

Christiane Tietz

Friedrich Schleiermacher and Dietrich Bonhoeffer

While Karl Barth's influence on the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer is obvious,¹ the impact of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), the other great figure in modern Protestantism, is far more inconspicuous. Nevertheless, Schleiermacher, the church father of the nineteenth century,² was of no little importance for Bonhoeffer's early ecclesiology (I). And Schleiermacher's idea of religion was part of the background against which Bonhoeffer developed his own understanding of religion and faith (II). When discussing both subjects in the following I will not so much ask if Bonhoeffer understood Schleiermacher correctly but show how what Bonhoeffer understood *as* Schleiermacher's point of view became important for his own theology.

I. Ecclesiology

It is quite astonishing how many aspects of Bonhoeffer's early ecclesiology were influenced by Schleiermacher, always in both appreciation and criticism. Bonhoeffer appreciates that Schleiermacher focuses on the church³ and correspondingly has a strong interest in the idea of social community.⁴ But Bonhoeffer criticizes the way this community is con-

¹ See Andreas Pangritz's article on Barth in this volume.

² Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher was born in 1768 in Breslau and educated in Moravian spirituality. He studied Protestant theology in Halle/Saale. As a pastor he became a member of the early romanticism movement in Berlin. 1804 he became professor at the University of Halle, 1810 at the newly-founded University of Berlin. He was one of the most influential intellectuals at the time. Schleiermacher died in 1834 in Berlin. Cf. K. Nowak, *Schleiermacher. Leben, Werk und Wirkung* (Göttingen 2001). Bonhoeffer studied Schleiermacher's *Speeches on Religion* already as a pupil (cf. Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 42).

³ Cf. "Das Wesen der Kirche," (1932) in *DBW* 11, 253: "For him [Schleiermacher] a new appreciation of the church. [His] ... central thought is the 'church'."

⁴ Cf. "Church and Eschatology," (1926), in *DBWE* 9, 319 (*DBW* 9, 347): "The fact that idealism understood the concept of the church so poorly also derives from the fact that, although the concept of the spiritual [*geistig*] personality was clearly understood,

ceived. In Bonhoeffer's eyes, the concept of community is the crucial point of salvation history: the primal state (1) is the "idea of unbroken community;"⁵ sin (2) is the breaking of this unbroken community; the church (3) and (4) finally is the reconciled community with God and with human being.

1. Social Community in the Primal State

Bonhoeffer pays tribute to Schleiermacher as "the first to speak of relationships in community in the primal state."⁶ Schleiermacher recognized that the *primal state* not only means community with God (which in Bonhoeffer's eyes "has always been recognized") but also social community of human beings. Thus, Schleiermacher understood that "community [with God] and social community belong together."⁷ He comprehended that "apart from [social] community 'there is no living and vigorous piety'."⁸ For Bonhoeffer, the insight "that human beings, as spirit, are necessarily created in a community – that human spirit in general is woven into the web of sociality"⁹ is of great importance. It is nothing less than the characteristic of creaturely existence: "The creatureliness of human beings ... can be defined in simply no other way than in terms of the existence of human beings over-against-one-another, with-one-another, and in-dependence-upon-one-another."¹⁰ Being a creature means being created in social community.

While appreciating Schleiermacher's emphasis on this primal social community, Bonhoeffer complains how Schleiermacher understands this community. Schleiermacher names as reason for the human community "the inner union of species-consciousness [*Gattungsbewußtsein*]" and "personal self-consciousness."¹¹ For Schleiermacher, this union has a two-fold function: On the one hand, it is "the general source of all recognition

the concept of the community remained completely ignored and had to be reintroduced in the romantic era in the theology of Schleiermacher."

⁵ DBWE 1, 62 (DBW 1, 37).

⁶ DBWE 1, 64, note 1 (DBW 1, 38, note 1).

⁷ DBWE 1, 64, note 1 (DBW 1, 64, note 1). Cf. DBW 11, 276: "[Der] Begriff des *Individualismus* [ist] bei Schleiermacher noch bereichert!" and note 255: "Schleiermacher bereichert das durch soziale Bezogenheit."

⁸ DBWE 1, 64, note 1 (DBW 1, 64, note 1). The Schleiermacher citation is from *The Christian Faith*, 2 volumes (second edition of 1830–1831). Edited by H. R. MacKintosh and J. S. Stewart (New York 1963); here 1, 246 (§ 60.1).

⁹ DBWE 1, 65 (DBW 1, 39).

¹⁰ DBWE 3, 64 (DBW 3, 60).

¹¹ *The Christian Faith*, 1, 246 (§ 60.1); Bonhoeffer's citation in DBWE 1, 64, note 1 (DBW 1, 38, note 1) is not very precise.

of others as being of *like nature with ourselves*.¹² On the other hand, it is “the only source of the presupposition and the ground of the fact that the ‘inner’ is known and grasped along with and by means of the ‘outer’.”¹³ “This inclusion of the species-consciousness [*Gattungsbewußtsein*] in the personal self-consciousness and the communicability of the ‘inner’ through the ‘outer,’ which is connected with it, is the fundamental condition or basis of social life, for all human fellowship rests solely upon it.”¹⁴ Through the unity of species-consciousness and self-consciousness a person is connected with all the other persons by “a common bond of consciousness.”¹⁵ Bonhoeffer can summarize: “only in species consciousness does one human being encounter another.”¹⁶ It might not be precise to say that human beings encounter each other *in* species consciousness. However, the latter is the reason for their encounter.¹⁷

Bonhoeffer’s own understanding of human encounter is quite different. Certainly, Bonhoeffer as well discusses the general character of the human spirit. Like Schleiermacher, he is convinced that people “*understand, express themselves, and are understood*.”¹⁸ But Bonhoeffer distinguishes this general characteristic of the human spirit from the ethical I-You-relation, which is the place where people truly encounter each other.¹⁹ What is the character of such an encounter?

For Bonhoeffer, human beings truly encounter each other only in the ethical sphere of claim and responsibility. Here human beings “constitute limits, boundaries, or ‘barriers’ [*Schranke, Grenze*] for each other.”²⁰ In the encounter with the other his or her claim is a barrier for me which forces me to decide if I want to answer this claim or not. The situation of

¹² *The Christian Faith*, 1, 246 (§ 60.2); emphasis added.

¹³ *The Christian Faith*, 1, 246 (§ 60.2). Cf. *DBWE* 1, 64 note 1 (*DBW* 1, 38, note 1): This union “is intended to ensure the possibility of mutual communication, of religious relationship in community ... If this were not present, people could never enter into relationship in community.”

¹⁴ *The Christian Faith*, 1, 246 (§ 60.2).

¹⁵ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 80. Cf. E. Herms, “Schleiermachers Erbe,” in idem, *Menschsein im Werden. Studien zu Schleiermacher* (Tübingen 2003), 200–227, here 204, and D. Schlenke, *Geist und Gemeinschaft. Die systematische Bedeutung der Pneumatologie für Friedrich Schleiermachers Theorie der christlichen Frömmigkeit* (Berlin/New York 1999), 102: The individual is “qua *Gattungsbewußtsein* ... gleichursprünglich auf andere Individuen bezogen.”

¹⁶ *DBWE* 1, 64, note 1 (*DBW* 1, 38, note 1).

¹⁷ Species-consciousness makes possible a “geistige[n] Akt der Identifikation mit einem anderen Menschen als einem Wesen gleicher Natur ... An diesen geistigen Akt ... schließt sich dann unmittelbar ein Mitempfinden des spezifischen Lebenszustandes des anderen Menschen an” (D. Schlenke, “Geist und Gemeinschaft,” 43).

¹⁸ *DBWE* 1, 68 (*DBW* 1, 41).

¹⁹ Cf. *DBWE* 1, 66 (*DBW* 1, 40).

²⁰ Clifford J. Green, *Bonhoeffer. A Theology of Sociality* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge 1999, revised edition), 31.

responding to the other's claim is basic for human community; here responsibility and personhood take place: "It is a Christian insight that the person as conscious being is created ... in the situation of responsibility, passionate ethical struggle, confrontation by an overwhelming claim; thus the real person grows out of the concrete situation."²¹ Thus, the true encounter between two human beings takes place when "the other ... places me before an ethical decision."²² So, acknowledgement of the other is not possible through recognition of "others as being of *like nature with ourselves*" in the species-consciousness but only in the ethical situation. If I am truly acknowledging his or her ethical claim, then I am acknowledging the other – as a You. And in this I myself am becoming a person.²³

In Bonhoeffer's opinion, the acknowledgment of the other *as an I* is neither given through the union of species-consciousness with self-consciousness and the nature of human spirit nor is it found through that encounter with the other as a You.²⁴ The I of the other can be acknowledged only if the other reveals him/herself.²⁵ This means that it is not the species-consciousness which makes the encounter with another I possible but his or her self-revelation: "there is no encounter with another person except that the person wills to reveal him/herself."²⁶ Such a self-revelation does not happen always; it only takes place from time to time and when the I wants to. Bonhoeffer himself distinguishes three basic structures existing in the church: "Einzelperson" (the I), the "community of persons" (the I-You-relations), and the "collective person"²⁷ – or, put in pneumatological terms: "*plurality of spirit*," "*community of spirit*," and "*unity of spirit*."²⁸ Whenever Bonhoeffer argues that Schleiermacher somehow fails in understanding these ecclesiological structures the question of personhood turns

²¹ DBWE 1, 49 (DBW 1, 29). It is important to note that for Bonhoeffer the You has this significance only because it is *God's You* that encounters me in the human You; cf. DBWE 1, 54–55 (DBW 1, 32–33).

²² DBWE 1, 52 (DBW 1, 32).

²³ Cf. DBWE 1, 48 (DBW 1, 28): "The person exists always and only in ethical responsibility."

²⁴ Cf. The Christian Idea of God, DBW 10, 427: "For Christian thought, personality is the last limit of thinking and the ultimate reality. ... Personality is free and does not enter the general laws of my thinking."

²⁵ Cf. DBWE 1, 56 and 213 (DBW 1, 34 and 144). Cf. DBW 10, 428.

²⁶ DBW 12, 290; in the original: "Es gibt keinen anderen Zugang zum Menschen, als daß dieser sich von sich aus offenbart."

²⁷ Cf. DBWE 1, 193 and 30 (DBW 1, 129–130 and 16).

²⁸ DBWE 1, 193 (DBW 1, 129–130). Cf. "Sichtbare Kirche im Neuen Testament," in DBW 14, 440 note 93 (in the transcript of Erich Klapproth): "Einheit der Gemeinde – Gemeinschaft – einzelner. Fehlt einer dieser drei Begriffe, so ist etwas verkehrt!"

out to be decisive. Idealism (which includes Schleiermacher in this case²⁹) fails to understand the structures of the church because it did not see the necessity of the described ethical concept of the person.³⁰

Nonetheless, Bonhoeffer acknowledges that Schleiermacher's insight in the sociality of the community in the primal state is "an important doctrine without which the ideas of *original sin* and especially the *church* could not be fully understood."³¹

2. *Original Sin as Destroyed Community*

In Bonhoeffer's view, the main problem of the doctrine of *original sin* is how "the individual culpable act and the culpability of the human race" can "be connected conceptually."³² Bonhoeffer stresses that Schleiermacher managed to connect both because he "rediscovered the significance of original sin as a problem of social philosophy."³³ From his theory of the social orientation of the individual in the primal state, Schleiermacher deduces the simultaneity of the individual character and the social character of original sin: He calls original sin "the individual's own guilt" because it is perpetuated "by the exercise due to the voluntary action of the individual."³⁴ But original sin is also "genuinely common to all."³⁵ On the one hand, it "operates in every individual through the sin and sinfulness of others," and, on the other hand, "it is transmitted by the voluntary actions of every individual to others and implanted within them."³⁶ In this respect, it is "in each the work of all, and in all the work of each" because "the sinfulness of each points to the sinfulness of all alike."³⁷ Thus the individual constitutes the "representative of the whole human race."³⁸ This expression is almost identical to Bonhoeffer's discussion of original sin. The individual "is representative of fallen humanity."³⁹ For Bonhoeffer this means that

²⁹ Sometimes Bonhoeffer counts Schleiermacher as an idealistic thinker (cf. *DBWE* 1, 196, note 68 (*DBW* 1, 131, note 68) and *DBW* 11, 149), sometimes he does not (cf. *DBWE* 9, 319 (*DBW* 9, 347)).

³⁰ Cf. *DBWE* 1, 193 (*DBW* 1, 130).

³¹ *DBWE* 1, 64, note 1 (*DBW* 1, 38, note 1); my emphasis.

³² *DBWE* 1, 110–111 (*DBW* 1, 71).

³³ *DBWE* 1, 113, note 11 (*DBW* 1, 245, note 9).

³⁴ *The Christian Faith*, 1, 286 and 287 (§ 71.1).

³⁵ *The Christian Faith*, 1, 288 (§ 71.2). Therefore, the doctrine of original sin is not an expression of the individual self-consciousness but of the consciousness of the species.

³⁶ *The Christian Faith*, 1, 287 (§ 71.2).

³⁷ *The Christian Faith*, 1, 288 (§ 71.2).

³⁸ *The Christian Faith*, 1, 288 (§ 71.2), discussed in *DBWE* 1, 113, note 11 (*DBW* 1, 245, note 9).

³⁹ *DBW* 10, 375. The individual "ist selbst Repräsentant der abgefallenen Menschheit."

when, “in the sinful act, the individual spirit rises up against God ... the deed committed is at the same time *the deed of the human race ... in the individual person*. One falls away not only from one’s personal vocation but also from one’s generic vocation as a member of the human race. Thus all humanity falls with each sin, and not one of us is in principle different from Adam; that is, every one is also the ‘first’ sinner.”⁴⁰

This train of thought includes the ethical assumption that there “is a will of God with a people just as with individuals.”⁴¹ Bonhoeffer follows from this the necessity of the concept of collective person which describes a community as an ethical person.⁴² Especially the human race is a collective person: “humanity-in-Adam ... is ‘Adam’, a collective person.”⁴³ Even if Schleiermacher did not develop such a concept of a collective *person*, he “was doubtless correct in one respect, namely seeing that the concept of sin implies fulfillment in a social, collective concept.”⁴⁴ But Schleiermacher in Bonhoeffer’s opinion is mistaken in his description of sin as “sensuality, inhibition of God-consciousness.”⁴⁵ Again, Bonhoeffer is not very precise in saying that sin *is* sensuality. While in the first edition of *The Christian Faith* Schleiermacher seems to interpret sensuality as such as sin, in the second edition (which Bonhoeffer used) he argues differently.⁴⁶ Now sin is a question of the proper *relation* of God-consciousness and sensuality.⁴⁷ Sensuality can inhibit the God-consciousness,⁴⁸ but it can also adequately be related to it.⁴⁹

However, Bonhoeffer stresses that in relating sin to sensuality Schleiermacher interprets sin as a “biological category instead of the ethical-social one.”⁵⁰ Bonhoeffer himself tries to understand sin as an ethical phenomenon: “Whereas in the primal state the relation among human beings is one of giving, in the sinful state it is purely demanding.” Sin means “ethical atomism.”⁵¹ Everybody lives for his or her own benefit. Community with

⁴⁰ DBWE 1, 115 (DBW 1, 72).

⁴¹ DBWE 1, 119. (DBW 1, 74).

⁴² Cf. DBWE 1, 121 (DBW 1, 76).

⁴³ DBWE 1, 121 (DBW 1, 76).

⁴⁴ DBWE 1, 114, note 11 (DBW 1, 245–246, note 9).

⁴⁵ DBWE 1, 114, note 11 (DBW 1, 245–246, note 9). Cf. *The Christian Faith*, 1, 271–273 (§ 66).

⁴⁶ Cf. M. Junker, *Das Urbild des Gottesbewußtseins. Zur Entwicklung der Religions-theorie und Christologie Schleiermachers von der ersten zur zweiten Auflage der Glaubenslehre* (Berlin/New York 1990), 114–115.

⁴⁷ Cf. M. Junker, *Das Urbild des Gottesbewußtseins*, 156–158.

⁴⁸ Cf. *The Christian Faith*, 1, 273 (§ 66.2): sin is “an arrestment of the determinative power of spirit, due to the independence of the sensuous functions.”

⁴⁹ Cf. *The Christian Faith*, 1, 20–22 (§ 5.3).

⁵⁰ DBWE 1, 114, note 11 (DBW 1, 245–246, note 9).

⁵¹ DBWE 1, 108 (DBW 1, 70). Jacqueline Mariña argues that Schleiermacher’s comprehension of sin includes that the self understands itself as “independent of others and in

God and with other human beings is destroyed. No longer is humanity a biological category: “‘Humanity’ is not a biological category but constituted by means of revelation.”⁵² This means: humanity is either “humanity in Adam” or “humanity in Christ.”⁵³ The latter is “God’s new will and purpose for humanity”⁵⁴ or, in the most precise term, the church.

3. The Church – Realized by Christ

Schleiermacher proclaims the formation of the church as necessary because religion is necessarily social: “Once there is religion, it must necessarily also be social.”⁵⁵ Religion is social out of two reasons: the nature of human beings, and the nature of religion itself. First, it is the human nature to share the things inside oneself with others: It is “highly unnatural for people to lock up in themselves what they have created and worked out.”⁵⁶ Second, this impulse is even stronger in case of religion. The individual especially wants to share his/her *religious* feelings with others “to have witnesses for and participants in that which enters his senses and arouses his feelings.”⁵⁷ And s/he wants to listen to other religious people to amplify her/his own religious experience.⁵⁸ Church originates from this impulse: Church is “an ever self-renewing circulation of the religious self-consciousness within certain definite limits, and a propagation of the religious emotions arranged and organized within the same limits.”⁵⁹ There-

competition with them for finite resources” (cf. “Christology and Anthropology in Friedrich Schleiermacher,” in *CCFS*, 151–170, 164). Schleiermacher himself claims his own concept of sin as consistent with the idea of sin as a “turning away from the Creator” (*The Christian Faith*, 1, 273 (§ 66.2)).

⁵² *DBW* 11, 263: “Menschheit’ [ist] nicht [ein] biologischer Begriff, sondern an [der] Offenbarung gebildet.”

⁵³ Cf. *DBW* 11, 263–265 and *DBWE* 2, 153 (*DBW* 2, 152).

⁵⁴ *DBWE* 1, 141 (*DBW* 1, 87).

⁵⁵ *On Religion*, 163, cited in *DBWE* 1, 159, note 18 (*DBW* 1, 102, note 18). Cf. *The Christian Faith*, 1, 26 (§ 6): “The religious self-consciousness, like every essential element in human nature, leads necessarily in its development to fellowship or communion.”

⁵⁶ *On Religion*, 163, cited (translation altered) in *DBWE* 1, 159, note 18 (*DBW* 1, 102, note 18). Cf. *The Christian Faith*, 1, 27 (§ 6.2): “the *consciousness of kind* [*Gattungsbeußtsein*] which dwells in every man ... finds its satisfaction only when he steps forth beyond the limits of his own personality and takes up the facts of other personalities into his own.”

⁵⁷ *On Religion*, 163. Cf. *DBW* 11, 278, where Bonhoeffer describes the psychological derivation of the church: “Psychologisch: Religiöse Gemeinschaft [entsteht] durch Mitteilungstrieb, Missionstrieb u. a. der Menschen.”

⁵⁸ Cf. *On Religion*, 163.

⁵⁹ *The Christian Faith*, 1, 29 (§ 6.4). Cf. also § 115, cited in *DBWE* 1, 159, note 18 (*DBW* 1, 102, note 18): “The Christian Church is formed through regenerate individuals coming together for mutual interaction and cooperation in an orderly way.”

fore, "piety forms the basis of all ecclesiastical communions."⁶⁰ Of course, Bonhoeffer acknowledges that Schleiermacher conceives community and church as necessary.⁶¹ But he refuses Schleiermacher's theory of the genesis of the church on the basis of five interdependent reasons.

First, Bonhoeffer judges that Schleiermacher concentrates at last on the individual: "The reason for the formation of religious community lies in the need of the *individuals* to communicate. The church ... is constructed individualistically."⁶² Even if Schleiermacher has a strong interest in the community he begins with the individual and argues from the perspective of the individual. He conceives "the individual's community with Christ ... as being independent of the church."⁶³

Bonhoeffer recognizes also the opposite that Schleiermacher sometimes sees the church "as the entity that exists before any individual, outside of which there is no religious self-consciousness."⁶⁴ In fact, Schleiermacher repudiates "the idea that one can share in the redemption and be made blessed through Christ outside the corporate life which He instituted, as if a Christian could dispense with the latter and be with Christ, as it were, alone." Such a view implies "an activity of Christ which is not mediated in time and space."⁶⁵ Nevertheless, Bonhoeffer is convinced that in the end Schleiermacher is "ultimately giving priority to the individual dimension over the communal."⁶⁶ Vice versa, the significance of the community lies in the development of the individual.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ *The Christian Faith*, 1, 5 (§ 3).

⁶¹ Cf. *DBWE* 1, 195, note 68 (*DBW* 1, 131, note 68). Bonhoeffer implicitly appreciates the structure of Schleiermacher's *The Christian Faith* when he argues that "it would be good ... if a presentation of doctrinal theology were to start not with the doctrine of God but with the doctrine of the church" (*DBWE* 1, 134; *DBW* 1, 85) which in fact is what Schleiermacher does (cf. *The Christian Faith*, 1, 5–31 (§§ 3–6)).

⁶² *DBWE* 1, 159, note 18 (*DBW* 1, 101, note 18); my emphasis. In Bonhoeffer's eyes, this can lead to an understanding of the church as "Privatsache." Bonhoeffer believes that "Schleiermacher schmiedet [die] Waffen dafür!" (*DBW* 11, 276).

⁶³ *DBWE* 1, 159, note 18 (*DBW* 1, 101, note 18).

⁶⁴ *DBWE* 1, 159, note 18 (*DBW* 1, 101, note 18). Cf. *The Christian Faith*, 2, 525–528 (§ 113). For Schleiermacher the existence of the church in which the believer finds him/herself means that there existed already "a collective need for redemption and expectation of it" (*The Christian Faith*, 2, 526 (§ 113.2)).

⁶⁵ *The Christian Faith*, 2, 360 (§ 87.3).

⁶⁶ *DBWE* 1, 159, note 18 (*DBW* 1, 101, note 18). Bonhoeffer takes this critique from Albrecht Ritschl, *Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung*, vol. 1 (Bonn, second edition 1882). Ritschl notices that Schleiermacher's concept of redemption and reconciliation is individual in focussing on the change of the individual's will and feeling: "... und indem diese Wirkungen immer nur an den Einzelnen anschaulich gemacht werden, so wird der Begriff der Lebensgemeinschaft ... unter der Hand zum Ausdruck eines ganz individuellen Verhältnisses, und das neue Gesamtleben tritt aus der Stellung der Voraussetzung in die der einfachen Folge davon" (ibid., 519; cf. 520).

⁶⁷ Cf. *DBWE* 1, 159, note 18 (*DBW* 1, 101, note 18).

Second, Bonhoeffer complains about Schleiermacher's question for the desires which are fulfilled in the church. "The reason for the formation of religious community lies in the *need* of the individuals to communicate. The church is the satisfaction of a need."⁶⁸ In this Schleiermacher's concept of the church is "utilitarian."⁶⁹

Third, Bonhoeffer criticizes that Schleiermacher "thought he could deduce the concept of the church from the general concept of religion."⁷⁰ Bonhoeffer judges Schleiermacher's argument as wrong that church is necessary because of the nature of religion itself. Of course, the community with God is integral for religion; but "an impulse toward religious community is not in principle entailed in religion, and this must be so; the value of the holy is not exclusively actualized in a social context as, for example, the value of justice, or love, or equality ... but also in solitary communion with God. The mystics too were religious."⁷¹ The fact that religion mostly is social [*gesellig*] is rooted in "psychological causes that are more or less accidental."⁷²

That the church emerges from the individual wills which come together⁷³ in Bonhoeffer's judgment is a psychological and historical understanding of the genesis of the church,⁷⁴ because it talks about the process of becoming a unity. Church, and this is Bonhoeffer's fourth point, is thus constituted by human beings.⁷⁵ The individual wills have to become

⁶⁸ *DBWE* 1, 159, note 18 (*DBW* 1, 101, note 18); emphasis added. Cf. *DBWE* 1, 160, note 18 (*DBW* 1, 102, note 18): Schleiermacher claims "the individual's need to communicate to be the basic sociological structure of the church."

⁶⁹ *DBWE* 1, 132, note 23 (*DBW* 1, 253, note 25). This judgment can also be seen in his university lecture on "The Nature of the Church" (*DBW* 11, 278–279, note 277) where Bonhoeffer discusses the difference between "Gesellschaft" und "Gemeinschaft" which F. Tönnies argued for: While the latter wills the "being-with-one-another" "as an end in itself" the former wills the "being-with-one-another" "as a means to an end" (*DBWE* 1, 88; (*DBW* 1, 56). In Schleiermacher's concept, community is needed for satisfying the "Mitteilungstrieb" and thus is only a means to an end (*DBW* 11, 278). Bonhoeffer himself sees the community in the church above all as "Gemeinschaft;" cf. *DBWE* 1, 266–267 (*DBW* 1, 185–186).

⁷⁰ *DBWE* 1, 133, note 23 (*DBW* 1, 254, note 25).

⁷¹ *DBWE* 1, 131, note 23 (*DBW* 1, 252, note 25). Cf. "The Nature of the Church," *DBW* 11, 278: "Dies Mitteilungsbedürfnis ist Zeichen jeder Gemeinschaft. Frömmigkeit [ist] auch individualistisch möglich." Bonhoeffer is keen to emphasize against Schleiermacher that there is "in fact only *one* religion in which the idea of community is an integral element of its nature, and that is Christianity" (*DBWE* 1, 130–131; *DBW* 1, 84); this means that community is an essential element of Christianity but not of religion as such.

⁷² *DBWE* 1, 133 (*DBW* 1, 84).

⁷³ Cf. *DBW* 11, 262.

⁷⁴ Cf. *DBW* 11, 276, note 259.

⁷⁵ Cf. *DBW* 11, 277. Cf. also *The Christian Faith*, 1, 3 (§ 2.2). Church "is a society which originates only through free human action and which can only through such continue to exist."

united.⁷⁶ Thus Bonhoeffer criticizes: “Schleiermacher’s concept of unity is not theological, but psychological, and therefore profoundly mistaken. It is based on an *identification of ‘religious community’ and ‘church’*.”⁷⁷ This leads to a concentration on religious experience and to an “Ideal des Erlebens.”⁷⁸ Bonhoeffer warns of this concentration on religious experience. He sees “the danger of confusing Christian community with some wishful image of pious community, the danger of blending the devout heart’s natural desire for community with the spiritual reality of Christian community.”⁷⁹

By identifying religious community and church, and this is Bonhoeffer’s fifth criticism, Schleiermacher makes the methodological mistake of viewing the church only from the outside. Of course, church also is a religious community: “when viewed from the outside, the church is a religious community [but] this is precisely an untheological perspective.”⁸⁰ It is untheological because it excludes what God does for the reality of the church: Schleiermacher “points to the ‘religious motives’ that in fact lead to empirical community (the missionary impulse, the need to communicate, etc.);” in this he “overlooks the fact that the new basic-relations established by God actually are real.”⁸¹ This is with what Bonhoeffer starts his own ecclesiology: with the divine reality of the church. The reality of the church is not made by human beings. Christ’s presence in the church is constitutive for it. What does this mean?

First of all, through Christ the broken community with God is reconciled: “In Christ humanity really is drawn into community with God”⁸². And Christ is present only in the church – a fact which leads to the insight that community with God is possible only in the church: “Community with

⁷⁶ Cf. *DBW* 11, 262.

⁷⁷ *DBWE* 1, 195–196, note 68 (*DBW* 1, 131, note 68).

⁷⁸ *DBW* 11, 277.

⁷⁹ *DBWE* 5, 34–35 (*DBW* 5, 22).

⁸⁰ *DBWE* 1, 196, note 68 (*DBW* 1, 131, note 68). Cf. *DBWE* 1, 126 (*DBW* 1, 79–80): “it is certainly possible to focus on the empirical phenomenon ‘church’ qua ‘religious community’ ... and to develop a sociological morphology of it [but] in that case all theological reflections would be superfluous.” Similarly, Bonhoeffer summarizes in his lecture on “The Nature of the Church” that for Schleiermacher “‘Kirche’ ist freiwilliger Zusammenschluß der christlichen Frommen. Damit ist [die] Kirche auf die Frömmigkeit der Einzelnen zurückgeführt.” In Bonhoeffer’s eyes, this includes that the church is deduced but not presupposed: “Kirche ist nicht letzte Voraussetzung. Individuelle Religiosität setzt er [Schleiermacher] vor die Klammer” (*DBW* 11, 253; emphasis added). Cf. *ibid.*, 277: “Kirche ist ... Abgeleitetes ... da, wo sie als religiöse Gemeinschaft gesehen wird.” Cf. *ibid.*: “[Auch wenn der] Gemeinschaftsbegriff aus [dem] Religionsbegriff abgeleitet [wird], ist religiöse Gemeinschaft immer etwas Sekundäres; [denn] die Religion muß [zuerst] da sein.”

⁸¹ *DBWE* 1, 125 (*DBW* 1, 79).

⁸² *DBWE* 1, 146 (*DBW* 1, 91).

God exists only through Christ, but Christ is present only in his church-community, and therefore *community with God exists only in the church.*"⁸³ This means that being a Christian is possible only *in the church*. Being in the church is not a consequence of Christian existence but a necessary element of it since "*there is no relation to Christ in which the relation to the church is not necessarily established as well.*"⁸⁴ Thus, "every individualistic concept of the church breaks down because of this fact."⁸⁵

Fundamental for understanding the character of the church is the insight that the church is a mode of being of Christ.⁸⁶ The church is "Christ existing as church-community."⁸⁷ This is why "Christian community is ... a divine reality,"⁸⁸ a reality realized in Christ. "God established the reality of the church ... in Jesus Christ – not religion, but revelation, *not religious community, but church.*"⁸⁹ Whereas the unity of a *religious community* in fact is psychological, the unity of the church "transcends psychological categories, it is divinely established."⁹⁰ It is the unity constituted by Christ in whom "the plurality of persons [is united] into a single collective person."⁹¹

Even in *Life Together* when Bonhoeffer describes the concrete daily life of a Christian community he emphasizes that it is Christ who constitutes the reality of the church and not the communication of "piety": "The fact that we are brothers and sisters only through Jesus Christ is of immeasurable significance. Therefore, the other who comes face to face with me earnestly and devoutly [*fromm*] seeking community is *not* the brother or sister with whom I am to relate in the community. My brother or sister is instead that other person who has been redeemed by Christ ... What persons are in themselves ... in their inwardness and piety, cannot constitute the basis of our community, which is determined by what those persons are in terms of Christ. Our community consists solely in what Christ has done to both of us."⁹²

⁸³ *DBWE* 1, 158 (*DBW* 1, 101).

⁸⁴ *DBWE* 1, 127 (*DBW* 1, 81).

⁸⁵ *DBWE* 1, 158 (*DBW* 1, 101).

⁸⁶ Cf. for example *DBWE* 1, 189–190 (*DBW* 1, 126–127).

⁸⁷ *DBWE* 1, 199 (*DBW* 1, 133).

⁸⁸ *DBWE* 5, 35 (*DBW* 5, 22). Cf. *DBWE* 1, 127 (*DBW* 1, 80): "The concept of the church is conceivable only in the sphere of reality established by God."

⁸⁹ *DBWE* 1, 153 (*DBW* 1, 79). Cf. *DBWE* 1, 126 (*DBW* 1, 80): The fact that constitutes the church is "the fact of Christ, or the 'Word'." Cf. *DBW* 11, 276–277: "Kirche ist ... *die schon in Christus realiter gesetzte Kirche!* Durch [die] Tat Gottes ist Kirche da."

⁹⁰ *DBWE* 1, 196, note 68 (*DBW* 1, 131, note 68). Cf. *DBWE* 5, 35 (*DBW* 5, 22): "Christian community is a spiritual and not a psychic reality."

⁹¹ *DBWE* 1, 193 (*DBW* 1, 129).

⁹² *DBWE* 5, 34 (*DBW* 5, 21–22); emphasis added.

Bonhoeffer interprets Jesus Christ's presence in the church which is essential for the church's reality as his *personal* presence. And he argues convincingly that this kind of presence is possible only on the background of Christ's resurrection.⁹³ Bonhoeffer judges that Schleiermacher is not able to conceive Christ's presence in the church as personal because Schleiermacher understands Christ's resurrection only symbolically.⁹⁴ Schleiermacher himself argues: "The facts of the resurrection and the ascension of Christ ... cannot be laid down as properly constituent parts of the doctrine of his person."⁹⁵ Different from Bonhoeffer, Schleiermacher claims that "neither the spiritual presence which He promised nor all that He said about His enduring influence upon those who remained behind is mediated through either of these two facts."⁹⁶ This means: For his presence, no resurrection is necessary. Bonhoeffer recognizes that Schleiermacher interprets the presence of Christ as "die von ihm ausgehende Wirkung, die in die Gemeinde hineinreicht ... Christus ist ... dynamisch gedacht, er ist eine historische Energie, die nicht verlorenggeht, sondern sich weiter mitteilt. Die Gegenwart Christi ist hier unter der Kategorie von Ursache und Wirkung gedacht."⁹⁷ At the same time, Schleiermacher interprets the presence of Christ as rooted in the human attempt "über die Geschichte hinweg sich das Bild Christi immer wieder zur Anschauung zu bringen."⁹⁸ Bonhoeffer thinks that in both cases Schleiermacher understands Christ as a power, but not as a person.⁹⁹

In Bonhoeffer's opinion this neglecting of the personhood of Jesus Christ is repeated in Schleiermacher's determination of the relation of the person and the deeds of Jesus Christ. Bonhoeffer sees Schleiermacher interpreting the person of Christ out of his deeds and thus dissolving the christological question into the soteriological one.¹⁰⁰ Admittedly, Schleiermacher argues that talking about the deeds of Christ means *the same* as talking about the person of Christ.¹⁰¹ But he describes both: the

⁹³ Cf. *DBW* 12, 293: "Allein wo der auferstandene Christus als der Grund und die Voraussetzung der Christologie verstanden wird, nur da ist es möglich, seine Gegenwart als Person zu fassen."

⁹⁴ Cf. *DBW* 12, 293–294. Cf. also Schleiermacher's sermon on Romans 6, 4–8 in *Sämtliche Werke* II.2 (Berlin 1843), 176ff., where Schleiermacher describes Christ's resurrection as "*Bild des neuen Lebens*, in welchem wir alle durch ihn wandeln sollen" (*ibid.*, 177).

⁹⁵ *The Christian Faith*, 2, 417 (§ 99).

⁹⁶ *The Christian Faith*, 2, 418 (§ 99.1).

⁹⁷ *DBW* 12, 292.

⁹⁸ *DBW* 12, 292.

⁹⁹ Cf. *DBW* 12, 292–293.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. *DBW* 12, 289.

¹⁰¹ Cf. *The Christian Faith*, 2, 375–376 (§ 92.3). Both categories are implicated in each other.

person of Christ¹⁰² and the duty of Christ¹⁰³ and connects both reciprocally.¹⁰⁴

However, Bonhoeffer himself argues for an interpretation of the deeds of Christ through the person of Christ. For, the deeds of Christ are conceived differently, depending on how the person of Christ is understood: "Nur wenn ich weiß, wer dies Werk tut, verstehe ich dieses Werk. Es kommt alles darauf an zu wissen, ob Jesus Christus ein idealistischer Religionsstifter oder der Sohn Gottes selbst gewesen ist ... War er ein idealistischer Religionsstifter, so kann ich durch sein Werk ... zur Nacheiferung angegraben werden, aber meine Sünde ist mir nicht vergeben ... Ist aber das Werk Christi das Werk Gottes selbst, dann bin ich ... in diesem Werk getroffen als einer, der das in keiner Weise selbst tun konnte. Aber zugleich habe ich... durch diesen Jesus Christus den gnädigen Gott gefunden."¹⁰⁵ This makes clear that the deed of Christ is ambiguous¹⁰⁶ which can be put down to the fact that for knowing Christ a *revelation* is necessary.¹⁰⁷

From this follows that for understanding the essence of the church, which is Christ's personal presence, as well a revelation is necessary: "Only the concept of revelation can lead to the Christian concept of the church."¹⁰⁸ This means: "The reality of the church is a reality of revelation, a reality that essentially must be either believed or denied."¹⁰⁹

Bonhoeffer is of the opinion that Schleiermacher's misunderstanding of Christ's personhood is not even avoided when Schleiermacher talks about the "personality" of Christ: "we can represent the growth of His personality from earliest childhood on to the fullness of manhood as a continuous transition from the condition of the purest innocence to one of purely spiritual fullness of power."¹¹⁰ Bonhoeffer judges: "Personality in this context

¹⁰² *The Christian Faith*, 2, 377–424 (§§ 93–99).

¹⁰³ *The Christian Faith*, 2, 425–475 (§§ 100–105).

¹⁰⁴ Cf. G. Lämmlin, *Individualität und Verständigung. Das Kirchenverständnis nach Schleiermachers Glaubenslehre* (Aachen 1998), 142.

¹⁰⁵ *DBW* 12, 290.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *DBW* 12, 290.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. *DBW* 12, 291: "Nur durch die Offenbarung Christi erschließt sich mir seine Person und auch sein Werk."

¹⁰⁸ *DBWE* 1, 134 (*DBW* 1, 84).

¹⁰⁹ *DBWE* 1, 127 (*DBW* 1, 80). Cf. *DBW* 11, 277: "Kirche [ist] nicht als religiöse Gemeinschaft [zu verstehen]! Kirche ist [eine] Wirklichkeit des Glaubens." It is interesting to note that Schleiermacher has a similar idea when he argues that it is a statement of our self-consciousness that the church is of divine origin: "With the first stirrings of preparatory grace in consciousness, there comes a presentiment of the divine origin of the Christian Church; and with a living faith in Christ awakens also a belief that the Kingdom of God is actually present in the fellowship of believers" (*The Christian Faith*, 2, 528 (§ 113.4)).

¹¹⁰ *The Christian Faith*, 2, 383 (§ 93.4).

characterizes the opposite of that which we call the *person*.”¹¹¹ Jesus Christ’s personality is interpreted as the appearance of a value: the idea of a religious personality, “a personality with an unclouded, strong ‘God-consciousness’.”¹¹² Christ is “the representative, the one who incorporates [*der Verkörperer*] this idea in history.”¹¹³ Bonhoeffer sees this as “doctetic:” “There is a certain prior religious idea that is applied to the historical Jesus.”¹¹⁴ That Jesus Christ was a real human being is ignored.¹¹⁵ Whoever understands Christ as the appearance of a religious idea which is true independently of this appearance ignores the historical revelation of Christ.¹¹⁶ The historical revelation of Christ “is always anew a challenge to man. He cannot overcome it by pulling it into the system which he already had before.”¹¹⁷

4. *The Church – Actualized by the Holy Spirit*

In Bonhoeffer’s view, Schleiermacher ignores the difference between psychological and theological categories and repeats this mistake in his pneumatology. Schleiermacher assumes that every community has a “common spirit” [*Gemeingeist*]. It is “the common bent found in all who constitute together a moral personality, to seek the advancement of this whole; and this is at the same time the characteristic love found in each for every other.”¹¹⁸ The Holy Spirit is nothing else but “common spirit” of the Christian community.¹¹⁹ Through the Holy Spirit “a multitude of people” becomes “a true unity through which the multitude of Christians also become a unity and the many individual personalities become a true common life or moral personality.”¹²⁰

¹¹¹ DBW 12, 293.

¹¹² DBW 12, 320. Cf. DBW 12, 293: “Persönlichkeit ist die Fülle und Harmonie der Werte, die in dem Phänomen Jesus Christus zusammengefaßt werden.”

¹¹³ DBW 12, 320.

¹¹⁴ DBW 12, 321. Cf. *On Religion*, 218: “But the truly divine is the splendid clarity with which the great idea he [Jesus Christ] had come to exhibit was formed in his soul, the idea that everything finite requires higher mediation in order to be connected with the divine.”

¹¹⁵ Cf. DBW 12, 320–321. Cf. Ernst Feil, *Die Theologie Dietrich Bonhoeffers. Hermeneutik – Christologie – Weltverständnis* (Münster, 5th edition, 2005), 217: “Für Bonhoeffer hat Schleiermacher letztlich mit der Menschwerdung Gottes nicht ernst gemacht.”

¹¹⁶ Cf. H.-J. Abromeit, *Das Geheimnis Christi. Dietrich Bonhoeffers erfahrungsbezogene Christologie* (Neukirchen-Vluyn 1991), 190.

¹¹⁷ DBW 10, 429.

¹¹⁸ *The Christian Faith*, 2, 562 (§ 121.2).

¹¹⁹ Cf. *The Christian Faith*, 2, 535 (§ 116.3).

¹²⁰ *The Christian Faith*, 2, 563 (§ 121.2).

Bonhoeffer acknowledges Schleiermacher's orientation on the community character of the Holy Spirit.¹²¹ And he appreciates Schleiermacher's idea of a "collective life" (*Gesamtleben*) of the church.¹²² Bonhoeffer praises emphatically Schleiermacher's pneumatological foundation of that "Gesamtleben:" "Schleiermacher [hat in der Lehre von der Kirche] neue Bahnen gewiesen, indem er kühn Gemeingeist und Heiligen Geist identifizierte ... Schleiermacher war ... gewiß nicht vorbildlich verfahren mit seiner kühnen Identification, aber ebenso gewiß hatte er doch etwas gesehen, was zu sehen die Dogmatik nicht wieder hätte verlernen dürfen. Hätte die Dogmatik früh genug das Verhältnis von Heiligem Geist und kirchlicher Gemeinschaft durchdacht, so wäre vielleicht in der Praxis manches anders geworden."¹²³

Furthermore, Bonhoeffer acknowledges Schleiermacher's general concept of spirit in his own idea of "objective spirit": "... where wills unite, a 'structure' is created – that is, a third entity, previously unknown, independent of being willed or not willed by the persons who are uniting. This general recognition of the nature of objective spirit was a discovery of the qualitative thinking that became dominant in romanticism and idealism ... Two wills encountering one another form a structure. A third person joining them sees not just one person connected to the other; rather, the will of the structure, as a third factor, resists the newcomer with a resistance not identical with the wills of the two individuals. Sometimes this is even more forceful than that of either individual ... Precisely this structure is objective spirit ... the persons themselves experience their community as something real outside themselves."¹²⁴

However, Bonhoeffer complains Schleiermacher's concept of the Holy Spirit itself. Again, Bonhoeffer sees an ignoring of personhood: Schleiermacher understands the Holy Spirit as "personal,"¹²⁵ as a neutral power, as effect.¹²⁶ Bonhoeffer judges Schleiermacher's idea of the Holy Spirit as solely anthropological-biological, being a "category of the psychology of

¹²¹ Cf. *DBWE* 1, 195, note 68 (*DBW* 1, 131, note 68): "Schleiermacher correctly recognizes a life of an individual only for and within the community – that the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit is primarily aimed at the church, at the corporate life."

¹²² Cf. *DBWE* 1, 153, note 79 (*DBW* 1, 97, note 79).

¹²³ "Der Geist und die Gnade bei Frank" (1926) in *DBW* 17, 47–48.

¹²⁴ *DBWE* 1, 98–99 (*DBW* 1, 62).

¹²⁵ *DBWE* 1, 194, note 68 (*DBW* 1, 131, note 68). Cf. *The Christian Faith*, 2, 569–574 (§ 123). That Schleiermacher calls the Holy Spirit a "moral person" (*The Christian Faith*, 2, 535 (§ 116.3), but referring to the unity of the Christian community, not to the Holy Spirit) "cannot salvage anything" (*DBWE* 1, 194, note 68; *DBW* 1, 131, note 68). Similarly Jürgen Moltmann, *Der Geist des Lebens. Eine ganzheitliche Pneumatologie* (Munich 1991), 236.

¹²⁶ Cf. Bonhoeffer's notes on "Heiliger Geist" (1935) in *DBW* 14, 468, note 20.

peoples and species.”¹²⁷ Bonhoeffer finds the fault in that that “the *Holy Spirit is apparently nothing but the consciousness of the species.*”¹²⁸ So Schleiermacher again ignores the basic difference between a psychological and a theological understanding of the church. While the consciousness of the species “is part of any community as such,” the Holy Spirit “is present in principle only in the church.”¹²⁹

In his dogmatic thinking Schleiermacher does not identify the Holy Spirit and consciousness of the species in a clear manner. He argues that the consciousness of the species in its unity with the God-consciousness is “no mere natural principle that would have developed of itself out of human nature as human nature would have remained without Christ.”¹³⁰ This shows that Schleiermacher assumes a christological reason for the case that the consciousness of the species is the Holy Spirit.¹³¹ Bonhoeffer himself interprets the Holy Spirit – like Schleiermacher – as “the Spirit of the church-community.” But he emphasizes that this means “something quite different”¹³² than Schleiermacher’s concept of “Gemeingeist.” Bonhoeffer is of the opinion that in talking about the unity which the Christians have to *become* in the “Gesamtleben,” Schleiermacher misunderstands the *unity* of spirit.¹³³ The unity of spirit of the church-community is already given; it lies in the collective person of Christ: “The unity of spirit of the church-community is a fundamental synthesis willed by God; it is not a relation that must be produced, but one that is already established.”¹³⁴ The unity of the church is “its existence as a collective person,” it is “*Christ existing as church-community.*”¹³⁵ From this follows that “this unity does not exist because the members of the body have the same intentions; rather, if they

¹²⁷ *DBWE* 1, 195, note 68 (*DBW* 1, 131, note 68).

¹²⁸ *DBWE* 1, 194, note 68 (*DBW* 1, 131, note 68). Cf. *DBWE* 1, 195–196, note 68 (*DBW* 1, 131, note 68).

¹²⁹ *DBWE* 1, 196, note 68 (*DBW* 1, 131, note 68).

¹³⁰ *The Christian Faith*, 2, 565 (§ 121.3).

¹³¹ Cf. Diederich, *Schleiermachers Geistverständnis. Eine systematisch-theologische Untersuchung seiner philosophischen und theologischen Rede vom Geist* (Göttingen 1999), 227–228. Bonhoeffer judges the identity between the consciousness of the species and the Holy Spirit as rooted in an “underlying doctrine of apocatastasis.” The human race has a final claim on God, “exactly because it is the species. It is the ‘value’ God wants, which is to be realized and to which the individual is sacrificed” (*DBWE* 1, 195, note 68; *DBW* 1, 131, note 68). Pneumatologically this means “that the entire human race belongs to this spirit. The difference between individuals is merely temporal, namely that some already have the *pneuma hagian* [Holy Spirit] while others do not yet have it” (*Die Christliche Sitte nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt*, SW I.12, 514, cited in *DBWE* 1, 171, note 29; *DBW* 1, 111, note 29).

¹³² *DBWE* 1, 195, note 68 (*DBW* 1, 131, note 68).

¹³³ Cf. *DBWE* 1, 195, note 68 (*DBW* 1, 131, note 68).

¹³⁴ *DBWE* 1, 192 (*DBW* 1, 128).

¹³⁵ *DBWE* 1, 199 (*DBW* 1, 133).

have the same intentions at all, they have them only as members of the body of Christ."¹³⁶

Over and above that christological unity, the church of course should become a community of love; but this human action is possible only on the basis of the unity already established by God in Christ.¹³⁷ That is why the "immanent unity of spirit is only the initial actualization of the transcendent unity of Spirit that is in reality established in Christ."¹³⁸

In the church community, "the plurality of persons [is united] into a single collective person ... without obliterating either their singularity or the community of persons."¹³⁹ Schleiermacher also misunderstands the *community* of spirit. The community of spirit is possible only between *persons*.¹⁴⁰ But in Schleiermacher's concentration of the effect of the Holy Spirit on the consciousness of species "the individual must become a tool, which means ... that the individual must be extinguished as a person."¹⁴¹

¹³⁶ *DBWE* 1, 200 (*DBW* 1, 134). Bonhoeffer argues for a simultaneity of act and being regarding the acting of the Holy Spirit and the being in the church: "the Holy Spirit is at work only in the church as in the community of saints; thus every person who is really moved by the Spirit has to be within the church-community already; but, on the other hand, no one is in the church-community who has not already been moved by the Spirit" (*DBWE* 1, 158–159; *DBW* 1, 101). This aspect is developed further in his *Act and Being* (*DBWE* 2); cf. my book *Bonhoeffer's Kritik der verkrümmten Vernunft. Eine erkenntnistheoretische Untersuchung* (Tübingen 1999). Schleiermacher himself sees an identity between the acting of the Holy Spirit and being a member of the church: "for only when this common spirit of the whole begins to show itself at work in a given person can it be known that he is a constituent part of the whole; just as if anyone joins himself to the whole, it can be taken as certain that he will receive a communication of the Holy Spirit" (*The Christian Faith*, 2, 563 (§ 121.2)).

¹³⁷ Cf. *DBWE* 1, 202 (*DBW* 1, 135).

¹³⁸ *DBWE* 1, 203 (*DBW* 1, 136). While Schleiermacher understands the unity as caused by the abolition of the difference between one's own human and that of others (cf. *Psychologie*, *Sämtliche Werke* III.6 (Berlin 1862), 194), Bonhoeffer concentrates on an equality which is not "discernible as 'uniformity,'" but an "equality before God" that "cannot be perceived or demonstrated in any way" (*DBWE* 1, 205; *DBW* 1, 138).

¹³⁹ *DBWE* 1, 193 (*DBW* 1, 129).

¹⁴⁰ Cf. *DBWE* 1, 195, note 68 (*DBW* 1, 131, note 68).

¹⁴¹ *DBWE* 1, 195, note 68 (*DBW* 1, 131, note 68). Cf. "Sichtbare Kirche im Neuen Testament," *DBW* 14, 440 note 93 (in the transcript of Erich Klapproth): "Einheit der Gemeinde – Gemeinschaft – einzelner. Fehlt einer dieser drei Begriffe, so ist etwas verkehrt! ... Fehlen die einzelnen, kommt Schleiermacher." This means that Schleiermacher loses the individual. Cf. the concept of instrument in *DBWE* 1, 196, note 208 (*DBW* 1, 270, note 195). Cf. also *The Christian Faith*, 2, 536 (§ 116.3): "in every corporate life all that is personal must be subordinated to the common spirit." Martin Diederich argues, however, "daß Schleiermacher das Aufgehen des Individuums in der Gemeinschaft gerade als sein Sichverwirklichen als Individuum zu denken vornimmt" (M. Diederich, *Schleiermachers Geistverständnis*, 250); "die Aufhebung der Personalität in die Gemeinschaft [ist] ein dialektischer Prozeß, der diese erst wahrhaft herstellt" (*ibid.*, 252f.). Bonhoeffer's own concept of community with its threefold structure (I, I-You-relation, collective person) rejects such a mixture of structures.

Because the individual spirit is swallowed by the community spirit, “dissolving the personality,”¹⁴² Schleiermacher has no “social concept of community.”¹⁴³ Bonhoeffer judges harshly: “In summary, we have to say that Schleiermacher not only fails to understand social community, and thus the essence of social ‘unity’, but that, in spite of his efforts to develop the concepts of the corporate life and the union of humanity, he does not reach the social sphere at all ... He is a metaphysician of the spirit, and as such founders on the concept of sociality.”¹⁴⁴

II. Religion

Without doubt, Schleiermacher’s reflections on religion are the basic source of the modern significance of the term “religion”. In his works, Schleiermacher argues for the peculiarity of religion to the other expressions of human existence (1) and for the necessity of religion (2); he also describes the religious self-consciousness as the main subject of theology (3).

1. The Peculiarity of Religion

The main achievement of Schleiermacher’s famous *Speeches on Religion* from 1799 is that they bring out the originality of religion. Compared with metaphysics and morals, religion is “something integral [*etwas eigenes*].”¹⁴⁵ Religion has the same subject as metaphysics and morals, “namely the universe and the relationship of humanity to it.”¹⁴⁶ But it deals with this subject differently: Religion “does not wish to determine and explain the universe according to its nature as does metaphysics; it does not desire to continue the universe’s development and perfect it by the power of freedom and the divine free choice of a human being as does morals.”¹⁴⁷ Religion is neither “thinking” (= metaphysics) nor “acting” (= morals), but

¹⁴² DBWE 1, 195, note 68 (DBW 1, 131, note 68). Cf. *On Religion*, 138: “Strive here already to annihilate your individuality and to live in the one and all.”

¹⁴³ DBWE 1, 195, note 68 (DBW 1, 131, note 68). Cf. E. Hirsch, *Die idealistische Philosophie und das Christentum* (Gütersloh 1926), 103–194.

¹⁴⁴ DBWE 1, 196, note 68 (DBW 1, 131, note 68).

¹⁴⁵ *On Religion*, 100.

¹⁴⁶ *On Religion*, 97.

¹⁴⁷ *On Religion*, 101–102. Oberdorfer argues that this does not tear apart religion, morals or metaphysics, but makes clear the significance of religion for both, morals and metaphysics (cf. B. Oberdorfer, *Geselligkeit und Realisierung von Sittlichkeit. Die Theorienentwicklung Friedrich Schleiermachers bis 1799* (Berlin/New York 1995), 544).

“intuition and feeling”¹⁴⁸ regarding the universe or, as Schleiermacher says in *The Christian Faith*, a “feeling of absolute dependence.”¹⁴⁹ It has its own anthropological function and its mental place, “its own province in the mind.”¹⁵⁰

In an early writing, an exegesis on James 1:21–25, Bonhoeffer makes a sceptical comment on this concept of religion. In Bonhoeffer’s judgment, Schleiermacher’s definition of religion means an exclusion of “doing.” “There can scarcely be a sharper contrast between the Schleiermacherian definition of religious terms (knowing and doing as mutually exclusive) and the conception of the letter of James,”¹⁵¹ a letter which focuses precisely on “doing.” Bonhoeffer himself argues for a strong connection between faith and action in form of obedience to Christ (“could there possibly be Christian concepts that are more tightly woven together than faith and obedience?”¹⁵²) and, accordingly, against a sharp contrast between the theology of James and that of Paul¹⁵³ – a position which remains crucial in his whole life.¹⁵⁴

Truly, Schleiermacher distinguishes faith and morality but he does not separate faith and morality: “All actual action should be moral, and it can be too, but religious feelings should accompany every human deed like a holy music; we should do everything with religion, nothing because of religion.”¹⁵⁵ Religion “grounds the desire to act.”¹⁵⁶ “Christian piety is an *incentive* to action.”¹⁵⁷ But of course, Bonhoeffer would stress that *only* the person who acts really believes.¹⁵⁸

2. *The Necessity of Religion*

Because religion has its place in an own “province in the mind,” having religion is essential for human existence. Religion “shows itself to you as

¹⁴⁸ *On Religion*, 102.

¹⁴⁹ *The Christian Faith*, 1, 16 (§ 4.3).

¹⁵⁰ *On Religion*, 95. Cf. Bonhoeffer’s lecture on the “History of Systematic Theology” in *DBW* 11, 147: “Schleiermacher hat das Eigenrecht der Religion begründet durch die Lokalisierung der Religion in der religiösen Provinz der S[eel]e.”

¹⁵¹ *DBWE* 9, 492, note 2 (*DWB* 9, 537, note 2); emphasis in original.

¹⁵² *DBWE* 9, 491 (*DWB* 9, 536).

¹⁵³ Cf. *DBWE* 9, 493 (*DBW* 9, 538).

¹⁵⁴ Cf. *DBWE* 4, 43ff.

¹⁵⁵ *On Religion*, 110.

¹⁵⁶ E. Herms, “Schleiermacher’s Christian Ethics,” in *CCFS*, 209–228, 214.

¹⁵⁷ E. Herms, “Schleiermacher’s Christian Ethics,” 215.

¹⁵⁸ *DBWE* 4, 63 (*DBW* 4, 52). Cf. Christiane Tietz, “‘Nur der Glaubende ist gehorsam, und nur der Gehorsame glaubt.’ Beobachtungen zu einem existentiellen Zirkel in Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s ‘Nachfolge,’” in *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Jahrbuch/Yearbook* 2 (2005–2006), 170–181.

the necessary and indispensable third next to those two [metaphysics/speculation and morals/praxis], as their natural counterpart, not slighter in worth and splendour than what you wish of them."¹⁵⁹ Having religion is "not an accidental element, or a thing which varies from person to person, but is a universal element of life."¹⁶⁰ This assumption includes the idea of a religious *a priori*: "A person is born with the religious capacity as with every other, and if only his sense is not forcibly suppressed, if only that communion between a person and the universe ... is not blocked and barricaded, then religion would have to develop unerringly in each person according to his own individual manner."¹⁶¹ Or, as Schleiermacher argues in the *Christian Faith*, the feeling of absolute dependence develops from "the absolutely general nature of humanity."¹⁶²

Bonhoeffer criticizes the idea of a religious *a priori* in human self-consciousness, because he fears that thus religion is "only anthropology" and hence "incapable of overcoming the immanence of the spirit."¹⁶³ As Barth he believes that religion then remains "die letzte, feinste der Möglichkeiten des Menschen. Der Mensch [wird] als Gott verwandt entdeckt."¹⁶⁴ This leads to a "'grand confusion' of religion and grace."¹⁶⁵ In accordance to his understanding of religion as an anthropological constant, Schleiermacher sees atheism inversely as a "sickness of the soul"¹⁶⁶ in which the religious *a priori* remains undeveloped. Because religion is essential for the human soul, Schleiermacher assumes that this atheism "may revive sporadically and from time to time," but it will never become "anything that is historically permanent."¹⁶⁷ For theological reasons Schleiermacher does not reckon with a time of religionlessness.

Quite differently, Bonhoeffer is of the opinion that the religious *a priori* is only a "historically conditioned and transient form of human self-expression."¹⁶⁸ And he substitutes the idea of a religious *a priori* by the assumption: "We are moving towards a completely religionless time; people as they are now simply cannot be religious any more."¹⁶⁹ As Schleier-

¹⁵⁹ *On Religion*, 102.

¹⁶⁰ *The Christian Faith*, 1, 133 (§ 33). Cf. (§ 33.2), where Schleiermacher claims "that the feeling of absolute dependence ... and the God-consciousness contained in it are a fundamental moment of human life."

¹⁶¹ *On Religion*, 146.

¹⁶² *The Christian Faith*, 1, 134 (§ 33.1); translation altered.

¹⁶³ *DBWE* 5, 130 (*DBW* 5, 156). Cf. *DBW* 11, 158.

¹⁶⁴ *DBW* 11, 145. Cf. Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 100: Bonhoeffer "reagierte ... heftig gegen jeden ... Verweis auf eine wie immer geartete religiöse Potenz des Menschen, die wieder in die Selbsterforschung führte."

¹⁶⁵ *DBWE* 2, 154 (*DBW* 2, 153).

¹⁶⁶ *The Christian Faith*, 1, 135 (§ 33.2).

¹⁶⁷ *The Christian Faith*, 1, 136 (§ 33.2).

¹⁶⁸ *LPP*, 280 (*DBW* 8, 403).

¹⁶⁹ *LPP*, 279 (*DBW* 8, 403).

macher, Bonhoeffer has not only historical, but also theological arguments for his position: Religion is not adequate for Christian faith. For Jesus Christ is the “reversal of what the religious man expects from God.”¹⁷⁰

While this seems to be a fundamental refusal of religion as such, we have to keep in mind that Bonhoeffer’s late concept of religion is different from Schleiermacher’s. Schleiermacher describes a basic anthropological dimension while Bonhoeffer’s late understanding of religion concentrates only on a few aspects of religion: metaphysics, inwardness, individuality, and partiality. But if we look carefully, we can see that Schleiermacher is at least in mind when Bonhoeffer argues against those elements of religion.¹⁷¹ Of course, Schleiermacher’s idea of religion is not metaphysics in that supernatural sense of a *deus ex machina* who breaks through the worldly order.¹⁷² But the term inwardness seems to refer to Schleiermacher’s concept of religion as self-consciousness. And Bonhoeffer’s critique of religious individualism might refer to his early remarks on Schleiermacher’s individualistic ecclesiology. Could it finally be that the aspect of partiality refers to Schleiermacher’s concept of religion as a special “province in the mind?”¹⁷³ “The ‘religious act’ is always something partial; ‘faith’ is something whole, involving the whole of one’s life. Jesus calls men, not to a new religion, but to life.”¹⁷⁴

Nevertheless, Bonhoeffer’s criticism of religion is not arguing against every form of what Schleiermacher would call religion. When Bonhoeffer asks: “What is the place of worship and prayer in a religionless situation?”¹⁷⁵ we see that religionlessness is no contradiction to cultus and prayer. Faith necessarily seeks expression in religious forms.

In this we can perceive the re-adoption of an early insight of Bonhoeffer. The young Bonhoeffer distinguishes religion and faith. Faith is “directed towards Christ,” “pure intentionality,”¹⁷⁶ is “*actus directus*,”¹⁷⁷ non-reflexive. But faith necessarily becomes religion (“in the community of Christ faith takes form in religion”¹⁷⁸), or, as Bonhoeffer says, credulity

¹⁷⁰ LPP, 361 (DBW 8, 535); cf. DBW 8, 534.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Ernst Feil, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, translated by Martin Rum-scheidt (Philadelphia 1985), 102–103.

¹⁷² Cf. for example LPP, 281 (DBW 8, 407). Cf. *Der christliche Glaube*, Kritische Gesamtausgabe I 13,1, edited by Rolf Schäfer (Berlin/New York, 2003), 276–277 (§ 47): “Aus dem Interesse der Frömmigkeit kann nie ein Bedürfnis entstehen, eine Tatsache so aufzufassen, daß durch ihre Abhängigkeit von Gott ihr Bedingtheit durch den Natur-zusammenhang schlechthin aufgehoben werde.”

¹⁷³ Feil, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 238, note 219.

¹⁷⁴ LPP, 362 (DBW 8, 537).

¹⁷⁵ LPP, 281 (DBW 8, 405).

¹⁷⁶ DBWE 2, 153 (DBW 2, 152–153).

¹⁷⁷ DBWE 2, 158, note 29 (DBW 2, 158, note 29).

¹⁷⁸ DBWE 2, 154 (DBW 2, 153–154).

[*Gläubigkeit*]. “Every act of faith is credulous insofar as it is an event embedded in the psyche ... and accessible to reflection.”¹⁷⁹ “Christ is apprehended in believing [*gläubigem*] faith.”¹⁸⁰ In this “*Gläubigkeit*” the Schleiermacherian terms like “experience, piety, feeling” have their right.¹⁸¹ But “*Gläubigkeit*” and faith are not identical.

3. Religious Self-Consciousness as Subject of Theology

For Schleiermacher, the religious self-consciousness is the topic of theology.¹⁸² Theology reflects the religious feelings or – as Schleiermacher says in his *The Christian Faith*: “Christian doctrines are accounts of the Christian religious affections set forth in speech.”¹⁸³ For Schleiermacher, “we must declare the description of human states of mind to be the fundamental dogmatic form”¹⁸⁴ whereas sentences on the essence of God or the world are acceptable only if they can be developed from the sentences on religious self-consciousness. For example, God is the whence of the feeling of absolute dependence.¹⁸⁵

Bonhoeffer conjectures that in concentrating on the religious self-consciousness the question of truth remains unasked.¹⁸⁶ Here we have no criterion of right or wrong.¹⁸⁷ Schleiermacher himself says that if we look at the consciousness everything is true: “it can rightly be said that in religion everything is immediately true, since nothing at all is expressed in its individual moments except the religious person’s own state of mind.”¹⁸⁸ In religion, “in the infinite everything finite stands undisturbed alongside one

¹⁷⁹ *DBWE* 2, 154 (*DBW* 2, 154). Cf. “Theologische Psychologie,” in *DBW* 12, 187, where Bonhoeffer argues that faith [*Glaube*] is and stays veiled in credulity [*Gläubigkeit*].

¹⁸⁰ *DBWE* 2, 154 (*DBW* 2, 154).

¹⁸¹ *DBWE* 2, 154 (*DBW* 2, 154). Cf. “Theologische Psychologie,” in *DBW* 12, 187.

¹⁸² Cf. *DBW* 11, 147.

¹⁸³ *The Christian Faith*, 1, 76 (§ 15).

¹⁸⁴ *The Christian Faith*, 1, 136 (§ 30.2).

¹⁸⁵ *The Christian Faith*, 1, 16 (§ 4.4).

¹⁸⁶ Cf. *DBW* 11, 147. It seems as if Bonhoeffer took this critique from Barth who argues in *Die christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf* (1927), Gesamtausgabe II, 14 (Zurich 1982), 407, that Schleiermacher in defining “christliche Glaubenssätze” as “*Auffassung*en der christlich frommen Gemütszustände in der Rede dargestellt” does not refer to truth or even to the expression of truth in the human self-consciousness.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. *DBW* 11, 150.

¹⁸⁸ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion*. Edited by Günter Meckenstock, Kritische Gesamtausgabe I.12 (Berlin/New York 1995, (2.-) 4. edition), 136; translation R.M. Adams, “Faith and Religious Knowledge,” in: J. Mariña (ed.), *CCFS*, 35–51, here 35.

another; all is one, and all is true.”¹⁸⁹ In Bonhoeffer’s eyes, this would mean: “If everything is true, then the concept of falseness is abolished; as a result, so too is the concept of truth.”¹⁹⁰ For Bonhoeffer, this is unacceptable, because the question of truth is fundamental for Christianity.¹⁹¹ In Bonhoeffer’s view, Ludwig Feuerbach – who, like Schleiermacher, concentrates on a person’s religious self-consciousness but comes to the conclusion that there is no God beyond the religious feelings – is worthy to be called “the most consequent student of Schleiermacher.”¹⁹² Indeed, this is a quite devastating judgment.

As we saw, Bonhoeffer acknowledges Schleiermacher’s interest in sociality: his emphasis on the primal social community, his collective concept of sin, the interest in the church, and Schleiermacher’s attempt to connect Holy Spirit and church-community. But Bonhoeffer criticizes Schleiermacher’s carrying out of these ideas in numerous ways. They can be summarized as the critique that Schleiermacher has a mere psychological approach to sociality which has no understanding of the ethical-social relations between persons and ignores the theological characteristics of the church. Furthermore, Bonhoeffer sees Schleiermacher’s concept of religion excluding action, passing by, and suspending the question of truth.

¹⁸⁹ *On Religion*, 108.

¹⁹⁰ *DBWE* 9, 215 (*DBW* 9, 219).

¹⁹¹ Cf. *DBW* 11, 330. In the context of the Confessing Church and the ecumenical movement (1935), Bonhoeffer discusses the relation of unity and truth in regard to two different ecumenical concepts: “So wahr und so biblisch der Satz sein mag, daß nur in der Einheit Wahrheit sei, so wahr und biblisch ist auch der andere Satz, daß nur in der Wahrheit Einheit möglich sei” (*DBW* 14, 390). Supporters of the first position would describe the ecumenical movement as a tree with many different branches. Bonhoeffer refers to this picture also in a lecture on church order: “Konfessionen Äste am Baum – Harmonie der Ökumene. Darstellendes Handeln, – ästhetisch-romantisch ... ‘Verschiedene Worte – dieselbe Sache’” (*DBW* 14, 307–308). In Eberhard Bethge’s transcript follows: “(Schleiermacher) ... (Luther wollte das Konzil als die Wahrheit scheidend, hier aber Konzil als ‘Darstellung’ der Einheit. ‘Auf gemeinsames hinarbeiten, nicht trennendes’)” (*DBW* 14, 308 note 8). It seems reasonable to assume that Bonhoeffer saw Schleiermacher as someone who proposed the unity of the church at the expense of truth.

¹⁹² *DBW* 11, 148.