as the gift of true transcendence, granting the totality its essences, its existence, its values, and its
transcendental properties from beyond itself, by the grace of participation.”\textsuperscript{310} This is to be distinguished from “totality,” which Hart defines as a pathology entailing an “attempt to grasp the being of beings as a whole immanent and sufficient for itself” or “a desire to comprehend all of being in a single thought, as a single ‘meaning.’”\textsuperscript{311} In totality, beings are uncoupled from their transcendent foundations and thus created difference collapses into sameness. The aesthetic character of the infinite is the source of its ethical character, since “it opens up being and beings—to knowledge and love—only within the free ordering of its beauty, inviting a desire that is moral only because it is not disinterested.”\textsuperscript{312} The beauty of creation is not “symbolic” in the sense of being schematized into accidental and essential elements, but rather in order to comprehend beauty “one need only attend to the glory that it openly proclaims, and resist the temptation to seek out some gnosis secretly imparted.”\textsuperscript{313} Beauty is not “discretely inherent in particular objects, but indwells the analogical relationship of all things.”\textsuperscript{314}

The beauty that Hart sees in the world infinitely framed is propped up against an unsettling trend he has noticed amongst many separate thinkers, this being that there is a necessarily inescapable violence endemic to created difference.\textsuperscript{315} This is opposed to the Christian narrative, wherein violence is conceived as an aberration of primordial peace.\textsuperscript{316} The modern or postmodern notion of the sublime, which is birthed out of the incongruence of difference, eclipses a theological account of beauty in difference.\textsuperscript{317} In this notion of the sublime, Hart singles out Emmanuel Levinas’ notion of the Other. In Levinas’ philosophy, the Other is the

\textsuperscript{311} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{312} Ibid., 15.
\textsuperscript{313} Ibid., 25.
\textsuperscript{314} Ibid., 18.
\textsuperscript{315} Ibid., 36.
\textsuperscript{316} Ibid., 37.
\textsuperscript{317} Ibid., 72.
encounter, the aporia of the self, the possibility of transcending the self; as such the encounter with alterity is closely related to the experience of one’s own death. In this heightened vision of the other, Hart believes that the true face of the other is obfuscated because “the face is the divine alterity that lies behind all faces, seen as invisible. In the ethical relation, one must not even notice the color of the other’s eyes.” This constitutes “love without eros” since it means encounter with the other and with God “never meets us within the scope afforded by our own being or nature.” The truth of the other for Levinas is a traumatic encounter with one’s own finitude, rather than a vision of the beautiful infinite. This makes love impossible, because joy in the other is joy in their real visible presence. Disinterest, therefore, is not the correct formula for ethics: “Love without eros can only be a subject’s victory over the effrontery of the given.”

Love cannot be found in an act of pure will because it perceives the genuine other without absorbing them into the self, as well as without collapsing the genuine beauty of the other into an infinite impersonal alterity. Both of these dangers transgress the Christian vision that “shows finite difference to belong—before all else—to an infinite display of blessings at peace with one another.”

This appreciation of difference is anchored in the unique metaphysical vision of Christianity; Hart is emphatic that the Christian metaphysical vision emerges in the history of philosophy as a singular interruption. The content of this vision can be summarized as “being,
for beings, is a gift in an absolute sense.”\textsuperscript{326} Thus, “if the world is without necessity…but is more originally gratuity,” then “transcendental reflection may be able to grasp many things, but by its own power it can accomplish neither the limits nor the contents of what is.”\textsuperscript{327} This means that didactic rational reflection never arrives at the “ground” of existence, because “beauty is the beginning and the end of all true knowledge…to know anything, one must first love, and having known one must finally delight.”\textsuperscript{328} This epistemology of love corresponds to the love and delight of the Trinity by which the world was created.\textsuperscript{329} Because of this the incarnation of the Logos, being the ratio of all things, “reconciles us not only to God, but to the world, by giving us back a knowledge of creation’s goodness.”\textsuperscript{330} The groundlessness of worldly difference is not seen as the instance of clashing dialectical essences but infinitely varied expressions of divine splendor.”\textsuperscript{331} Because creation is “groundless” one need not flee from the surface in search of the divine ground on the other; instead the face of the other “must of necessity be visible only in the peculiarities of its features, and only within an unforclosable sequence of perspectives and supplementations.”\textsuperscript{332}

This understanding of the beauty of creation as gratuitous difference within a relationship of love emerges necessarily from the Christian vision of God as a perichoresis of love.\textsuperscript{333} God,  

\textsuperscript{326} Ibid., 131.  
\textsuperscript{327} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{328} Ibid., 132.  
\textsuperscript{329} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{330} Ibid., 133-4.  
\textsuperscript{331} Ibid., 141.  
\textsuperscript{332} Ibid., 144.  
\textsuperscript{333} Ibid., 155. It is worth noting that Hart’s recent work has been concerned with refining the arguments regarding God’s existence in the public square. Believing the modern conversation about God’s existence to often be an exercise in discussing a being among beings rather than the Christian God who is being, Hart has argued for his vision of a Christian metaphysics in [David Bentley Hart, \textit{The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss} (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018). He has also provided an account of Christian history counter to those used by those polemicists who would undermine Christianity’s status as a liberating force within history. See David Bentley Hart, \textit{Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and Its Fashionable Enemies} (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).
existing as impassible love, does not require *pathos* or evil in order to prove God’s goodness because God exists, within Godself, as eternal determinacy toward the other lived out in continual self-outpouring. The very existence of God bespeaks the true nature of difference as such, that it is the gift of beauty. God is not the one who stands in dialectical opposition to the multiplicity of creation, but rather “it is precisely creation’s departure from God that approximates God” because God is the font of all difference. Desire is the energy of movement towards the other, present in divine *perichoresis*, and expressed in human life. Because created difference corresponds necessarily to divine differentiation, “the soul’s ascent into God is not a departure from, but an endless venture into, difference.” Differentiation from God is not alienation, but the very possibility of participation in God’s love. It is the endless variety of creation that expresses the beauty of God, in a “superficial” series of being expressing God’s beauty through its endless variety. The Holy Spirit brings this differentiation into conformity with the love of God, not in a way that absorbs differentiated things into a higher monistic essence but in a way that arouses desire to transverse the distance between them in love.

The ontology of creation is such that it does not truly have any essence unto itself, and because of this, “in the strictest sense theology can use a term like *ousia* of God alone.”

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335 Ibid., 177. More particularly it is the Spirit who demonstrates and completes the love of God, breaking it from having a stable center, into an infinite polyphony, and is thus the potential within God of God loving expanding beyond eternal self-love (176).
336 Ibid., 183.
337 Ibid., 190.
338 Ibid., 194. On this point Hart relies heavily on Gregory of Nyssa. For Gregory the infinity of God was adequate to account for the eternal journey of the soul unto God in the concept of “Epektasis.”
339 Ibid., 194.
340 Ibid., 207.
341 Ibid., 209.
342 Ibid., 252.
in God’s being the divine essence is necessarily defined by the dynamism of *perichoresis*. The radical non-necessity of creation means that it was created for the delight and love of God and thus “it is delight that constitutes creation, and so only delight can comprehend it.” This is what is expressed in the doctrine of *creation ex nihilo*, that God gives creation out of God’s own bounty and not out of any need. This vision of creation as delight means that thinkers such as Nygren who present love as disinterested and dispassionate do not adequately appreciate the aesthetic aspect of ethics because they seek to do away with those aspects of existence deemed “superfluous.” The true ethical core of love is the inseparability of love from interest in the other, giving not out of a self-annihilating selflessness, but out of a genuine desire for the other. The moral task is the cultivation of desire such that one comes to see every other as truly beautiful. A gift given without *eros* for the other is no true gift, but only bondage to an absolute benefactor.

The beauty of the superficial differentiation of creation will be fully revealed eschatologically, when difference will exist in accordance with the primordial truth of peace in difference. The *eschaton* is not the absorption of all particularity into the monologue of the absolute, but an endless harmonious expression of created difference unfolding in perfect peace.

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343 Ibid.
344 Ibid., 253.
345 Ibid., 258.
346 Ibid., 264. He dramatically critiques Nygren by asking “in what sense, precisely, is an agape purified of eros distinguishable from hate.”
347 Ibid., 265.
348 Ibid., 266.
349 Ibid., 400.
350 Ibid., 401.
judgement on all absolutizing historical realities. No historical reality can claim itself as final and thus consider itself essential, while denigrating the rest of creation as accidental.\textsuperscript{351}

The judgement of Hart’s system on consumer culture is powerful and interesting. While initially seeming to feed off of and valorize desire, Hart is clear that the desires that the market thrives on are not the genuine desires aroused by the beauty of the other, but the “etherealization of desire.”\textsuperscript{352} The objects of consumption are not appreciated but are rather seen as symbols. The market approaches creation in a gnostic fashion, rendering all things accidental. Nothing is beautiful in itself but rather for the wealth and power that it symbolizes.\textsuperscript{353} True desire is not present because true desire requires distance, expressed in dispossession. The sheer gratuity of creation means that it can never be possessed without being destroyed.\textsuperscript{354}

**An Integration of Hart with Bonhoeffer’s Theology of Love**

Hart’s thought is useful for filling out Bonhoeffer’s vision for a polyphonic model of Christian love by providing the metaphysical and metaethical framework into which such a model could fit. By conceiving of creation as pure gratuity expressed in difference that mirrors the difference inherent in Trinitarian perichoresis, Hart makes it impossible to differentiate between substance and accidence and thereby separate the world into essential and non-essential parts. The world as sheer gift can only be perceived rightly if it is loved. This means appreciating the beauty that is readily visible in creation, rather than the quest for a single foundational

\textsuperscript{351} Ibid., 411.
\textsuperscript{352} Ibid., 436.
\textsuperscript{353} Ibid.
ground. This is helpful in that it cautions against the major mistake in Tillich’s vision of love wherein all things are loved only as instances of being itself.

According to Hart, to love God is to be drawn into difference and to see the difference present in creation as the way that creation analogically participates in the being of God. In this way Hart, reveals how loving God causes humans to be drawn into what Bonhoeffer calls “the polyphony of life.” Loving God is beginning of learning to love creation rightly because it allows one to perceive creation as a gift. This action of holding creation loosely and never trying to possess it coheres well with many statements that Bonhoeffer makes in his prison letters, where he exhorts Christians to be this-worldly, by enjoying and acting responsibly within the world that they are given, however temporary. Seeing the world as gift arouses love and desire for the world but also necessitates a level of detachment wherein one does not make eternity out of temporary things and thereby destroy them. This is echoed by Bonhoeffer in his Ethics, where he claims that the resurrection correctly orders Christian life such that “one demands no eternities from life. One takes from life what it offers, not all or nothing, but good things and bad, important things and unimportant, joy and pain.” Viewing creation as a gratuitous gift forces the Christian into many aspects of life at the same time and requires them to experience it all, for it is the diversity of life that expresses God’s eternal perichoretic love.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I considered two thinkers who theologically exposit the relationship between love and ethics in a way that can help to fill out Bonhoeffer’s vision of love. Smith’s teleological model of human love and Hart’s model of cosmological gratuity can be made to work together.

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356 Ibid., 228.
Within Smith’s model, Christian practices condition the believer to love a vision of the good life wherein God and creation are reconciled. This reorients one to the created world, transforming one’s virtues, actions, and ways of participating cultural institutions. This comprehensive transformation re-orient one’s vision of creation to see the world as the gift of God. By comprehending creation as gift, through having one’s loves teleologically oriented towards God, one comes to appreciate the unique aesthetics of creation proper to the Christian understanding of God and the world exposited by Hart. Within this paradigm, desire for God is expressed by aesthetically experiencing desire for all of creation, evoked by the divine difference that constitutes the surface of all things. This desire, evoked by the beauty of created difference, births ethical transformation, and in turn increases one’s desire for the God who in and of Godself is the font of this difference. Thus Smith and Hart can help shed light on how love provides unity against the disintegration of human life into arbitrary parts, while drawing human life into a polyphony that rejoices in the whole of created life. In the third and final chapter I will argue that the Pentecostal tradition can provide a fruitful augment to Bonhoeffer’s theology of love through its focus on pneumatically mediated orthopathy.
CHAPTER THREE:
PENTECOSTAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO BONHOEFFER’S THEOLOGY OF LOVE

Introduction

In the final chapter of this work, I will expost the significant ways that Pentecostal orthopathic theology can contribute to Bonhoeffer’s theology of love. I will begin by discussing the affective tradition within Pentecostal thought. This tradition, owing its roots to Steven Jack Land and his *Pentecostal Spirituality*, adds *orthopathy* to orthodoxy and orthopraxy as a regulating norm for the Christian life. As such, this tradition provides a helpful grammar for speaking about how love for God brings about rightly ordered earthly desires. Chris E. W. Green’s work helps to develop Land’s construct towards this end through his exposition of holiness as a Pentecostal trope. I will then examine recent works by a variety of scholars which emphasize the affective nature of Pentecostal biblical interpretation. Cheryl Bridges Johns, Casey S. Cole, and Caroline Redick serve as representatives of the orthopathic tradition’s comprehensive ethical dimensions. The conclusion of this examination of orthopathy will draw parallels between Bonhoeffer’s notion of love as the opposite of disintegration and orthopathy as the integrating center of orthodoxy and orthopraxy and explain how the Pentecostal emphasis on pneumatology can assist in broadening the theological horizon of Bonhoeffer’s vision.

The Orthopathic Tradition of Pentecostalism

In James K. A. Smith’s *Thinking in Tongues*, published in 2010, Smith attempts to provide an account of Pentecostalism’s unique worldview. This is based on the assumption that Pentecostalism has a unique vision of the world, and therefore a genuine philosophical
One aspect of this unique vision is what Smith calls an “affective, narrative epistemology.” This epistemology shifts away from a didactic model of knowledge, towards a model of knowledge that prioritizes the affections, as formed by stories. The emphasis on stories is embodied in the practice of testimony. From this perspective, Smith launches into a critique of enlightenment epistemology markedly similar to the critiques he presented in *Desiring the Kingdom*. Pentecostalism, therefore, constitutes a reversal of enlightenment rationalistic epistemology as well as enlightenment dualism that considers the human person to be predominantly mental rather than physical. Pentecostal worship assumes an anthropology wherein “we feel our way around the world more than we think about it, before we think about it.”

Smith’s vision of Pentecostalism’s anthropology as affective is, in large part, indebted to Steven Jack Land’s description of Pentecostalism in his classic *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom*. Land defines spirituality as “an integration of beliefs and practices in the affections which are themselves evoked and expressed by those beliefs and practices.” Specifically he believes that Pentecostalism’s integrating core is found in distinctive “apocalyptic affections,” which correspond to the “righteousness, holiness, and power of God.” This spirituality cannot be dichotomized from either theology or praxis because

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359 Ibid., 43.
360 Ibid., 43-4.
361 Ibid., 51.
362 Ibid., 51-62.
363 Ibid., 60.
364 Ibid., 72.
366 Ibid., 12. This methodological shift toward the affections is significant since it means that Pentecostalism cannot be identified with a particular religious experience, insofar as such experiences occur in the context of Pentecostal spirituality can they be considered “Pentecostal” (19).
orthodoxy (right praise-confession), orthopathy (right affections), and orthopraxy (right praxis) are all fundamentally entangled in a mutually affirming relationship. 367 These affections are integrative, in the sense that they serve the broader purpose of integrating believers into “the gestalt of the apocalyptic narrative.” 368

The affective nature of this apocalyptic integration has significant consequences for the way the Christian faith is conceived. Within this paradigm, the Christian faith is conceived as a “pattern of deep emotions,” which the Holy Spirit bears forth in “someone who believes the gospel of Jesus Christ and construes the world accordingly.” 369 These deep emotions are objective (in the sense that God is both the object and the subject of these affections), relational (in the sense that these affections require expression in a relationship with God, the church, and the world), and dispositional (in the sense that they are not passing feelings, but abidingly dispose the person towards God and neighbor). 370 The three fundamental Pentecostal affections that Land highlights are gratitude, compassion, and courage. 371 These correspond to God’s righteousness, love, and power, respectively; and to the three blessings of classical Pentecostal soteriology: salvation, sanctification, and baptism in the Spirit. 372 Gratitude remembers what God has done and responds in worship. 373 Compassion builds on the foundation laid by gratitude and results in an attitude of “compassionate, longing love.” 374 This love is the substance of the perfect holiness that the early Pentecostals sought to embody. 375

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367 Ibid., 31. This emphasis on the affections is in continuity with the John Wesley and Jonathan Edwards, the former whom Land describes as “the theologian of the love of God” (32).
368 Ibid., 54.
370 Land, Pentecostal Spirituality, 130-2.
371 Ibid., 135.
372 Ibid.
373 Ibid., 136.
374 Ibid., 139.
375 Ibid.
missional edge that expresses indignation at unrighteousness and longs for the salvation of the lost. It sensitizes the Christian to the suffering of others and allows them to long for the coming redemption. This longing for eschatological redemption is not quietistic, but rather “moves the believer toward the world and draws the world into the sphere of redemption.”

Compassion can only come into its full expression if the Christian’s love of God is “as complete as possible.” Its longing for the salvation of the world is helped along by the courage that comes with Spirit baptism. Courage channels the compassionate love of sanctification into active, empowered resistance of “unrighteousness, hatred, and oppression.”

Land takes it upon himself in his final chapter to theologically revise the apocalyptic heart of Pentecostalism. He believes that Pentecostals would do well to re-focus on God as the eschatological Trinitarian presence, rather than on end-times speculation. As part of this focus on God, Pentecostals must recognize that God works in history and understand it as a kind of revelation. These two axioms birth Land’s assertion of God’s eschatological work not as something that is saved for the terminal point of history alone, but rather characterizes all of God’s action as eschatological, always oriented towards the consummated kingdom. Salvation

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376 Ibid., 140.
377 Ibid., 143.
378 Ibid., 144.
379 Ibid.
380 Ibid., 153.
381 Ibid., 154. All three of these affections are simultaneously expressed by, and formed in, the believer through prayer (164). This often takes the form of concert prayer, wherein the auditory cacophony is produced by the common response of the body to the same Spirit (165). Land employs a musical metaphor to describe this: “at times it is like a jazz performance with first this one then that one improvising from a common theme; and at other times it is as if all are playing one great symphony of praise” (165). Pentecostal prayer expresses simultaneous gratefulness for what God has done and longing for Christ’s immanent return, thus it narrates the participants into the apocalyptic story of God (172). Land summarizes the apocalyptic telos of the three major affections as a “passion for the kingdom,” which is in truth “a passion for the king” (175). The heart of this passion is love, which longs to see God (175).

382 Ibid., 196.
383 Ibid., 197.
384 Ibid., 199.
is, therefore, God creating new possibilities for creation as God moves history towards its consummation. This means that loving God and longing for God’s coming does not draw one away from the world, but passionately acknowledges all of the ways that God’s Spirit is immanently at work.\textsuperscript{385} Love is the integrating center of holiness and the principle of participation in the world.\textsuperscript{386} Living in the world in the love of God is the church’s mission as it participates in the eschatological, Trinitarian life of God.\textsuperscript{387} This participation in the life of God unites the two aspects of love: loving one’s neighbor and discipling the nations.\textsuperscript{388} In order for the church to be present in the world in this way, it must itself exemplify justice, peace, unity, and the love of God.\textsuperscript{389}

Land’s method is primarily concerned with recovering what he understands as the core of early Pentecostal spirituality.\textsuperscript{390} Within this historical taxis, the central belief of Pentecostalism is Christ as soon coming king.\textsuperscript{391} Chief within his method is the conviction that “theology is spirituality shaped by eschatology and pneumatology.”\textsuperscript{392} While Land himself is not necessarily antagonistic towards systematic reflection, his chief concern remains the tactile interplay between the life of faith (orthopraxy and orthopathy) and doctrinal reflection (orthodoxy).\textsuperscript{393} His recovery of early Pentecostal tradition has spurred on many other Pentecostals to do further work on the religious affections as they relate to Pentecostal belief and practice.

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\textsuperscript{385} Ibid., 201.  \\
\textsuperscript{386} Ibid., 202.  \\
\textsuperscript{387} Ibid., 204.  \\
\textsuperscript{388} Ibid., 206.  \\
\textsuperscript{389} Ibid., 208.  \\
\textsuperscript{390} Christopher A. Stephenson, \textit{Types of Pentecostal Theology: Method, System, Spirit} (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 37. Specifically Land relies on the “first ten years” after the Azusa Street revival.  \\
\textsuperscript{391} Ibid., 39.  \\
\textsuperscript{392} Ibid., 58.  \\
\textsuperscript{393} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
The affective anthropology that Smith highlights, derived from Land, shows strong affinities for the comprehensive erotic anthropology that he develops in his *Cultural Liturgies* series. If Smith is correct, then the implicit erotic anthropology of Pentecostalism coheres well with the account of the commonalities between Bonhoeffer and Smith observed in the previous chapter. Land’s formulation of Pentecostalism as characterized by apocalyptic affections is helpful for examining the necessarily emotive character of sanctification, as well as the comprehensiveness of Pentecostalism’s ethical vision within an eschatological context. The notion that encountering God brings about affective transformation has much in common with Bonhoeffer’s notion of love as the integrative center of the person, granting unity in the face of disintegration. This, in turn, relates this motif to the classical Wesleyan notion of sanctification, which Pentecostals have historically appropriated. The interconnected affections of gratitude, compassion, and courage form a comprehensive eschatological expectation within the believer. This is, however, not an otherworldly deferment. While Land’s notion of compassion and love for the world is primarily missional, he makes it clear in his final chapter that these affections attune the believer to the Spirit’s activity within history. Thus, holiness can be said to be characterized by a pneumatological this-worldliness, whereby sanctified individuals are moved by sanctified affections to cooperate with God in responsible action within the world.

**The Orthopathic Tradition in Pentecostal Hermeneutics**

Chris E. W. Green, in his 2015 volume *Sanctifying Interpretation*, provides a constructive account of vocation and sanctification, in the context of scriptural interpretation, which helps to further highlight the distinctiveness of Pentecostal anthropology.394 Green seeks to deconstruct

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what he sees as an overreliance on lifeless hermeneutical methods in favor of a soteriological method of reading scripture.\textsuperscript{395} This soteriology’s first point is that the person and work of Christ cannot be separated, and as such human participation in the identity of Christ cannot be fulfilled without their \textit{calling} to share in his works.\textsuperscript{396} This calling is the perfection of created human nature.\textsuperscript{397} Thus, participation in Christ is not a specifically ecclesial calling, but a more broadly human vocation.\textsuperscript{398} The vocation of the “called out ones” (the \textit{ecclesia}) is always for the sake of those who have not been called out; they are a kingdom of priests “for the world’s sake.”\textsuperscript{399}

Green understands Christ’s vocation as the mediation of holiness to humanity. To participate in this vocation is, therefore, to “bear witness to the promise that in the glory of God’s Kingdom all things are brought into their particular glories, and in mediation we ourselves are brought into \textit{our} own glory.”\textsuperscript{400} This universal glorification is predicated on the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on “all flesh.”\textsuperscript{401} Defining human vocation as mediation has implications for how Christians ought to understand love, insofar as, “loving our neighbor just \textit{is} the way we love God.”\textsuperscript{402} Green makes it clear that loving God always takes the form of loving the neighbor. Because mediation of holiness is the human vocation, humans are saved not “\textit{from}, but \textit{by}, interpretation.”\textsuperscript{403} This interpretation represents divine risk by which God makes Godself known

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{395} Green, \textit{Sanctifying Interpretation}, 3.
\item \textsuperscript{396} Ibid., 15.
\item \textsuperscript{397} Ibid., 16.
\item \textsuperscript{398} Ibid., 17.
\item \textsuperscript{399} Ibid., 19.
\item \textsuperscript{400} Ibid., 32.
\item \textsuperscript{401} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{402} Ibid., 37.
\item \textsuperscript{403} Ibid., 39.
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through the vicissitudes and fallibilities of human language.\textsuperscript{404} Speaking in tongues, therefore, is a tangible reminder that human attempts to speak of God are never quite successful, and the truth of God lies ever beyond words.\textsuperscript{405} This struggle to interpret represents the this-worldliness of human vocation, revealing that “God’s gifts are not meant to carry us out of this world…but are purposed to ground us more firmly in the world that has been entrusted to our care.”\textsuperscript{406}

The service of the world that is performed by the church is contingent on a definition of holiness, not as separation from the world, but as “saving identification with the world.”\textsuperscript{407} Separation for the sake of purity is not the correct view of holiness, rather all separation is for the sake of the other.\textsuperscript{408} Through the worship of the church, especially in the sacraments and charisms, Christians are formed into Christ-likeness, which is brought to bear on all of the mundane aspects of human life.\textsuperscript{409} This formation crucifies and resurrects human conscience such that it is brought into conformity with natural life, oriented towards Christ.\textsuperscript{410} Drawing on ideas from John L. Duly, Green proposes that the formation of Christian character is reliant on the Wesleyan maxim of “perfect love.”\textsuperscript{411} But Green’s and Duly’s vision of love is that it is perfected “in its object and not its subject.”\textsuperscript{412} This means that “holy living is not about… the completeness of my love, but rather the completeness of the recipient of my love.”\textsuperscript{413} Holiness is not concerned with separating itself but spreading to all of the world. The saint, therefore, is

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{404} Ibid., 42.
\textsuperscript{405} Ibid., 44.
\textsuperscript{406} Ibid., 49.
\textsuperscript{407} Ibid., 66.
\textsuperscript{408} Ibid., 68.
\textsuperscript{409} Ibid., 73.
\textsuperscript{410} Ibid., 78.
\textsuperscript{411} Ibid., 85.
\textsuperscript{412} Ibid.
\end{quote}
recognized as a saint by virtue of their deep participation in human existence.\(^{414}\) Green notes that this outpouring of *agape* should not be overstated to the point that it ends up characterizing love as always the “unmaking” of humanity without the necessary remaking of humanity.\(^{415}\) Holiness must never be separated from worldly life, for it “moves us always deeper in, and more toward the center of the church-community, and so into the center of the world.”\(^{416}\)

Out of this vision of sanctification, Green develops a scriptural hermeneutic that centralizes transformation into holiness. Scripture is meant to assist humanity in fulfilling their vocation of mediating the holiness of God to the world.\(^{417}\) Thus scripture is not merely a didactic text, but an active transformative means by which God sanctifies humanity.\(^{418}\) It does not merely have an *epistemological* function but a *soteriological* one.\(^{419}\) The Word and the Spirit work together in perichoretic unity and therefore serve the same purpose.\(^{420}\) This purpose can be summarized as “being taken up into our calling, being drawn along toward God, one another, and all things in Christ by the Spirit.”\(^{421}\) This is accomplished through affective transformation that occurs in three ways: “by putting our unnatural desires to death; by re-ordering our natural desires, and by awakening in us “supernatural” desires for God.”\(^{422}\) Green’s definition of

\(^{414}\) Green, *Sanctifying Interpretation*, 103.
\(^{415}\) Ibid., 105.
\(^{416}\) Ibid., 106.
\(^{417}\) Ibid., 110. Green has previously engaged the emphasis of Pentecostal hermeneutics on transformation into holiness in Chris E. W. Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of the Lord’s Supper: Foretasting the Kingdom* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2012). Here he emphasizes the interplay between partaking of the Eucharist and scriptural interpretation. He heavily emphasizes the transformative aspects of the Eucharist, which form the participants into Christ-likeness, thus preparing them to imaginatively perceive the Christological depth of the scriptures (294). Here too it is clear that scripture is not about a didactic transfer of knowledge, but rather focused on forming its readers into Christ’s image.
\(^{418}\) Ibid., 111.
\(^{419}\) Ibid., 113.
\(^{421}\) Green, *Sanctifying Interpretation*, 125.
\(^{422}\) Ibid., 137.
holiness provides another perspective on Land’s vision of affective transformation that highlights, even more strongly, the this-worldly and participatory nature of sanctification and orthopathy.

For his affective, soteriological understanding of scriptural hermeneutics, Green is heavenly reliant on the work of Cheryl Bridges Johns. In her paper “Grieving, Brooding, and Transforming,” Johns develops a method of scriptural interpretation grounded in an ontology of scripture.\footnote{Cheryl Bridges Johns, “Grieving, Brooding, and Transforming: The Spirit, the Bible, and Gender,” \textit{Journal of Pentecostal Theology} 23, no. 2 (2014): 144.} In her view, the work of the Bible is inseparable from the work of the Spirit. This means that the “basic ontological category for the biblical text is that of ‘Spirit-Word.’”\footnote{Ibid., 147.} As such, “it serves as a sanctified vessel in bringing about Christ’s reconciling mission within the creation.”\footnote{Ibid.} The Bible, as a sanctifying text, is both human and divine.\footnote{Ibid., 148.} The text is also a “sacred space,” wherein, “Word, Spirit, and person(s) meet.”\footnote{Ibid., 149.} Within this space there is potential for “re-orientation of existence.”\footnote{Ibid.} This re-orientation takes the form, not of suspicion or remembrance, but of “conscientization of the Spirit, that points, not only to our status of marginalization, but also in regards to an awareness of the presence of God who saves us.”\footnote{Ibid., 151.} This conscientization takes the form of grieving for the women in the text, with the full knowledge that the shekinah of God was present with them in their suffering.\footnote{Ibid., 152.} Alongside this grieving there is brooding, which means “we remain with the pain of brokenness, praying and attending to the Spirit as she works for creation to be set free.”\footnote{Ibid., 153.} The final movement of this
hermeneutic is transformation; wherein the text sanctifies the reader through bringing them into encounter with the divine life.432

Johns’ vision of sanctification as conscientization through transformation was previously developed in her volume *Pentecostal Formation*. Here she appropriates the term “conscientization” from the work of Paulo Freire and defines it as “learning to examine social, political and economic injustices in order to take action and correct them.”433 Johns specifies that this term does not refer merely to becoming aware of injustice, but is necessarily actualized in action against oppressive socio-political realities.434 She relates this concept of social transformation to Pentecostal sanctification, wherein “orthopathy…is joined with orthopraxis.”435 The transformation of the affections, therefore, “leads not just to personal piety but also to social transformation inasmuch as the eschatological goals of the Kingdom are paralleled in a social level.”436 Baptism in the Holy Spirit opens Pentecostals to another level of reality and thus opens up space for critical reflections on current social systems.437

The account of Pentecostal hermeneutics that Green and Johns represent helps to constructively unify the themes of holiness, orthopathy, and biblical interpretation. With this method established, it has been recently utilized by several hermeneuts in a way that can elucidate how Bonhoeffer’s theology of love can be compatible with Pentecostal Spirituality. Such an example is provided by Casey Cole in her article “Taking Hermeneutics to Heart.” In

432 Ibid.
435 Ibid. 94.
436 Ibid.
437 Ibid., 100
this article, Cole proposes a method of reading biblical texts of terror that prioritizes orthopathy.\textsuperscript{438} In order to develop this method she presents the story of the rape of Tamar, found in 2 Samuel 13.\textsuperscript{439} Cole points out that reading this text for doctrinal content (orthodoxy), or behavioral guidelines (orthopraxy), yields very little useful material.\textsuperscript{440} Cole shifts, therefore, the hermeneutical question from, “How does the text function?” to “How ought we function in light of the text?”\textsuperscript{441} Reading this text with this question in mind brings its reader into a complex engagement with their own assumptions and opinions.\textsuperscript{442} Cole concludes this particular text is meant to teach the reader what it is “right to feel.”\textsuperscript{443} This can be understood as “learning to feel as God feels.”\textsuperscript{444} This is complicated for this particular text, however, because Yahweh is conspicuously absent from the narrative.\textsuperscript{445} Nevertheless God is not truly absent, for the Spirit is “within us, brooding over the text.”\textsuperscript{446} The text confronts the reader with how they feel about the characters and the situation it describes.\textsuperscript{447} In response to this story, one ought to experience horror, disgust, and sorrow.\textsuperscript{448} One’s emotional response to the text must be subjected to the discernment of the Spirit, and in this discernment room is made for the Spirit to transform the reader’s affections in light of Christ as the ultimate revelation of God.\textsuperscript{449} Thus, reading this text forms the reader into the image of Christ as it creates within them “the inability to be apathetic to


\textsuperscript{439} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{440} Ibid., 265.

\textsuperscript{441} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{442} Ibid., 269.

\textsuperscript{443} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{444} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{445} Ibid., 270.

\textsuperscript{446} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{447} Ibid., 271.

\textsuperscript{448} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{449} Ibid., 272.
tragedy.” In this text the reader can “be Christ” through their disgust at injustice. Cole applies this ethically, saying that the text calls the readers “not just toward virtuous emotions and affections, but toward a Christ-centered ethic.” Cole further exposits the orthopathic Pentecostalism developed by Land, Johns, and Green by demonstrating that orthopathy, comprehensively conceived, does not merely reframe those aspects of life that are inherently religious or ecclesiological. The sanctification of human desires in holiness increases compassion for real human situations. Human empathy is one of the outcomes of orthopathy. Thus even superficially “secular” emotions are brought into their full expression within an orthopathic framework.

Also building on Johns’ ontological hermeneutic, Caroline Redick provides a Pentecostal reading of Song of Songs in her article “Let Me Hear Your Voice.” She begins her exposition with an examination of the rhetorical philosophies of Ernesto Grassi and Martin Heidegger. From these thinkers, Redick extracts the principle of the tension between the poetic and the rational. The poetic distinguishes itself from the rational insofar as it does not attempt to impart didactic truths to the reader, but rather confronts him/her with the unknown and the irreducible. Redick relates this to the Pentecostal experience of the mystery of God, which “manifests itself as charismatic gifts: uncontrollable, wild, experiences, ranging from tongues-speech, to trembling, to small whispers that unveil a deeper reality of God’s presence.” She then examines various Pentecostal sources that highlight the poetic and affective dimensions of Pentecostal Spirituality, from which she concludes that a poetic reading of scripture is deeply

affective and, therefore, a Pentecostal interpretation of the text will highlight these aspects of the text. The affective dimensions of the text communicate “the deep affections of God” and thereby communicates this love to the reader to facilitate transformation.

With this methodological matrix established, Redick describes the Song of Songs as a book of poetry, which facilitates an encounter with God by “iterating God’s love for humanity, and welcoming the hearer to reiterate a complimentary desire back to God.” Within the interplay between the two lovers in the song, the reciprocal love between God and the Pentecostal believer is given prayerful articulation. This goes hand in hand with the other function of the song, which is that it “offers a new analysis of the role of eros within this hermeneutic.” Thus, Redick provides an expansion of Pentecostal affective hermeneutics, which have “sometimes stopped short of the relation of eros to God’s loving desire.” This assumes a correspondence between human and divine love, as in the narrative a human relationship provides a faithful dramatic metaphor for divine love. She elaborates on this correspondence: “Unlike moderns, who segregate human eros from divine love, the charismatic hermeneutic is prone to see how human love flows from and is patterned after God’s love for creation.” The desire of God for humanity, communicated by the text of Song of Songs, culminates in a union that is fulfilled eschatologically. As such, it was a chief source for the

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455 Ibid., 191-2.
457 Ibid., 192.
458 Ibid., 193.
459 Ibid.
460 Ibid., 194.
461 Ibid.
462 Ibid., 195. Redick notes astutely that Karl Barth propagated the antithesis between eros and agape. She also recognizes that Barth inherited this bifurcated view of love from Anders Nygren (195 n25).
Pentecostal “bridal paradigm,” which conceives of the *eschaton* as a union of the bride (the church) and the bridegroom (Christ).\(^{463}\) Thus, for Pentecostals the whole of the biblical text and the salvation narrative can be read through the lens of the *erotic* union between the lover and the beloved.\(^{464}\) Redick usefully expands the doctrine of orthopathy by explicitly demonstrating that, within the Pentecostal worldview, *eros* cannot be abstracted from the love of God and responsive love for God.

By emphasizing the personal transformation that occurs through an encounter with God, Johns highlights the text’s function of conscientization. This means that in sanctification, one is able to recognize the incongruities within society, while also being able to recognize the presence of God that grieves with, broods over, and transforms oppressive situations. In this way, she helps to draw attention to orthopathy’s inherent social implications. The role of the text in cultivating a rightly ordered emotional life is clearly illustrated by Cole’s reading of the narrative of the rape of Tamar. In this text the reader is presented with the opportunity to develop orthopathy through the cultivation of empathy. She helps to demonstrate, along with Land, that orthopathy is not restricted to the specifically religious “apocalyptic affections,” but rather allows these affections to frame the whole of the human emotional life as an “existential core” from which all of life is lived.\(^{465}\) In her Pentecostal reading of Song of Songs, Redick shows how human love is used in the text to speak of divine *eros* for humanity. Thus she points even more strongly to the way in which Pentecostals intuit a correspondence between the love of God and human love.

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\(^{463}\) Ibid., 196-7.

\(^{464}\) Ibid., 200. Redick uses many sources to prove this point, including the theology of the modern International House of Prayer, in order to prove her point that the Song of Songs can be used as a prayer text to facilitate encounter with God.

An Integration of Pentecostal Spirituality with a Bonhoefferian Account of Love

Bonhoeffer’s vision of love as unity against disintegration coheres with the definition of Pentecostal Spirituality as orthodoxy and orthopraxy integrated in orthopathy. Conceiving of these three aspects of the spiritual life as inseparable ensures that the various aspects of life cannot be abstracted from one another. Actions, beliefs, and emotions are integrated together in the love of God; this is the comprehensive definition of sanctification. By understanding sanctification in this way, Pentecostal scholarship can help to clarify how exactly love functions as the opposite to the state of disintegration.\(^{466}\) In love, “everything is integrated, united, and pleasing to God.”\(^{467}\) While Bonhoeffer strictly identifies this integrating love of God with Christ, he does so to the exclusion of pneumatology.\(^{468}\) For Bonhoeffer, Christ is the source and reality of all true love, but the Pentecostal emphasis on pneumatology shifts this focus to the Holy Spirit. The sanctifying experience of Pentecostals is understood to be accomplished by the Holy Spirit, who mediates Christ to them. The presence of the Spirit as the love of God in the life of Pentecostals therefore provides a clearer articulation than Bonhoeffer does of the love of God as the cantus firmus, the unity in the midst of the disintegration of life.\(^{469}\)

This vision of the love of God shed abroad in the hearts of believers by the Holy Spirit, leading to orthopathic sanctification, is excellently developed by Green. He helps to clarify Bonhoeffer’s account of this-worldliness with his Pentecostal vision of holiness. By understanding the human vocation as the mediation of holiness, and understanding holiness as “saving identification with the world,”\(^{470}\) Green helps to shed light on an account of this-

\(^{466}\) Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 332.
\(^{467}\) Ibid.
\(^{468}\) Ibid., 334.
\(^{470}\) Green, *Sanctifying Interpretation*, 66.
worldliness that takes seriously Christ’s affirmation of the world.\textsuperscript{471} This account of mediation assures that love cannot exist as an “abstract attribute of God but only in God’s actual loving of human beings and the world.”\textsuperscript{472} Just as Green speaks of the risk of interpretation, whereby God subjects Godself to misunderstanding for the sake of relationality, Bonhoeffer claims “as God’s love entered into the world, thereby submitting to the misunderstanding and ambiguity that characterize everything worldly, so also Christian love does not exist anywhere but in the worldly, in the infinite variety of concrete worldly action.”\textsuperscript{473} Bonhoeffer, like Green, shares a deep distain for the false purism of a love that desires to abstract itself from the world for the sake of its own purity: “God was not too pure to enter into the world.”\textsuperscript{474} Green’s vision of participation in the world, however, is predicated on the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh.\textsuperscript{475} And it is by the Spirit that Christians are incorporated into the world-serving vocation of Christ.\textsuperscript{476} In this way his pneumatological emphasis provides a clearer explanation of how one comes to participate in Christ’s redemptive this-worldliness.

Within this vision of holiness as orthopathy, Pentecostal hermeneuts provide further helpful clarifications. Cheryl Bridges Johns, through her paradigm of scriptural hermeneutics as “conscientization” through encounter with the Spirit-Word, demonstrates that sanctification has necessary social dimensions. Encountering the Spirit of God in the words of scripture attunes one’s affections to the suffering of others, such that one can then act in cooperation with God for liberation. Casey Cole provides a concrete example of this process in action through her reading of the Tamar narrative. In this reading, the reader experiences “conscientization” through a text

\textsuperscript{471} Bonhoeffer, \textit{Ethics}, 8.
\textsuperscript{472} Ibid., 241.
\textsuperscript{473} Ibid., 241-2.
\textsuperscript{474} Ibid., 242.
\textsuperscript{475} Green, \textit{Sanctifying Interpretation}, 32.
\textsuperscript{476} Ibid., 125.
with no explicit theological content. This relies on the presence of the Spirit within the believer and the believer’s willingness to cooperate with the groans of the Spirit on behalf of Tamar. This recognition of God in otherwise non-religious situations, through the presence of the Spirit, can provide a pneumatological revision of Bonhoeffer’s notion of God at the center, rather than the boundaries of life. It is orthopathy, the tuning of desire to the love of God, which allows the believer to recognize the relevance and presence of Christ’s Spirit in all situations. Thus Pentecostal hermeneutics reveals surprising commonalities between orthopathy and the true meaning of Bonhoeffer’s “religionless Christianity.” Christ’s domain is not limited to the spiritual aspects of life, but rather the Spirit is never absent from any aspect of life.

Caroline Redick’s Pentecostal reading of Song of Songs provides another touchstone for a Pentecostal theology of love through her elucidation of the correspondent *eros* between God and humanity. God’s love of humanity results in respondent *eros* on the part of humans and thereby attunes their desires. This suggests that human love is a legitimate analogue for divine love, such that the metaphor of a bride and bridegroom can be used to speak of the eschatological consummation. All of these hermeneutic texts provide a holistic expansion of the passage from *Letters and Papers from Prison*, wherein Bonhoeffer speaks of love for God as the *cantus firmus* that allows the counterpoint of earthly love to develop “as mightily as it wants.” Compassion towards the oppressed, anger at injustice, and desire for one’s beloved all exist in the natural emotional life of humans, but according to a Pentecostal account of orthopathic hermeneutics, all

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478 Ibid., 362-6, 482
479 Ibid., 485.
480 Ibid., 394. Terry Cross has provided an accessible Pentecostal theology of calling, wherein honoring God and living out the human vocation necessitates loving and enjoying life. This mandate to love life includes participation in the production of and appreciation of cultural products. See Terry Cross, *Answering the Call In the Spirit: Pentecostal Reflections on a Theology of Vocation, Work and Life* (Cleveland, TN: Lee University Press, 2007), 99-104.
of these emotions are intensified and attuned by encountering the love of God in Christ, mediated by the Holy Spirit. In this encounter with the love of God, one is able to “let the cantus firmus be heard clearly…only then will the sound be complete and full, and the counterpoint will always know that that it is being carried and can’t get out of tune or be cut adrift.”\textsuperscript{481} The earthly loves of humans are tuned to the love of God, through the work of the Spirit. Thus Pentecostalism’s orthopathy is anchored in pneumatology and can thereby provide a more substantive ground for Bonhoeffer’s theology of love than his Christology alone.

Eschatology characterizes and conditions all of Pentecostal orthopathic theology.\textsuperscript{482} Land construes his affective characterization of Pentecostalism as “apocalyptic,” by which he means eschatologically oriented. The gratitude, compassion, and power that he exposit all have the function of heightening eschatological expectation. This eschatological longing that Land exposit is not an otherworldly, escapist notion. Rather, Land explicitly works against otherworldly notions of eschatology by emphasizing that the \textit{eschaton}, conceived as the kingdom of God, is characterized by union with God, and therefore the \textit{eschaton} can be foretasted wherever God’s Spirit is active in the world. The world is not evolving toward the \textit{eschaton}, per se, but God is continually at work preparing the world for its eschatological culmination.\textsuperscript{483} This means that the apocalyptic affections draws Christians into participation in the world in order to cooperate with God. Green’s vision of holiness heavily emphasizes this eschatological reality as well, such that the virtues of Christ only make sense when viewed from their eschatological

\textsuperscript{481} Bonhoeffer, \textit{Letters and Papers From Prison}, 396.
\textsuperscript{482} Christopher Stephenson highlights the priority of eschatological passions within Pentecostal spirituality. He considers them so central to Pentecost that he couches his own constructive proposal for a Pentecostal model of the Lord’s Supper in eschatological terms. In his model the celebration of the supper inspires hope for the coming of the kingdom in its fullness [Stephenson, \textit{Types of Pentecostal Theology}, 123]. This model is characterized by a tension fostered by a realization that the church is once again celebrating the supper without the fullness of the kingdom. The supper takes place in the presence of the Spirit and the absence of the Son (124).
\textsuperscript{483} Land, \textit{Pentecostal Spirituality}, 201.
culmination. Ultimately, loving the world rightly is reliant on viewing it from the perspective of its eschatological culmination. To view it from the current state is to see only in part, to fragment the creation from the fullness of its being.

The eschaton, therefore, properly understood as God bringing creation into the fullness of its being, provides a useful expansion of Bonhoeffer’s notion of “natural life” in his *Ethics*, which he defines as “that which, after the fall, is directed toward the coming of Jesus Christ.” This correspondence that Bonhoeffer observes between Christ and the world’s true form, is what allows him to later posit that loving God brings earthly love into its fullness. For Pentecostals, and others in the Wesleyan tradition, it is their emphasis on eschatology that allows them to be this-worldly and polyphonic as they groan with the whole of creation for all things to be “brought into their peculiar glories.” Eschatological longing does not negate eros, it sanctifies it, so that it longs for the flourishing of all things. Eschatological hope, therefore, rooted in the apocalyptic affections, forces Pentecostals into “many different dimensions of life at the same time.”

By experiencing the love of God, Pentecostals come to love God and long for Christ’s return, and by loving Christ and longing for his return they come to desire the flourishing of all of creation. This forces them into the polyphony of life as they weep and rejoice, fast and feast,

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484 Green, *Sanctifying Interpretation*, 75.
485 Chris E. W. Green, “Does (Not) Nature Itself Teach You? Pentecostal Reflections on a Troubled and Troubling Text,” *Pneuma* 38, no. 4 (2016): 472. Green also echoes this eschatological naturalism in [Chris E. W. Green, “‘Let it Be’: Predestination, Salvation, and Divine/ Human Agency,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 23, no. 2 (2014): 171-90] wherein he applies an eschatological reading to the doctrine of predestination. Green believes that the full meaning of divine predestination and salvation is not fully revealed until the *eschaton*. Thus the theological quest is always to find a “less inadequate, less misleading ways of talking about God and the life we have been given” (189).
487 Green, *Sanctifying Interpretation*, 32.
dance and mourn, heal and tarry. Just as loving God does not diminish, but fulfills earthly love, so longing for the *eschaton* and longing for creation fulfill one another. Holiness is walking in gratitude, compassion, and courage, such that one seeks to live out the *eschaton* within history. Considering the world from its eschatological culmination, and participating in the work of the Spirit towards this end, is an innovation on Bonhoeffer insofar as it situates a theology of this-worldliness within an eschatological framework that prioritizes pneumatology. This allows for them to have a more expansive notion of this-worldly love, as they are able to discern the Spirit’s redemptive work within the world as it groans for its eschatological fulfillment.

The *eschaton* also shifts the moral horizon for Pentecostals, such that they refuse to be satisfied with any sort of disintegration. Just as orthodoxy, orthopraxy, and orthopathy cannot be separated, so intention, action, and emotion cannot be ethically abstracted from one another. This resonates with Bonhoeffer’s critique of secular ethics, while expanding with a cosmological purview. A Pentecostal ethic binds together individual piety, social justice, and desire for the flourishing of non-anthropic creation within its eschatological horizon. This forces Pentecostals to never sequester their ethic into a merely personal or privatized space. Pentecostal eschatology ensures that Pentecostal ethics cannot participate in disintegration or abstraction, since in the *eschaton* the whole of the cosmos is transfigured. Thus, for the Pentecostal the ethical life is lived from this cosmological perspective. Pentecostal orthopathy, therefore, as desire for the *eschaton*, brings forth a Pentecostal ethic that is holistic and non-reductive in its desire to participate in the Spirit’s work of healing the cosmos.

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Conclusion

Pentecostal theology is diverse and fertile theological soil. As such, I have attempted to show how Pentecostal theology can inform Bonhoeffer’s theology of love. To do so I engaged the orthopathic tradition, which understands the affections as the integrative center of the Pentecostal life. Within this tradition I discovered commonalities with Bonhoeffer’s account of love as the antithesis of disintegration, as well as his account of the love of God tuning natural human desire to polyphony. This coheres with Bonhoeffer’s non-reductive ethical vision, which refuses to sequester the entirety of the ethical life into a single dimension, but rather takes the universal relevance of Christ as its beginning and end. Through its pneumatological and eschatological dimensions, the Pentecostal orthopathic tradition can offer a corrective to Bonhoeffer by helping to situate his theology of love within a broader theological matrix. There is still much more work that can be done on this front, as the body of recent Pentecostal scholarship is vast and diverse, but the commonalities between Bonhoeffer’s account of love and some strands of Pentecostal theology are useful for demonstrating the genuine contribution that Pentecostals can make to a comprehensive theology of love.
CONCLUSION

The amount and variety of differing Christian theologies of love reveals the expansiveness of this particular theological topic. The reason for this inexhaustible variety stems from the fact that love constitutes the very heart of God. The infinity of God, therefore, precludes any comfortable resolution to this theological discussion. Within this taxis, it is worth examining the contributions of Christian history and observing how these ideas can be developed through further reflection and dialogue. This project has attempted to do so with the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. It has accomplished this by demonstrating the novel character of Bonhoeffer’s theological insights within his historical context as well as by placing his thought in dialogue with various other voices that can contribute to his insights.

The first chapter showed that Bonhoeffer’s theology of love is distinctive from various other prominent theologies of love within his protestant tradition. It demonstrated that his theology of love was radically distinct from those of Kierkegaard, Nygren, Lewis, and Tillich. Within his historical context, Bonhoeffer provided a vision of love that took the implications of Christ seriously. Springing from his vision of Christ as reconciling the world to God, Bonhoeffer developed a theology of love that refused to mitigate earthly desires, but rather explained how loving God attunes earthly desires to divine love. This represents Bonhoeffer’s timely innovation, making him notable for the time in history that he lived.

The second chapter worked to introduce some thinkers whose theological thought can serve to develop Bonhoeffer’s historical contribution in a more comprehensive direction. James K. A. Smith, by expositing an anthropology centered on love, is able to give an account of love-based ethics that complements Bonhoeffer’s own construal of love as the integrating center of human life. David Bentley Hart provides a distinctly Christian metaphysical framework, wherein
difference is the taxis of beauty. His contribution, therefore, helps to provide a metaphysical framework into which Bonhoeffer’s notion of polyphony can fit.

The third and final chapter sought to exposit some aspects of the Pentecostal orthopathic tradition that can provide a corrective augment to Bonhoeffer’s christologically centered ethic. It does so by examining the tradition of Pentecostal theology, developed by Steven Jack Land, which emphasizes orthopathy as the integrating center of the Christian life. These affections are inculcated into the believer by the Spirit and orient the believer toward the eschatological horizon. Chris Green’s work presents holiness as identification with the world in order to mediate Christ’s holiness to the world by the power of the Spirit. The orthopathic tradition was further clarified by the work of Cheryl Bridges Johns, Casey Cole, and Caroline Redick. They work together to demonstrate the extravagant dimensions of a full-orbed vision of orthopathy. These sources provide a constructive corrective to Bonhoeffer’s theology of love, by emphasizing the role of the Spirit in orienting the affections towards God. Additionally, this pneumatology provides an eschatological horizon for the Pentecostal ethical vision, which can provide a more comprehensive vision of ethics than Bonhoeffer ever could.

The theological investigation of love must always continue. As theological history continues, revolutionary ideas like Bonhoeffer’s become obsolete and must be transcended. Nevertheless, it would be remiss for the theological conversation to not recognize the contributions of the past and inquire about how these ideas can be innovated upon in the future. This what I have attempted to do with the work of Bonhoeffer, by demonstrating his historical contribution and examining how the theological tradition can innovate upon his ideas.


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