

*Gottesvergessenheit: Wolf Krötke and "Godforgotten-ness" in the DDR*

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS (RELIGION)

Joint Master's Program

University of Manitoba and University of Winnipeg

Winnipeg, MB

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I would like to thank Dr. Jane Barter for her patient guidance. Special thanks go to those present and involved in the defense of this thesis: Dr. Danielle Dubois, Dr. Alexander Freund, Dr. Stephan Jaeger, Dr. Justin Lewis, and Sara Payette.

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Abstract: Wolf Krötke's effect on Protestantism in the DDR served to re-frame Luther's theology away from its application through German history, thereby confronting the existence of a "God-Forgottenness" that developed during secularization. Krötke addressed the phenomenon within the DDR, drawing a line from Luther to the actions of German Protestants during the Second World War. Krötke's theological language addressing the role of the Protestant Church within the DDR was informed by Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, allowing Krötke to address the then-current secularization initiated by the application of Luther's theology in German culture. As history unfolded, strict adherence and potential misunderstandings of Luther's theology fell short of the needs of East German Protestants. The social and economic conditions left in wake of the "forgetting of God" caused by secularization in tandem with the church's capitulation to National Socialism opened the door for a further cultural rejection of Christianity and its immediate influence in post-war Germany. Krötke makes a case for the significance of God in his confrontation with the "God-Forgottenness" of East Germany, developing a commentary on the secularism found in German Protestantism. Krötke's theology confronts the existential questions developed in the German mind that historically separated the spiritual and the secular. This is shown to be, not the absence of God, but instead the absence of the relevance of religion. For Krötke, God is very much present, no longer limited to the delineations of previous religious comprehension, now open to various possibilities of personal religious relatability. The social situation within the DDR was a context in which Krötke could establish new theological ideas speaking to a relationship with God, against a systematically secularizing government. No longer an abstraction, Krötke's theology confronts "God-forgottenness" with an immediate disclosure of God's personal relevance.

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## Introduction

The Protestant Church within the *Deutsche Demokratische Republik* (German Democratic Republic, from here on referenced as "DDR") adapted in order to survive within an atheistic socialist system. One of the key elements to overcome was the development of "God-forgottenness" (*Gottesvergessenheit*) within German culture, and arguably continues to this day. Focusing mainly on prominent theologian, Wolf Krötke (b. 1938), as well as his main influences, Karl Barth (b. 1886 - d. 1968) and Dietrich Bonhoeffer (b. 1906-d.1945), this phenomenon will be investigated in stages, utilizing key points in German history and theology, as well as their systemic impact within the DDR and beyond.

The basis in which the Protestant Church in the DDR found itself was rooted in a traditional acquiescence to the state based on an interpretation of Martin Luther's theology concerning the dynamic between the religious and secular spheres. This theology developed its role alongside the social conditions inherent to those historical shifts. Culminating at a time of introspection and internal criticism, Barth and Bonhoeffer developed the theological language that would allow Krötke to address the role of the Protestant Church within the DDR and the *Gottesvergessenheit* the DDR sought to culturally instill.

## **Methodology**

What I will show in this thesis is how theologian, Wolf Krötke, addressed the phenomenon of *Gottesvergessenheit* within the DDR, drawing a line from Martin Luther to the actions of German Protestants during the Second World War. It is to this background that Krötke responded. While this touches on various subjects, they are contextual to "God-forgottenness"

within the DDR. While my focus will be on major points centered around the 1950s through 1980s, this is merely a fragment of a larger history that expands beyond the scope of the thesis.

Beginning with Luther, I will lay out *an* explanation of the Two Kingdoms theology, as well as the importance of Luther in German culture and identity.<sup>1</sup> Integral to this is the historical context of Luther's influence, developing into a system that is unique to German history.

Likewise, the Confessing Church, a Protestant sect that opposed the Nazi-approved expression of faith, is discussed in their wrestling with Luther, as they are also the church that both inspired and informed the actions of Protestants in the DDR, especially Krötke. This shows, as history unfolded, strict adherence and potential misunderstandings of Luther's theology fell short of the needs of East German Protestants.

## Sources

Pertinent to the development of Krötke's theology, both the theology of Karl Barth and that of Dietrich Bonhoeffer will be examined. First, among Krötke's chief influences was Barth, one of the preeminent Protestant theologians of the twentieth century. Due to his involvement in the German church struggle during the war through the writing of the *Barmen Declaration*, Barth's influence held profound weight for Krötke.<sup>2</sup> Barth's position that relates to Krötke's concept of *Gottesvergessenheit* is that "religion is unbelief," wherein Barth demonstrates that a constructed religion is one that misunderstands that dynamic at its core, meaning that the religion is based in *faith*, and not in *belief*.

Krötke's approach to religion in the DDR was also couched in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's language of "religionless Christianity." For Bonhoeffer, the Church had become something with

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<sup>1</sup> This explanation is, at times, heavily colored by those interpreting and utilizing Martin Luther. As such, this theology is removed from the hands and contexts Luther may have intended, and is placed within the subjectivity of later contexts. That being said, the provided explanation of Luther's theology is *neither* monolithic, *nor* intends to be presented as the sole correct interpretation beyond this historical scope.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew D. Hockenos, "The Church Struggle and the Confessing Church: An Introduction to Bonhoeffer's Context," *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 2, no. 1 (2007): 7, accessed August 13, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.6017/scjr.v2i1.1399>.

which the Christian could no longer relate in a modern or contemporary sense.<sup>3</sup> Christianity had become as many other religions, as Bonhoeffer saw them to exist: as a physical construct that divulges and teaches the faith onto which the religion is itself built. Bonhoeffer's position is key to Krötke's comprehension of *Gottesvergessenheit*.

With Krötke's position, I will also show two examples of the DDR's attempt to further distance East German Protestants from their religiosity, effectively mandating a systemic move toward *Gottesvergessenheit*, highlighting the environment and actions to which Krötke was responding. In discussing church, both capitalized and un-capitalized variations are used, with "church" representing individual church-parishes and the elements connected to that location of worship; the word "Church" is used in reference to the specific organization of *Evangelische* Protestantism in the DDR, as well as the Church-body of Christendom to which it belongs.

In-text quotations, being subject to translation and changing grammatical rules over time, occasionally result in what would now be considered as errors. These are presented verbatim, as they were found in the text, so as to show no manipulation of the original intentions. In larger quotations, where there is more text leading to a greater contextual understanding of the quoted information, yet interrupts the reading of the thesis, is then relegated to footnotes. If one is so inclined, the expanded contextual quotation can be read there. Likewise, the footnotes contain translations of terms, as well as cited sources. All included translations are my own.

## **Review**

On the behalf of my previous focuses in German cultural history and world religion, the contextual motivations of history have always guided my perceptions of theology, to varying degrees. As there is no response without a call, and there is no effect without a cause, religious expression and examination are not cleaved from their historical contexts. Nothing is isolated

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<sup>3</sup> Hockenos, "The Church Struggle and the Confessing Church: An Introduction to Bonhoeffer's Context," 7.

from external influence; and, no matter how minute the answer, the question of "why" is prompted whether or not an influence is utilized.

The documents utilized for this thesis were narrowed from over one-hundred initial sources. For historical documents, I looked for documentation of sociological and political movements of specific timeframes that carried themes of "othering" as well as a misbalance of power, as these themes parallel conditions within the DDR, creating an internal consistency, giving parameters in which the theologians can be heard. This presents, dually, a topic which can be discussed within a thesis *and* one that could be expanded upon at a later time.

The works of historians such as John S. Conway,<sup>4</sup> Mary Fulbrook,<sup>5</sup> and Steven Ozment,<sup>6</sup> were utilized to construct the historical environment in which the documents of theological origin develop, providing secondary sources. The most authentic historical, primary sources to the timeframes discussed are the theologians themselves, as one must not forget that even the syntax of a theological work is a chosen response to a contextual need. Krötke, Barth, and Bonhoeffer present their theologies via personal letters and commentary about the socio-political situations in which they are writing. More than anyone, by connecting their situations to those secondary sources, these primary sources are key to comprehending their understandings of their relationships to God, as well as the world to whom they spoke.

The primary sources for theology are the theologians examined within this thesis, being Krötke, Luther, Barth, and Bonhoeffer. While the main focus is directed toward Krötke, it is done so only through the examination of Luther by Barth and Bonhoeffer in regards to their then-current situations. Krötke utilizes the outcomes of Barth and Bonhoeffer to engage the problems

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<sup>4</sup> (1929-2017) Professor Emeritus of History at the University of British Columbia, visiting Professor of History at the University of Western Ontario, and recipient of the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal.

<sup>5</sup> Professor of German History at University College London, Fellow of the British Academy, and Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/institute-of-advanced-studies/professor-mary-fulbrook>

<sup>6</sup> (1939-2019) Mclean Professor of Ancient and Modern History at Harvard University, Professor Emeritus after 2015.

faced by German Protestants in the DDR. Secondary theological sources include, for a brief example, Anders T. S. Nygren,<sup>7</sup> Detlef Pollack,<sup>8</sup> and Philip G. Ziegler.<sup>9</sup> The secondary sources were chosen in direct reference to the timeframe and subject matter of the primary sources.

My translation choices were perhaps the most difficult portions of the thesis. Having an interdisciplinary degree that qualified my undergraduate work in German language and culture allowed me to have a basis for translation. My usage of the German language has tapered off in those years, making translation of theological concepts a daunting task, requiring more time and focus than any other portion of research. My translated notes are in greater number than appear in the thesis. The choice of what is used within the thesis was narrowed by context to the themes being examined. Among these sources is Krötke, himself, as a number of his writings have not been translated and published in English. Other translations include the work of Pollack, Ziegler, and Claudia Lepp.<sup>10</sup> I chose to integrate the information of the text into the thesis for ease of the reader, leaving the full German source in the footnotes for reference.

### **Wolf Krötke**

Krötke was born in 1938 in Berlinchen, Germany (now Barlinek, Poland). Having been born so close to the onset of the Second World War, Krötke's formal education began in post-war East Germany.<sup>11</sup> Krötke's university work took him to study theology in Leipzig, Naumberg, Berlin, and Halle; however, his education was interrupted after Naumberg due to a twenty-one month prison sentence at Waldheim. This imprisonment in 1958 was due to composing poetic couplets that viewed DDR communist leader, Walter Ulbricht, in a satirical light. Having been

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<sup>7</sup> (1890-1978) Swedish Lutheran theologian, Bishop of Lund, and Professor of Systematic Theology at Lund University.

<sup>8</sup> Professor of Sociology of Religion at the University of Münster. <https://www.uni-muenster.de/Soziologie/en/personen/pollack.shtml>.

<sup>9</sup> Professor of Christian Dogmatics at the University of Aberdeen. <https://theologiaborealis.wordpress.com/>

<sup>10</sup> The head of research at the Evangelischen Workshop for Contemporary Church History at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München [https://www.ngzg.geschichte.uni-muenchen.de/personen/pd/lepp\\_claudia/index.html](https://www.ngzg.geschichte.uni-muenchen.de/personen/pd/lepp_claudia/index.html).

<sup>11</sup> Philip G. Ziegler, *Doing Theology When God is Forgotten: The Theological Achievement of Wolf Krötke*, Edited by Paul D. Molnar. 14. Vol. 14, Issues in Systematic Theology (New York etc., NY: Peter Lang, 2007), 4-7.

charged with producing and circulating inflammatory material that threatened the state (solely the aforementioned poems), Krötke was eventually denied the ability to study under Karl Barth in Basel, Switzerland.

Resuming his education in Berlin during the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, Krötke was limited to those professors who resided in, and were allowed to continue to teach, in East Germany. Fortunately for Krötke, this was to include Eberhard Jüngel, under whom Krötke became a doctoral student at the University of Halle. After completing his dissertation *Sünde und Nichtiges bei Karl Barth* (*Sin and Nothingness in the Theology of Karl Barth*) in 1967, Krötke became an instructor at the *Sprachenkonvikt* ( a Protestant theological institute) in East Berlin, eventually coming to teach systemic theology from 1973 to 1991. Krötke received an honorary doctorate in 1973 from the University of Tübingen, and was later awarded the Karl-Barth Prize in 1990. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Krötke was elected a member of the *Europäische Akademie der Wissenschaften* (European Academy of the Sciences) in 1995, maintaining a professorship of systemic theology at Humboldt University until his retirement in 2004.

### ***Gottesvergessenheit***

The roots of *Gottesvergessenheit* are complex. It is an oversimplification to suggest that it Communist structure of the DDR, solely, led to this "forgottenness." The conditions found in Germany allowing for this to happen were already present before the Second World War, as Bonhoeffer found that German Christianity was lacking the same relevance that Christianity had within the African American community which he encountered while visiting Union Theological Seminary in Manhattan.<sup>12</sup> Germans were culturally Christian, but Christianity had ceased to hold daily significance for them. Luther's influence, and two world wars, would seal the fate of the

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<sup>12</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1995), 11.

Church as an institution, ceasing to offer any relevance prior to the advent of Communism in the DDR. Krötke confronted *Gottesvergessenheit* through this the cultural backdrop.

Though functionally on par with atheism, *Gottesvergessenheit*, a "practical atheism," was not the same as an ideological atheism.<sup>13</sup> *Gottesvergessenheit* was neither a positioned disbelief in God, nor an impassioned crusade to debunk God's existence, but instead a complete absence of God as relevant to day-to-day life.<sup>14</sup> When the routines and structures of religion are ingrained within an inherited way of life, as opposed to being taken on by choice, spiritual relevance can wane. In *Gottesvergessenheit*, whereas an individual's parents or ancestors may have come to a point where God's existence was confronted or questioned, their descendants may have come to a point where the atheist *Weltanschauung* (worldview) has been so taken for granted that the question of God is itself absent from the structure of life. As a practical example of this position, God is not one to pay the bills, and neither is God the one to make sure the picture frames are level, nor that the shelves are dusted. God is so on-the-periphery of consideration of life's practical functions that God never enters the mind at all. This is *Gottesvergessenheit*.

This thesis traces the development of *Gottesvergessenheit* as a sanctioned acceptance of atheism in the DDR. Beginning with Martin Luther in the first chapter, his Two Kingdoms theology will be explored within its context. This examination leads into the ways in which German Protestantism became increasingly interiorized to the degree that it came to have little effect upon practical living. In chapter two, the social and economic conditions left in wake of the aforementioned "interiorization" show the simultaneous "forgetting of God" in tandem with the church's capitulation to National Socialism.

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<sup>13</sup> Ziegler, *Doing Theology When God is Forgotten: The Theological Achievement of Wolf Krötke*, 11.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

In the third chapter, the minority protest by the Confessing Church is discussed, wherein Barth and Bonhoeffer develop new theological perspectives whilst wrestling with Lutheran theology in the shadow of the Second World War. These perspectives become the tools by which, in the fourth chapter, Krötke makes a case for the significance of God in his confrontation with the *Gottesvergessenheit* of the DDR. Chapter four goes on to document the powers with which Krötke and the DDR Church were contending, including the systemic cultural structures the DDR implemented to uphold *Gottesvergessenheit* as a standard, thereby attempting to invalidate the Kingdom of God. Finally, a reflection and conclusion show Krötke's theology to be a running commentary on the *Gottesvergessenheit* of German secularism against German Protestantism.

## Chapter One: Luther's Two Kingdoms and its Legacies

The historical origin of what would lead to the *Gottesvergersenheit* of the DDR begins with Martin Luther. Luther's theology upended notions of the roles concerning spirituality and secularity, transforming German culture from that point onward.<sup>15</sup> In the minds of many, as we shall see, this theology divided these two worlds with such finality that the gulf between them allowed for the vacuum of "forgotten-ness." In speaking on "*Gottesvergersenheit*," Krötke comes to address not only this vacuum, but also the misunderstanding of Luther and his theology having impacted history.<sup>16</sup> As not all are trained theologians, an unintentional division between Kingdoms was created with the historical application of Luther's theology, wherein the assumed divine right of rule and establishment of the Prussian Church conflated the roles of power and identity. This led to the cultural acquiescence to governing power, even as religious influence

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<sup>15</sup> Luther's religiosity was firmly tied to his personal sense of ethnic nationalism, entrenching politics and religion into the building-blocks of "German" society, reverberating through history and theology within the DDR; The Protestant Church in Germany, also known as the *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland*, is the product of the Prussian Empire's attempt at competing with the Bavarian and Austro-Hungarian empires' representation of the Roman Catholic Church. Instead of being strictly a Lutheran Church, the Prussian model combined the elements of Lutheran and Reformed-Calvinistic belief systems, and bridging the gap between the two by interjecting specifically Prussian theological concepts. The Prussian Church changed names repeatedly over time, for a variety of reasons, eventually becoming the *Evangelische Kirche*, which split into Eastern and Western factions during the Cold War. It is for the ease of the reader that it be known that when "the Church" is mentioned, it is specifically the Eastern branch that existed in the DDR during the decades in discussion. For more detailed information, see Christopher Clark, "Confessional Policy and the Limits of State Action: Frederick William III and the Prussian Church Union 1817–40," *The Historical Journal*, 39, (1996) pp 985–1004, accessed February 2, 2021, doi:10.1017/S0018246X00024730; Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, 127–140; Sabrina Petra Ramet, "Protestantism in East Germany, 1949–1989: A Summing Up," *Religion in Communist Lands* 19, no. 3–4 (1991): 160–96, accessed May 20, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09637499108431513>; Jan Herman Brinks, "Luther and the German State," 1 (1998): 1–2, accessed February 11, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2265.00062>; Steven Ozment, *A Mighty Fortress: a New History of the German People*, (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2004), 77–9. For Luther, religious reformation and civic reorganization, both bolstered by his views of the German people, were all part of a restoration of the gospel; What was entirely unexpected was how Martin Luther's theology and social outlook would impact the direction of specifically German Protestantism *within* Germany. It should be noted that this is to highlight the trajectory that leads us toward Protestantism within the DDR. Though German Protestantism did leave German-speaking lands, its political and social dimensions, thus its resulting theology, isn't comparable to the branch maintained within Germany itself.

<sup>16</sup> Luther, who came to be called "one of the greatest sons of the German people" by the government of the DDR, no less, is often contextualized along solely religious lines, overlooking the whole picture; Stephen P. Hoffmann, "The GDR, Luther, and the German Question," *The Review of Politics* 48, no. 2 (1986): 247, accessed November 15, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0034670500038535>; Gordon R. Mork, "Martin Luther's Left Turn: The Changing Picture of Luther in East German Historiography" *The History Teacher* 16, no. 4 (1983): 588, accessed November 15, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.2307/493722>; John A. Moses, "The Politicisation of Martin Luther in the German Democratic Republic," *Pacifica: Australasian Theological Studies* 24, no. 3 (2011): 285, accessed November 11, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1030570x1102400305>.

waned. Herein is where the discrepancy between the language of Luther's intentions and that of the cultural application of his theology is found.

### Theological Base

In "*der Beständige*" (writing to Johann, the Constant [1468-1532], the Elector of Sachsen), Luther wrote *Von Weltliche Obrigkeit*, known as his work on the Two Kingdoms, or better known as *On Temporal Authority*. Luther opens with First Peter, stating that one should allow oneself to be subject to all external authority.<sup>17</sup> In First Peter, temporal authorities exist because God allowed them to exist in order to enact a physical justice in this world.<sup>18</sup> Luther explains this as justice carried out in this world where an injustice has occurred *also* in this world; and, is the law of the "temporal sword" that must put things aright. Such a justice is commanded since Cain killed Abel.<sup>19</sup> For Luther, any authority allowed to exist in this world by God is a physical tool by which actionable justice is meted out.<sup>20</sup>

Luther suggests a separation of the spiritual world from the "temporal sword," though not a division.<sup>21</sup> This modifies Paul's contrast between Adam and Jesus, wherein Jesus offers the justification made absent by Adam's sin; thus, while all are children of Adam, Christians *also* belong to Jesus through his gift of salvation.<sup>22</sup> The separation is then: (1) everyone who by default belong to the Kingdom of the World; i.e., the Temporal Kingdom, as they are the children of Adam; and, (2) those who are disciples of Jesus *also* belong to the Kingdom of God,

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<sup>17</sup> 1 Pt. 2:13-14, "For the Lord's sake accept the authority of every human institution, whether of the emperor as supreme, or of governors, as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right."

<sup>18</sup> 1 Pt. 2:15-17 "For it is God's will that by doing right you should silence the ignorance of the foolish. As servants of God, live as free people, yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil. Honor everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honor the emperor.;" Anders Nygren, "Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," *The Ecumenical Review* 1, no. 3 (1949): 305, accessed February 2, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6623.1949.tb03072.x>.

<sup>19</sup> Martin Luther, *The AGES Digital Library Collections: Works of Martin Luther Vol. 3*, (Albany, OR: Books for the Ages, 1997), 183-4.

<sup>20</sup> Nygren, "Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," 302-3. While the official position may be more nuanced, that of a Gospel-based truth that allows the Kingdom of God to speak on the matters of the Temporal Kingdom by way of its separate position, the reality of its effect on society was not so eloquently navigated.

<sup>21</sup> Luther, *The AGES Digital Library Collections: Works of Martin Luther Vol. 3*, 183-4.

<sup>22</sup> Nygren, "Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," 308-9; Rom. 5: 16-17

having been justified by Jesus' death.<sup>23</sup> The spiritual exists neither separate nor counter to the temporal, but as a non-material addition to it. The Temporal Kingdom does not issue from faith and salvation; faith and salvation, being not of this world, are of the Kingdom of God. Both kingdoms issue from God, as do all things, though function differently according to need.<sup>24</sup> God, therefore, engages with the whole of existence: the temporal via the Law and the spiritual via the Gospel.<sup>25</sup>

Good conduct is not threatened, with punishment directed instead toward bad conduct.<sup>26</sup> As Luther views them, "true believers" are set apart, belonging to the Kingdom of God, needing no correction as injustice will not fall on them by the product of their belief, though not on the account of what one may or may not judge on their own. These "true believers" would live under the rule of Jesus as King, making the need for any other form of spiritual governance technically superfluous while all continue their existence within a material governance.<sup>27</sup> As all people, even Christians, are sinners, secular government exists to establish physically tangible peace and

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<sup>23</sup> Luther, *The AGES Digital Library Collections: Works of Martin Luther Vol. 3*, 184.

<sup>24</sup> Ps. 2:6 "I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill."; Jn. 18:36-7 "Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.'"; Mt. 6:33 "But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."; Nygren, "Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," 304. Politically, what Luther aimed to do would be to decentralize the power of authority in Rome, as its own physical expression of the authority over Christendom, and instead transition that power to a secular government. Spiritually, this was an attempt to dismantle the Roman Catholic view that God is disengaged with the secular world and the people that inhabit its positions.

<sup>25</sup> Nygren, "Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," 304.

<sup>26</sup> Rom. 13:1-4 "(Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.) For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval; (for it is God's servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer.); 1 Tim. 1:9 "This means understanding that the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their father or mother, for murderers . . ." The authority of the Temporal Kingdom, falls on those who do not believe in Jesus because the salvation brought from such a belief would produce only good fruits, leaving no need for the law to punish them.

<sup>27</sup> Nygren, "Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," 303; Luther, *The AGES Digital Library Collections: Works of Martin Luther Vol. 3*, 187. The most plain way to put it would be that Luther felt that true belief in Jesus led only to positive outcomes, leaving someone with no need of the law; if bad things happened to someone, it's because they deserved it from their lack of true belief; *The AGES Digital Library Collections: Works of Martin Luther Vol. 3*, 185. The fruit of belief and salvation, in this case, is only to produce service to others and goodness return to them. Martin Luther reasons that if these New Testament verses were taken alone, it would mean that those who adhere to them would be more "perfect" than those that could not, thereby allowing those who are "perfect" to be on a counsel of perfection, whereas the "imperfect" would be given commandments, separating Christians and Christian teachings into two classes.

justice in the Temporal Kingdom.<sup>28</sup> The authority of the Temporal Kingdom is sustained by God so that justice is brought to those who require it, using people as "agents," or "Servants of the Lord," to take action on his behalf within both Kingdoms, according to either the Gospel or the Law, but not to confuse those needs of one for the other.<sup>29</sup>

Luther's theology on these matters was in its day, and still is, debated.<sup>30</sup> Confusion enters the application of this theology when one either divides the Two Kingdoms entirely, or, confuses the functions of one kingdom for the other, thereby confusing the governance of the material over the spiritual. This would be a misapplication as, for Luther, there is no external force governing the internal righteousness of the individual, and whatever external physical force may exist historically had little bearing on the value of that righteousness.<sup>31</sup> All together, the

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<sup>28</sup> Nygren, "Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," 303–4, 310.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 304-6; Luther, *The AGES Digital Library Collections: Works of Martin Luther Vol. 3*, 186-7. The law exists to punish the lawless of the Temporal Kingdom, set straight those who profess to be true believers toward the Kingdom of God, and to point unbelievers toward the Kingdom of God; 185. This Temporal Kingdom plays the role that the "Servants of the Lord" in the Kingdom of God are not supposed to take according to Biblical text; that role being punishment and physical justice; Rom. 12:19 "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.'"; Mt. 5:44(-45) "But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, (so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.); 1 Pt. 3:9 "Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called—that you might inherit a blessing."; Nygren, "Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," 301, 308. If divorced from its context, this teaching would imply that the spiritual should have no sway over the temporal, making way for secular division. To remove the thought process of this doctrine from its religious context, it has been argued, has opened the door to secularization and unquestioning submission to authority to the detriment of society.

<sup>30</sup> Brinks, "Luther and the German State," 1; Barth was convinced of a "totalitarian thread," beginning from Luther's theology, had allowed room for "Hitlerism" to flourish in a Christianized form as the "bad dream of the German heathen." Barth's view of Luther was that he was "greatest German Christian," under whose legacy the German people had "suffered." Brinks' full citation of Barth reads thusly: "In a similar but more pointed way, the Swiss theologian and 'Father of the Confessing church', Karl Barth, had already argued in 1939 in his 'Letter to France' that the 'German people suffered from the legacy of the greatest German Christian', i.e., from 'Martin Luther's mistake concerning the relationship of Law and gospel, of worldly and religious order and power, which did not limit and restrict its natural paganism, but rather glorified, corroborated and strengthened it ideologically'. Hitlerism, Barth argued, 'is the current bad dream of the German heathen who was christianized [sic] only in its Lutheran form'. And, so he warned, 'further developments on the fatal line from Frederick the Great via Bismarck to Hitler' had to be made 'physically impossible'. Just like other authors Barth was convinced that there runs a totalitarian thread through German history, and one of the main people responsible for this 'Wrong Track' was Martin Luther." Karl Barth, 'Ein Brief nach Frankreich' (1939) in *Eine Schweizer Stimme 1938–1945* (Zürich, 1945), pp. 108-17; here: pp. 113–4. Quoted in Brinks, "Luther and the German State," 1; Robert F. Goeckel, "The Luther Anniversary in East Germany," *World Politics* 37, no. 1 (1984): 114-6 accessed November 15, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2010308>. Alexander Abusch, minister of culture in the DDR, who once referred to Martin Luther as the "gravedigger of German freedom," interpreted Luther's theology as a catalyst for centuries of "reactionary darkness" in German history; Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, 62, 73; Nygren, "Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," 301.

<sup>31</sup> Martin Luther, Harold J. Grimm, and W. A. Lambert, "The Freedom of a Christian." Essay, In *Career of the Reformer* 31, edited by Helmut T. Lehmann, 31:329–76, Luther's Works, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1999), 344; 2 Cor. 4:16 "So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day."; Gal. 5:17 "For what

temporal-external forces of this world do not dictate the righteousness, or possibility thereof, of the internal-spiritual nature of the individual; nor should the powers of this world dictate the personal realm of conscience.<sup>32</sup> Luther writes:

Again you say, Temporal power does not force men to believe, but simply prevents them from being misled by false doctrine; otherwise how could heretics be prevented from preaching? I answer, This the bishops should do, to whom, and not to the princes, such duty is entrusted. Heresy can never be prevented by force. That must be taken hold of in a different way, and must be opposed and dealt with otherwise than with the sword. Here God's Word must strive; if that does not accomplish the end it will remain unaccomplished through secular power, though it fill the world with blood.<sup>33</sup>

Luther's "Servant of all," the role of the Christian, comes from a concert of biblical readings, working to form a philosophy found in "*The Freedom of a Christian*."<sup>34</sup> Luther states, "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none; A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant to all, subject to none."<sup>35</sup> According to Luther, Paul's focus on the birth of Jesus is not only to highlight the humanness of the Jesus' incarnation, but also the redemptive quality of that incarnation previously nonexistent in the physical world.<sup>36</sup> God sending his son to be born human was the humbling of God himself, facilitating the redemption of humanity.

Instead of serving as equal or greater to any person, Paul, in imitation of Jesus, is humbled, divorcing himself from that role in order to serve others.<sup>37</sup> Not maintaining a role as a

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the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want."

<sup>32</sup> Nygren, "Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," 302.

<sup>33</sup> Luther, *The AGES Digital Library Collections: Works of Martin Luther Vol. 3*, pg. 204.

<sup>34</sup> Luther, Grimm, and Lambert, "The Freedom of a Christian," Essay, in *Career of the Reformer 31*, 344.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. Luther acknowledged the seeming contradiction in these two statements.

<sup>36</sup> Gal. 4:4(-5) "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, (in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children).," New Testament, 316n. For Paul, the servant role was Jesus' renunciation of the role of a king that could have ruled from above, to instead "empty himself" through self-denial of the power he could wield, Phil. 2:6-7 ". . . who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. . .," New Testament, 330n. Though the word here in English is rendered as "slave," in Luther's own translation, he renders the Koine word "*δουλον*" as "*Knechtsgestalt*." In this sense, the role is not equated with "slave" and the pejoratives associated with the term, but is instead a "servant role."

<sup>37</sup> 1 Cor. 9:19 "For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them." Paul acknowledges that he is not beholden to anyone, owing nothing to anyone outright. To Martin Luther, in the sense in which he writes, the role of the imitation of Jesus-via-Paul is the role of those saved by the redemption of Jesus, i.e. Christians, as the co-

leader *over* people, Paul instead becomes a leader *among* the people in what he understands as the essence of Jesus.<sup>38</sup> For Luther, Jesus was not just God, a king over this Earth, but part of the Earthly realm as one of the servants of God and humanity, manifested in the form of Jesus Christ. The fulfillment of Law by furthering the Gospel is in service toward one another beyond the requirement of altruism.<sup>39</sup> This is where the "Servant of all" lives within the Kingdom of God, fulfilling the Gospel, existing in both the temporal and the spiritual.<sup>40</sup> For Luther, service is the action of a "servant of all"; though the church may not punish an enemy, the Temporal Kingdom should still see fit to punish an enemy, as it is in service of the Kingdom of God.<sup>41</sup>

## Historical Review

Luther's influence on German society cannot be over-emphasized when comprehending the cultural and religious backdrop of Germany. Historically, there had been an incredibly weak assortment of territories, and even dialects, making up the patchwork of "Germany." This decentralized power was held by Catholic clerics, issuing no offspring to whom land could be passed.<sup>42</sup> A byproduct of property acquisition, economic potential was ultimately in the grasp of Rome, as opposed to the German nobility. Over centuries of intellectual growth throughout

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existing lords over the temporal-external while also being servants of the spiritual-internal; In doing so, Paul further humanizes himself and his cause, allowing him to better "win" the hearts and minds of those around him, engaging with them rather than speaking across or down to them, which is, in Paul's mind, an act in the similitude of Jesus' very being.

<sup>38</sup> Paul explains how he became whomever he needed to be in order to reach the hearts and minds of people, "speaking their language" as it were and addressing their roles and concerns.

<sup>39</sup> Nygren, "Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," 310. In other words, according to Paul, it is service toward one another where one is found to fulfill ("πεπλήρωκεν") the law as put forth by God; Rom. 13:8 "Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law." The role of this "*Knechtsgestalt*-Servant of all" is an act in this case of the version of love, "ἀγαπᾶν/ἀγαπῶν," that is the commonly referenced "agapé"-love found in the New Testament.

Specifically, in the first mention here, the phrase is "τὸ ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν," meaning a love of, and for, one another. This sense of service is not bound to the station in which you are born, nor does it derive from whichever social position one inhabits; all are to serve one another.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 308-9. As a member of the Kingdom of God, one is not subject to the Temporal Kingdom; as living within the Temporal Kingdom, the member of the Kingdom of God humbles oneself to serve.

<sup>41</sup> Luther, *The AGES Digital Library Collections: Works of Martin Luther Vol. 3*, 192-3; Brinks, "Luther and the German State," 3-4. "Bebel works out Luther's position during the Peasants' War very clearly, which, for him, was tantamount to treason: 'In his church postil' thus Bebel, he teaches 'the authorities have to drive, beat, strangle, hang, burn, decapitate and break the rabble upon the wheel, so that they shall be afraid and can then be kept on a tight rein'." While one *must* absolutely read the words of Luther as contextual to the needs of their time and place, one *must* also dually hold in mind the deadly precedent such a view can and did hold, as it was used to justified violence against peasants in Luther's own day, and would eventually be the argument to allow the Third Reich to enforce its agenda.

<sup>42</sup> Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, 60.

Europe, disadvantaged German lands stagnated due to Rome's control.<sup>43</sup> The German lands were a tinderbox waiting for a spark. That spark came in the form of Martin Luther, whose writings and ideas came to circulate among German intellectuals such as Albrecht Dürer, Lucas Cranach, Georg Spalatin, and Frederick the Wise, leading to changes in politics, economics, social order, and the religion, using the updated German language that Luther had streamlined.<sup>44, 45</sup>

Under the influence of Luther, the Protestant House of Hohenzollern reorganized the unified lands into Brandenburg-Prussia, overthrowing the sway of Catholic Austria. The Hohenzollerns established a "Prussian Union of Churches," separating secular and religious power, and offering an upward cultural-mobility previously unknown.<sup>46</sup> The Prussian Church extended its power from throne and government, based on Luther's idea of temporal power being separate from religious authority, yet both being God-ordained. Protestant growth of influence via of a united Germany in 1871, aided by a weakened Austrian power, made room for the annexation of more land, expanding the Prussian Empire.<sup>47</sup>

After the addition of Catholic Bavaria, Luther's Two Kingdom theology in Prussia fostered a sense of nationalism in the form of German national identity. Prussian successes in terms of power, industrial growth, and scientific advancements bolstered the idea that the nationalism of temporal authority was Germany's destiny, eventually superseding faith in the Christian God as being separate from government. By the twentieth century, the concept of secular authority being providentially given allowed for German society and churches to accept the actions made by the Temporal Kingdom with little criticism. It is within this context that *Gottesvergessenheit* fully emerged.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 61.

<sup>44</sup> Ozment, *A Mighty Fortress: a New History of the German People*, 78-9.

<sup>45</sup> Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, 67.

<sup>46</sup> Henkel, "State-Church Relationships in Germany: Past and Present," 309.

<sup>47</sup> Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, 178.

*Gottesvergeessenheit*, the spiritual descendant of an atheism rooted initially in the decline of belief and church attendance, began with the industrialization of nineteenth century German society. During industrialization, some left their rural lives to work in growing urban centers.<sup>48</sup> Those who moved to these centers were exposed to culture and the sciences, as well as to the ideas that fueled these concepts; likewise leading to exposure to early German communist parties. While church attendance was at a higher percentage in rural areas, attendance was comparatively low in urban centers. Of these percentages, the degree of adherence was culturally varied, with distinct disparity in belief between the two sectors of urban and rural life. The coming influence of socialism into German culture, leading into the Cold War, exacerbated a situation that was already present under the veneer of Christian society.<sup>49</sup>

It was the 1875 incarnation of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) that gained traction, as well as Bismarck's ire, calling them the "enemies of the empire."<sup>50</sup> Though the largest party in the Reichstag in 1912, they were not the only Marxist-socialist organization in Germany bolstered by the growth of unionization among disaffected workers relocated to the urban sector.<sup>51</sup> In 1918, the remains of the Prussian Empire were "handed over" to SPD member, Friedrich Ebert, to serve as Chancellor, rapidly proclaiming a German Republic in an effort to turn the tide of unrest and revolt, attempting to prevent Germany's own potential-Bolshevik

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<sup>48</sup> This is not to say that the *Aufklärung* (German Enlightenment) of the eighteenth century played no role in this development, but rather to highlight that the industrialization of pre-modern Germany caused a societal split between urban and rural sectors.

<sup>49</sup> Wolf Krötke, "Die Kirche Und Die »Friedliche Revolution« in Der DDR," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 87, no. 4 (November 1990): 529, accessed November 17, 2019, Z-Library. "Zwar gab und gibt es in einigen Landstrichen noch ein kirchliches Leben, das nach traditionellen Mustern weitere Bevölkerungskreise erfaßt. Soziologisch ist aber eindeutig festzustellen, daß christliche Gemeinden in der DDR sich vor allem aus mittleren Gesellschaftsschichten zusammensetzen. Den Kontakt zur Industriearbeiterschaft hat die Kirche in Deutschland ja schon vor 1949 verloren. Sie hat ihn in den Jahren des Bestehens der DDR auch nicht wiederge wonnen. Denn die materialistischen Orientierungen, die in der Arbeiterschaft vorherrschen, wurden durch den Marxismus als »wissenschaftlich« begründet gefördert und konnten sich in einer gewissen Selbstverständlichkeit ausbreiten. Es war je länger, je mehr gar keine atheistische Propaganda mehr erforderlich. Der praktische Atheismus als Massenerscheinung bestimmt das Lebensklima des weitaus größten Teils der Bevölkerung."

<sup>50</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany* (Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 187, 195.

<sup>51</sup> Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, 195.

revolt.<sup>52</sup> This change in German culture, as Krötke notes, showcases that the "hindrance and limitation" of religion, on the part of the state, leads to a practical atheism as socialist conditions are introduced as, according to Marxist theory, religion disappears.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 219. This action calmed the populace, though set in motion the events that would lead a group of so-called "Spartacist" radicals to splinter from the SPD to form the KPD, the Communist Party of Germany; Reinhard Henkel, "State–Church Relationships in Germany: Past and Present," *GeoJournal* 67, no. 4 (March 2007): 309, accessed November 18, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-007-9063-2>. Prior to the First World War, as a holdover from the Holy Roman Empire, positions within German royalty held the roles as heads of churches in Lutheran territories, as well as protectors in Catholic territories; Henkel, "State–Church Relationships in Germany: Past and Present," 309. After 1918, monarchical roles were lost and replaced mainly with secular functionaries, distancing the State from the Church in an administrative capacity. The Weimar Constitution, though reinforcing the protection of holidays and religious observances, clearly stated that there would be no "State Church." This was in addition to the formal recognition of religious bodies that exist outside Lutheran and Catholic churches, a recognition that did not exist prior, as well as the implementation of church taxes, wherein a practicing church member must pay a percentage of their income, leading people to functionally abandon their faith by refusing to participate in a church-body. The actions set in motion by Martin Luther initially to separate secular and church powers over time allowed room for the secular to eventually supersede the spiritual.

<sup>53</sup> Krötke, "Die Kirche Und Die »Friedliche Revolution« in Der DDR," 529. "Man kann diese Entwicklung nicht einseitig auf die massive atheistische Beeinflussung der Menschen durch den sozialistischen Weltanschauungsstaat zurückführen. Die Menschen nehmen hier an dem allgemeinen Säkularisierungsprozeß teil, der für die moderne technisch-industrielle Zivilisation überhaupt charakteristisch ist. Aber natürlich spielt die Behinderung und Begrenzung der Arbeit der Gemeinden durch den Staat bei dieser Entwicklung auch eine gewichtige Rolle. »Religion« ist für den Marxismus mit der Schaffung sozialistischer Verhältnisse gesetzmäßig zum »Absterben« verurteilt. Diesem »Absterben« hat man in unterschiedlicher Intensität nachzuhelfen versucht. Denn das »verkehrte Bewußtsein«, das die Religion nach der marxistischen Theorie ist, macht sie zu einem Verbündeten des zu bekämpfenden »Klassenfeindes«." "

## **Chapter Two: 19<sup>th</sup>-century Industrialization, National Socialism, and the Forgetting of God**

During the Third Reich, the German Evangelical Church (DEK) fractured into factions, including the *Deutsche Christen* (German Christians), supportive of the Nazi government, as well as the opposing Confessing Church (*Bekennende Kirche*) functioning as an alternative to any form of Protestantism that supported the government.<sup>54</sup> The relevance of the Confessing Church, as well as Barth and Bonhoeffer's relation to it, showed Krötke an example of a faith, based in the Word of God, isolated within an opposing secularity actively seeking to unmake the relevance of an immediate presence of the divine by replacing it with the immediacy of the state.

### **German Protestantism in the Third Reich**

The Confessing Church was not wholly in disagreement with all German Protestantism at the time, nor were all its members opposed to the ideologies of the Third Reich.<sup>55</sup> This may have been the intention of some members; however, the initial purpose was to combat the deification of the state, the Führer, and the political ideology that held the public in its grasp.<sup>56</sup> Lutheran theologian and historian, Gerhard Besier, explains the atmosphere in which the Confessing Church developed by writing:

They presumed the churches would be included in the "national revolution" in the weeks that followed 30 January 1933. The vast majority was not affected by the measures taken against political, ideological and religious minorities and therefore took a rather indifferent stance towards their persecution. The new government's unequivocal breaches of human rights raised no critique among the churches; many Protestants indeed welcomed the restrictions of basic rights and the strong

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<sup>54</sup> Matthew D. Hockenos, *A Church Divided: German Protestants Confront the Nazi Past*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 4; Matthew D. Hockenos, "The Church Struggle and the Confessing Church: An Introduction to Bonhoeffer's Context.," 2. As opposed to a doctrinal unity, there existed a loose federation of twenty-eight regionally autonomous Lutheran, Reformed, and United churches; Robert P. Ericksen and Susannah Heschel, eds., *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust*, (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2000), 57-8.

<sup>55</sup> Hockenos, *A Church Divided: German Protestants Confront the Nazi Past*, 4.

<sup>56</sup> Wolfgang Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent: The Confessing Church and the Persecution of the Jews*, Translated by Victoria Barnett, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 231; John S. Conway, "The Political Role of German Protestantism, 1870-1990," *Journal of Church and State* 34, no. 4 (January 1992): 825-6, accessed November 18, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/34.4.819>; Ericksen and Heschel, *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust*, 20, 103.

measures taken for the development of the dictatorship as a step back to the reestablishment of law and order.<sup>57</sup>

Both the *Deutsche Christen* and the Confessing Church, minority divisions of the Prussian Church, had a difference of opinion on the matter of state control.<sup>58</sup> The explanation for the phenomenon of the *Deutsche Christen* was that after 1918, the most influential theologians in Germany were neither traditionalists, nor looking to rebuild German society, but sought an authoritarian power on which to rely.<sup>59</sup> The theologians to flourish were "völkisch-nationalist" Protestants, finding their authoritarian substitute in "*Nationalität and Volk*" ("Nationality and People") as they saw nationality to be the product of God's creation, sacrificing theology for national identity.<sup>60</sup> Germany post-WWI lacked a national identity, and these theologians offered that with a theology of anti-socialism, anti-Judaism, and anti-internationalism.<sup>61</sup> The National Socialist movement was seen as offering hope to those wanting to restore the church-state conditions before the 1919, "re-Christianizing" Germany.<sup>62</sup> As early as 1933, the *Deutsche Christen* pushed for the Church to adopt the policies that would align it with the state and Adolf Hitler's vision, namely to:

...dismiss all its clergymen of Jewish origin, repudiate the Old Testament, forget the Jewish "rabbi" Paul, and present Jesus as a heroic Nordic type who would do for men in the next world what Hitler was doing as Germany's saviour here below. [...] Calling themselves "the stormtroopers of Jesus Christ," they sought power, and were confident they could displace the old guard of the Protestant leadership with the aid of the pulsing enthusiasm for Hitler's new Reich.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Gerhard Besier, "Seventy Years after 'Machtergreifung'. The German Churches' Political Stance 1933-2003," *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 16, no. 2 (2003): 464, accessed April 1, 2020, Z-Library.

<sup>58</sup> Besier, "Seventy Years after 'Machtergreifung'. The German Churches' Political Stance 1933-2003," 465; Ericksen and Heschel, *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust*, 54-5.

<sup>59</sup> Traditionalist theologians would be those carrying on a lineage of revelation and Church basis found in God, Jesus, and the gospel. This is opposite the nationalist, i.e. *völkisch*, theologians who, in finding governmental authority to be ordained by God, relied on the state and its leaders for revelation, by default "nazifying" their Church theology.

<sup>60</sup> John S. Conway, "The Political Theology of Martin Niemöller" *German Studies Review* 9, no. 3 (October 1986): 527-8, accessed May 17, 2021, Z-Library; Ericksen and Heschel, *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust*, 52-3.

<sup>61</sup> Ericksen and Heschel, *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust*, 58-9.

<sup>62</sup> Besier, "Seventy Years after 'Machtergreifung'. The German Churches' Political Stance 1933-2003," 464; Conway, "The Political Role of German Protestantism, 1870-1990," 826, 828.

<sup>63</sup> Conway, "The Political Theology of Martin Niemöller," 525-6

The "Aryan Paragraph," a social construct excluding non-ethnic Germans and "non-Aryans," was being utilized to exclude those of Jewish background.<sup>64</sup> The acceptance of the Aryan Paragraph was not universal, as smaller groups of Protestants showed concern over current non-Aryan theologians and converts.<sup>65</sup> Professor of History at Pacific Lutheran University, Robert P. Ericksen, and Professor of Jewish Studies at Dartmouth, Susannah Heschel, write on this matter, saying:

Even before Adolf Hitler became chancellor, the self-styled "storm troopers of Christ" began to attack Jewish influences in Christianity. Drawing on a range of precursors that included Martin Luther as well as overseas missionaries, they created an ecclesiology defined by race. For the next twelve years...the German Christians continued to seek a synthesis of Nazi ideology and Protestant tradition and to agitate for a "people's church" based on blood. With their fusion of traditional Christian antiJudaism [*sic*] and biological racial obsessions, the German Christians represented a blend of what Donald Niewyk has dubbed the "old" and the "new" antisemitisms.<sup>66</sup>

While those active in the Confessing Church were later given positions within the DDR Church, disagreement with the government did not equate to disagreement with the moral positions of the government's leaders.<sup>67</sup>

Whilst teaching at Universität Bonn, soon expelled back to Switzerland for refusal to swear an oath to Adolf Hitler, it fell on Karl Barth to construct a theology to combat that of the *Deutsche Christen*, which Barth felt was the direct outcome of strict, orthodox Lutheranism.<sup>68</sup>

Born in 1886 in Basel, Switzerland to a Reformed minister and a pastor's daughter, Karl Barth

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<sup>64</sup> Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent: The Confessing Church and the Persecution of the Jews*, 23-5; Ericksen and Heschel, *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust*, 53. Meaning Jewish-Christians and Christians from families who had converted from Judaism, from religious attendance and access.

<sup>65</sup> Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent: The Confessing Church and the Persecution of the Jews*, 30; Hockenos, "The Church Struggle and the Confessing Church: An Introduction to Bonhoeffer's Context," 8.

<sup>66</sup> Ericksen and Heschel, *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust*, 52

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 40. It was both possible and common to find Protestant Germans who held a position counter to Nazis, who were still anti-Semitic, or at the very least anti-Judaic. Later within the DDR Church, this self-assessment made uncomfortable bedfellows for those in the minority who actually *had* morally disagreed with the Nazis; Hockenos, "The Church Struggle and the Confessing Church: An Introduction to Bonhoeffer's Context," 9-10; Ramet, "Protestantism in East Germany, 1949-1989: A Summing Up," 171-2. This is a concept that seems to be lost when people remember that the *Deutsche Christen* were ultimately disbanded, allowing for members of the Confessing Church to assume leadership.

<sup>68</sup> Conway, "The Political Theology of Martin Niemöller," 529; Hockenos, "The Church Struggle and the Confessing Church: An Introduction to Bonhoeffer's Context," 14.

spent his youth reading voraciously.<sup>69</sup> This tenacity for the acquisition of knowledge continued beyond his choice to focus on theology at the age of thirteen. Barth enrolled in the University of Bern in 1904, followed by semesters abroad in Berlin, Tübingen, and Marburg. Barth's academic studies were completed in 1908, beginning his ministerial career in 1909, first in Geneva, then in Safenwil.

Known for his socialist theological leanings, Barth criticized the German actions in the First World War. Feeling that he hadn't fully understood the Bible on its own terms, Barth began an intensive study of *The Epistle to the Romans*, with that work being published in 1918. Barth's notable thoughts awarded him a position of Honorary Professor of Reformed Theology at the University of Göttingen in 1921, and then a position of Professor of Dogmatics and New Testament Exegesis at the University of Münster in 1925. Having become renown in the theological world, earning respect from both Protestants and Catholics, Barth became the understandable choice to give an official voice to the Confessing Church, having already chosen to counter the theology of the *Deutsche Christen* since their inception.

Informed by his Calvinist theology, Barth never agreed with the intermingled ideologies of Christianity and German nationalism as it placed revelation in the state and its activities, opposing the Word of God, which Barth felt should precede all political creeds.<sup>70</sup> The *Barmen Declaration*, completed by Barth in May of 1934, viewed as restoring principles that had been distorted, was agreed upon by the Confessing Church, theologically outlining the limitation of state power through a crucially needed unity of Protestant denominations, in addition to preventing history from repeating itself.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Keith L. Johnson, *The Essential Karl Barth: A Reader and Commentary*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2019), 1-6.

<sup>70</sup> Conway, "The Political Theology of Martin Niemöller," 529.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 529, 531; Hockenos, "The Church Struggle and the Confessing Church: An Introduction to Bonhoeffer's Context," 11.

The *Barmen Declaration* outlined the differences between the Confessing Church and the *Deutsche Christen*, highlighting the Confessing Church's reliance on the sovereignty of Jesus Christ as opposed to *Deutsche Christen* belief in the sovereignty of political leadership.<sup>72</sup> This *Deutsche Christen* belief brought the Church into synchronicity with the state, thereby "nazifying" its theology; the Confessing Church condemned this, utilizing the *Barmen Declaration* to voice the autonomy the Church should hold counter to politicization.<sup>73</sup>

For Barth, the Church may have *existed for* the German people, but it was called only to *serve* the Word of God, i.e., Jesus Christ.<sup>74</sup> The Confessing Church was a response to the "idol worship" of the state political-ideology of the *Deutsche Christen*, as the *Deutsche Christen* had placed the state's views as the source of revelation, fusing Christianity with National Socialism, thereby removing church autonomy.<sup>75</sup> Rejected by the *Deutsche Christen*, the *Barmen Declaration* insisted that a state declaring itself as a source of salvation or sanctification invalidates itself, making Christian resistance to that state mandatory.<sup>76</sup>

With the *Deutsche Christen* motivated to enforce the state's Aryan Paragraph, the Confessing Church led an underground seminary, training its ministers in secret.<sup>77</sup> Unsurprisingly, the Confessing Church refused the *Deutsche Christen* requirement as it was incompatible with the *Barmen Declaration*, though their solidarity was limited to those of Jewish descent in line for ordination, thus also limiting its scope and support.<sup>78</sup> Overall, the issues of

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<sup>72</sup> Ericksen and Heschel, *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust*, 101.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>74</sup> Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent: The Confessing Church and the Persecution of the Jews*, 75.

<sup>75</sup> Hockenos, "The Church Struggle and the Confessing Church: An Introduction to Bonhoeffer's Context," 4, 13.

<sup>76</sup> Conway, "The Political Theology of Martin Niemöller," 521, 531; Active stances such as the *Barmen Declaration* were incredibly controversial; Hockenos, "The Church Struggle and the Confessing Church: An Introduction to Bonhoeffer's Context," 12.

<sup>77</sup> Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent: The Confessing Church and the Persecution of the Jews*, 186.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 189-190; Conway, "The Political Theology of Martin Niemöller," 532. A later criticism of the *Barmen Declaration* was that it neglected to directly address the inhumanity of Nazi crimes as well as the fate of the Jews who were found "guilty" of those crimes.

concern came down again, not to antisemitism, but to anti-Judaism.<sup>79</sup> Historian, author, and retired *Evangelischen* pastor, Wolfgang Gerlach, writes on the Confessing Church's feelings towards Judaism and anti-Judaism within the Nazi state, saying:

The complex history of the *Kirchenkampf* (Church struggle) clearly illustrates the difficulty of speaking about "the" Confessing Church. It was decidedly heterogeneous. Its diversity provided great opportunities, since there was an abundance of creative thinkers who were prepared to resist; *but it also included church leaders and laypeople who had no intention of opposing the Nazi state* (emphasis added). Throughout the Third Reich, the German Evangelical Church struggled to avoid a schism.<sup>80</sup>

After Barmen, attacks were carried out on the Confessing Church, clergy arrested, the state continued to be glorified while those who opposed it were demonized, and children were led to follow state-sanctioned rituals.<sup>81</sup> Only after the war ended did the Confessing Church's members realize that maintaining the pure message of the Gospel, as opposed to the *Deutsche Christen's* distortion and manipulation of it, had not been enough.<sup>82</sup> Conway states:

Recent studies of the conservative movement in Germany have increasingly called in question their political judgments and instead laid stress on the extent to which they have been compromised by their approval of so much of what Hitler had already achieved. Such criticism only confirms the picture of men whose political sensibilities had given them no instruction in how to take up arms against injustice and violence in a totalitarian state. In these circumstances, for the men of July 20, the determination to overthrow and if necessary kill the leaders of an evil regime was not the result of any clearly enunciated theology of resistance. Rather it derived from their traditional understanding of personal honor and morality. Only in the aftermath of their self-sacrificing failure was the Church brought to recognize that, in the circumstances of total war and destruction, the inherited political theologies of the past would not suffice.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent: The Confessing Church and the Persecution of the Jews*, 190-1; Erickson and Heschel, *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust*, 102-3. Whereas antisemitism is focused on the "race" and ethnicity of the Jewish people, anti-Judaism focuses on the traditional religion and beliefs of the Jewish people.

<sup>80</sup> Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent: The Confessing Church and the Persecution of the Jews*, 230.

<sup>81</sup> Conway, "The Political Theology of Martin Niemöller," 534. All foreshadowing events the Church would come to face during the Cold War.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 533, 538.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 539.

As Western Allies held the view that European society could not be rebuilt democratically without the help of churches, churches were granted special privileges with the caveat of drafting admissions of guilt for their roles during the war.<sup>84</sup> The *Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt* of 1945, for all it tried to do to take accountability and foster reconciliation, was apologetic in its limitation of action during the war, though neglecting to mention the murder of European Jewry, leaving the overall statement well-meaning but obtusely vague.<sup>85</sup> It was difficult for the public not to be critical of religious leaders after the war, as many within the Confessing Church attempted to re-write history, reframing their involvement by any means to maintain a more idealized view of their actions.<sup>86</sup> To varying degrees, churches scrambled to re-contextualize their positions and actions to have been organizations of resistance.<sup>87</sup> Gerlach writes on this recontextualization:

Even those who had been in the midst of the *Kirchenkampf* succumbed to the temptation to retouch their memories. Wilhelm Niemöller falsified the past, perhaps in good faith, when he wrote that the church of Christ (that is, the Confessing Church) had "taken a firm position" on the Aryan paragraph. Nor did Heinrich Gruber's retrospective view correspond to the situation described by the documents: "The Confessing Church had comprehended the distress and misery of these people [*that is, the non-Aryans*] from the very beginning. Again and again, the synods of the Confessing Church, and its pastors as well, took a position regarding the defamation of the Jews. What was lacking, however, was practical assistance."<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Besier, "Seventy Years after 'Machtergreifung'. The German Churches' Political Stance 1933-2003," 466.

<sup>85</sup> Conway, "The Political Role of German Protestantism, 1870-1990," 831; Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent: The Confessing Church and the Persecution of the Jews*, 226-9, 236. The Confessing Church was not the only Protestant group to make such an admission of guilt about the positions taken during WWII, with their admissions still including the same anti-Judaic language common in German Protestantism, if the Jews were directly mentioned at all.

<sup>86</sup> Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent: The Confessing Church and the Persecution of the Jews*, 234; Besier, "Seventy Years after 'Machtergreifung'. The German Churches' Political Stance 1933-2003," 466.

<sup>87</sup> Besier, "Seventy Years after 'Machtergreifung'. The German Churches' Political Stance 1933-2003," 466.

<sup>88</sup> Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent: The Confessing Church and the Persecution of the Jews*, 234-5. "The documents available establish that the Confessing Church regarded the Jewish question as annoying and burdensome and treated it dilatorily. The church's protracted handling of the Jewish question encouraged the state's persecution of the Jews. The Confessing Church's dogmatic solutions to the Jewish question in 1939 and 1940 fostered the Evangelical Chancellery's rigorous solution in 1941 — and, ultimately, the Nazi state's Final Solution."; Ericksen and Heschel, *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust*, 56, 73, 77-8, 100-1. The *Deutsche Christen* attempted to prove a redacted reinterpretation of their role during the war, omitting and distorting information surrounding their stances, arguing that the *Deutsche Christen* navigated their situation and preserved the regional church from schism while under duress.

## Barth on Luther

Barth's views on Luther were influential to Krötke for Barth saw that the reconciliation of God to humanity in Jesus Christ would not be brought about by secular politics, but was an event that took place in a realm beyond the political. Barth was both Swiss and Reformed (Calvinist), both having a relativizing effect on Luther's influence. For Barth, politics were a "modest and limited human enterprise"; Christian faith exists *in* a tension between two worlds—the world of the now and the not yet.<sup>89</sup> Barth, on Luther, says of that he had made a "mistake concerning the relationship of Law and Gospel, of worldly and religious order and power," in that he separated them too finally.<sup>90</sup> Critical of Luther, Barth found him to have created the social conditions by which National Socialism could take root.<sup>91</sup> Barth offered his own view of this particular situation, having watched German history taking shape:

Government is not just the establishment and exercise of the right among men but also, for the sake of this, the establishment of sovereignty and dominion and the exercise of power and force by man over man. Now if power breaks loose from law, if the one who should be active in the service of the divine order chooses to value and love as such his sovereignty and dominion, his power and force over others, if he undertakes to establish and exercise these things for their own sake, as the man does who emancipates himself from God, then inasmuch as they too emancipate themselves from him and become his master, the demonism of politics arises. Law or right is no longer the order which helps man, which safeguards his life, which gives him freedom and peace. It is the establishment and strengthening of the power which is seized and exercised by some in the subjugation of others. Power no longer protects the right, nor finds in it its determination and limit. It subjects the right to itself and makes triumphant use of it. The state no longer serves man; man, both ruled and ruling, has to serve the state. The demonism of politics consists in the idea of "empire," which is always inhuman as such.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Wolf Krötke, *Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologians for a Post-Christian World*, Translated by John P. Burgess, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2019), 122-3.

<sup>90</sup> Brinks, "Luther and the German State," 1.

<sup>91</sup> Nygren, "Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," 301.

<sup>92</sup> Karl Barth, *The Christian Life*, (New York, NY: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2017), 316.

When one views the power of government as being sanctified by God, and the successes of that government a blessing, it is difficult, revolutionary, or even heretical, to question that power. Luther was made the measure by which the German upheld resistance to foreign influence (*fremden Volkstum*).<sup>93</sup> So ingrained was the "shape" of Luther's theology in German culture, that the incremental removal of God from the forefront of the mind, to *forget God*, transformed the theology of "Christian triumphalism," into a social philosophy of "national triumphalism," with few taking notice.<sup>94</sup>

Barth came to comprehend the love behind the "servant of all" within alternate parameters.<sup>95</sup> For Barth, this love is not the action of service, but is instead an act of non-resistance, in that engagement is the course-correction of a world that is already going to happen on its own terms.<sup>96</sup> In one of his most overtly political writings, *The Epistle to the Romans* (circa 56 BCE), Barth states:

It is not permitted us to excuse ourselves for the absence of love by saying that, since we live in the shadowy region of evil, we can only bear witness to the Coming World by 'not-doing'. Even in the world of shadows love must come into active prominence, for it does not stand under the law of evil. Love of *one another* ought to be undertaken as the protest against the course of this world, and it ought to continue without interruption. We remember that human conduct is positively ethical when it is not *conformed to* in complete secrecy, it bears witness to the strangeness of God. [...] We are not now thinking of a single act, but of the combination of all positive—that is to say, protesting—possibilities; we are thinking of a general ethical manner of behaving.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Brinks, "Luther and the German State," 3. It is difficult for the outsider to grasp just how embedded Martin Luther, as well as the acquiescence to organizational power that is larger than oneself, is in German society into the twentieth-century.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 1, 4. It is notable that the Nazi ideologist, Alfred Rosenberg, was in public conflict with Karl Barth over their particular stances on Martin Luther and his effect on German society.

<sup>95</sup> Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans, with a New Preface by the Author*, Translated by Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, Translated from the Sixth ed., (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 1933), 492. Parameters that would impact both Dietrich Bonhoeffer's and, eventually, Wolf Krötke's theologies.

<sup>96</sup> Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans, with a New Preface by the Author*, 492.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 492-4. "It is not permitted us to excuse ourselves for the absence of love by saying that, since we live in the shadowy region of evil, we can only bear witness to the Coming World by 'not-doing'. Even in the world of shadows love must come into active prominence, for it does not stand under the law of evil. Love of *one another* ought to be undertaken as the protest against the course of this world, and it ought to continue without interruption. We remember that human conduct is positively ethical when it is not *conformed to* in complete secrecy, it bears witness to the strangeness of God. [...] We are not now thinking of a single act, but of the combination of all positive—that is to say, protesting—possibilities; we are thinking of a general ethical manner of behaving. We have described it [the conception of love], in fact, as the *outpouring of the Spirit* (v. 5), that is to say, as

In Barth's sense, as opposed to Luther's understanding of love fulfilling the Law as required *service*, love is instead the active *defiance* of the established ways of the world. In running counter to the "world of shadows," love is where God is concretely manifested in human action, much as the concrete manifestation of God in Jesus, abutted against the "concrete world in which we live." This lies outside the expectations and functions of the world, leaving the conversation "interrupted," as did the incarnation of Jesus, in that its presence is not reactionary to the possibilities of future or past, but instead the immediate presence of now. Such a dialectical concept of God's immediate concretion later informs Krötke in facing the absence of God within a Soviet society.

### **Bonhoeffer on Luther**

For the twentieth-century German Lutheran theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, there was a personal struggle with Luther's theology. One of the youngest of eight children, Bonhoeffer was born in 1906 in Breslau.<sup>98</sup> In a household of strict intellectualism, Bonhoeffer learned to read and express himself from a young age. Deeply affected by the loss of his seventeen-year-old brother in 1918, the twelve-year-old Bonhoeffer, already wrestling with questions about God, soon decide to devote his life to theology. Entering Tübingen University at the age of seventeen, Bonhoeffer studied under Adolf von Harnack, earning his doctorate in theology at twenty-one.

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that reality by which men know God, lay hold of Him, and cling to Him, as the Unknown, Hidden God, as the final 'Yes' in the final 'No' of all concrete, observable life. Love is the existential standing-before-God of men, their being touched by His freedom, whereby their personalities are established, whereby, we might perhaps say, they are 'individuated'. It is love that places the reactionary also finally in the wrong, despite the wrongness of the revolutionary. Inasmuch as we love one another we cannot wish to uphold the present order as such, for by love we do the 'new' by which the 'old' is overthrown. And so, in speaking of the breach in the wall of the incomprehensible 'not-doing', we have to speak now of the much more incomprehensible action of love. [...] It has been noteworthy that we have always encountered it lying beyond the possibility, the conceivable possibility, of any concrete or analysable experience of the relation between man and God, beyond, that is to say, Law and Religion, beyond all the demands which they are wont to make upon men's minds and wills; we have encountered it, moreover, as the unobservable point where men's highest endeavours are related to God, and therefore where they are immediately reversed. But what can all this mean, when we remember that all these reflections of ours, as our reflections, are disturbed by their relation to the concrete world in which we live? Our conversations about God are always interrupted conversations; for He withdraws Himself from us and opposes Himself to us when we are confronted by the question..."

<sup>98</sup> Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 5-11.

Bonhoeffer visited a church in Harlem while on a fellowship to Union Theological Seminary and left changed, forming his criticisms of German Christianity.

Not being content to resolve himself to strictly academic pursuits, Bonhoeffer became a Lutheran pastor in order to serve others. By the rise of Hitler in 1933, Bonhoeffer gave a radio broadcast of criticism toward the idea of a political leader being made into an idol. In 1937, the Gestapo shutdown an illegal seminary Bonhoeffer had been operating for two years, soon forbidding him to teach at all. Having doubts, Bonhoeffer accepted another position at Union Theological seminary, returning to Germany only twenty-six days later. While working for the Abwehr, the German Military Intelligence, in 1939, Bonhoeffer took part in espionage and the assassination plot of Hitler. For this, in 1945 Bonhoeffer was arrested, imprisoned, and executed.

Bonhoeffer recognized the traditional German application of Luther had developed the temporal authority into a political authority capable of horrendous, immoral acts.<sup>99</sup> This implementation of Luther's theology fractured the unity of the western world.<sup>100</sup> From the Roman Catholic Church, despite its failings, the West had inherited a unity under the Word of God, with Jesus holding a unifying power between the Pope and the Emperor, moving history in one direction, unifying the "*corpus christianum*" to defend the Christian west.<sup>101</sup> Believing that unity would still be preserved without Rome, Luther inadvertently broke this unity, introducing a theology that could later be misinterpreted.<sup>102</sup> To Bonhoeffer, the Reformers that followed Luther had removed God from the material world instead of uniting the material world, as well as the secular sciences, under the Word, which was Jesus Christ.<sup>103</sup> Bonhoeffer writes:

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid, 28.

<sup>100</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, Edited by Eberhard Bethge, Translated by Neville Horton Smith, (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 79.

<sup>101</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 79.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 80-1.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, *Ethics*, 81; *The Cost of Discipleship*, 105.

In His Church Christ rules not by the sword but solely with His word. Unity of faith exists only in obedience to the true word of Jesus Christ. But the sword is the property of the secular government, which in its own way, in the proper discharge of its office, also serves the same Lord Jesus Christ. There are two kingdoms which so long as the world continues, must neither be mixed together nor yet be torn asunder. There is the kingdom of the preached word of God, and there is the kingdom of the sword. The kingdom of the Church, and the kingdom of the world. The realm of the spiritual office, and the realm of secular government. The sword can never bring about the unity of the Church and of the faith. Preaching can never govern nations. But the Lord of both kingdoms is the God who is made manifest in Jesus Christ. He rules the world through the office of the word and the office of the sword. It is to Him that those who bear these offices must render account. There is only one Church, and that is the Church of faith, which is governed solely by the word of Jesus Christ.<sup>104</sup>

Bonhoeffer points out that, for Luther, political unity would be held by emperor.<sup>105</sup>

Though the fear of God had historically led the German Christian to honor the emperor, as well as that governing power, the disunity and schism of faith that followed, as Bonhoeffer notes, led to the Thirty Years' War.<sup>106</sup> Ingrained in German identity was the idea that though not every person was subject to the "law and the sword" according to their belief, it was still heavily intended that the Christian should still honor and serve that authority.<sup>107</sup> This sense of a Lutheran order-of-power in German culture viewed the organization of those institutions as God-ordained; and, goodness was the fruit of true belief, being that wrongs would not fall on the German Christian having followed their "governors" commissioned to "punish those who do wrong and praise those who do right."

Bonhoeffer notes the misinterpretation of Luther's Two Kingdoms brought the Christian into opposition with the secular world, though regarding it as sanctified by God, yet forgetting

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid, *Ethics*, 80.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, 67. "Accept the authority of every human institution." "Fear God. Honor the emperor." These are concepts that really stuck with people, resonating deep within Luther's theology. Accordingly, as the seat of power does not sit with the "counsels" of Rome, for the German, the power and authority to be accepted is seated in a German institution. This was the Temporal Kingdom allowed to exist by the Kingdom of God. Luther's ideas created a cohesive "German" identity. Luther's translation of the Bible created a uniform language, arguably non-existent previous to him, where before had been a smattering of dialects. Fealty to one's regional noble or monarch, and the defense of them via military service, was incredibly high; particularly in the Protestant north of Prussia due to Luther's theology of the Two Kingdoms.

<sup>107</sup> Luther, *The AGES Digital Library Collections: Works of Martin Luther Vol. 3*, 192-3.

the Reformation value of holiness and sanctification as coming from God's Word, as nothing is holy in its own right.<sup>108</sup> This secularization removes God from the world, as Bonhoeffer points out.<sup>109</sup> The criticism, then, is not *with* Luther specifically, but with a misapplication of Luther's theology, leading to German secularist Protestantism.<sup>110</sup> Eschewing the concept of spiritual superiority, Bonhoeffer states that, as Luther utilized secularity in the name of a "better Christianity," the Two Kingdoms should be accepted by utilizing Christianity in the name of a "better secularity," thereby uniting the West once more.<sup>111</sup> In doing so, it becomes the duty of the Christian to combat tyranny.<sup>112</sup> Bonhoeffer describes the true role of the Christian:

Let him live under authority as a doer of good, let him live in the world as a member of the Body of Christ, the New Humanity. Let him do it without reserve, for his life in the world must be of such a quality as to bear witness to the world's lost condition and to the new creation which has taken place in the Church. Let the Christian suffer only for being a member of the Body of Christ. Let the Christian remain in the world, not because of the good gifts of creation, nor because of his responsibility for the course of the world, but for the sake of the Body of the incarnate Christ and for the sake of the Church. Let him remain in the world to engage in frontal assault on it, and let him live the life of his secular calling in order to show himself as a stranger in this world all the more. But that is only possible if we are visible members of the Church. The antithesis between the world and the Church must be borne out in the world.

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<sup>108</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 81; *The Cost of Discipleship*, 221.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid*, *Ethics*, 81.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, 155.

<sup>111</sup> Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 28, 157.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, *Ethics*, 155. "Let the Christian remain in subjection to the powers which exercise dominion over him. Let him not contract out of the world (I Cor. 5.11). But let the slave of course live as a freeman of Jesus Christ. Let him live under authority as a doer of good, let him live in the world as a member of the Body of Christ, the New Humanity. Let him do it without reserve, for his life in the world must be of such a quality as to bear witness to the world's lost condition and to the new creation which has taken place in the Church. Let the Christian suffer only for being a member of the Body of Christ. Let the Christian remain in the world, not because of the good gifts of creation, nor because of his responsibility for the course of the world, but for the sake of the Body of the incarnate Christ and for the sake of the Church. Let him remain in the world to engage in frontal assault on it, and let him live the life of his secular calling in order to show himself as a stranger in this world all the more. But that is only possible if we are visible members of the Church. The antithesis between the world and the Church must be borne out in the world. That was the purpose of the incarnation. That is why Christ died among his enemies. That is the reason and the only reason why the slave must remain a slave and the Christian remain subject to the powers that be."

### **Chapter Three: Remnants of the Confessing Church**

The theologies of both Barth and Bonhoeffer were fundamental in the formation of the Church within the DDR.<sup>113</sup> This Church, which would become the "*Bund der evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR*" (Federation of Evangelisch Churches in the DDR, or, BEK), believed itself to ideologically be the true inheritors of the Confessing Church; in their view, opposing the veneer of inheritance in the West German EKD.<sup>114</sup> For Krötke specifically, these theologies helped construct the language used to address the absence of God in the present culture.

#### **The Aftermath of the Second World War**

Details of German resistance during the Third Reich commonly focus on the Confessing Church's shortcomings.<sup>115</sup> Criticism was not aimed at the Church's intent, but at its disunity and lack of action.<sup>116</sup> After WWII, Church leadership was shown as not having defended more those most vulnerable within the Third Reich, putting resistance on the backburner while more immediate legal and organizational issues became main concerns.<sup>117</sup> This diversion allowed the

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<sup>113</sup> Besier, "Seventy Years after 'Machtergreifung'. The German Churches' Political Stance 1933-2003," 473; Gerhard Besier, "The 'Church Struggle' During the Third Reich as a Subject of GDR Historiography: On The Conflict Between Contextuality and Ethics of Profession," *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 14, no. 1 (2001): 72, accessed November 18, 2019, Z-Library. Former-leading employee of the State Secretariat of Church Questions in the DDR, Horst Dohle, characterized Barth as representative of religious socialism and as having maintained contact, from Switzerland, with other religious socialists in Germany, counter the work of Otto Dibelius; Ramet, "Protestantism in East Germany, 1949–1989: A Summing Up," 171; Conway, "The Political Theology of Martin Niemöller," 538. Dohle felt similarly about Bonhoeffer, who was arrested and later executed due to his close ties with the *Abwehr* conspiracy to assassinate Hitler, partly recontextualized for the DDR's historiography of the period; Hockenos, "The Church Struggle and the Confessing Church: An Introduction to Bonhoeffer's Context," 3.

<sup>114</sup> Besier, "Seventy Years after 'Machtergreifung'. The German Churches' Political Stance 1933-2003," 473; Christine R. Barker, "Church and State: Lessons from Germany?" *The Political Quarterly* 75, no. 2 (2004): 168-9, accessed November 15, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-923x.2004.00599.x>. By the mid-1950s, 13 million of the 17 million citizens of the DDR were registered members of various forms of Protestantism, and the ultimatums given by both Church and state lowered those numbers drastically. Despite the religious freedoms protected by the DDR's constitution of 1949, members of the Church found many obstacles intended, on behalf of the state, to dissuade them from continuing attendance and affiliation.

<sup>115</sup> Conway, "The Political Theology of Martin Niemöller," 521. Often overlooked are the struggles between both clergy and laity in the attempts to take a stand, making definable statements on the then-current regime.

<sup>116</sup> Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent: The Confessing Church and the Persecution of the Jews*, 75; Conway, "The Political Role of German Protestantism, 1870-1990," 829.

<sup>117</sup> Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent: The Confessing Church and the Persecution of the Jews*, 76.

*Deutsche Christen* to isolate and invalidate non-Aryan congregations.<sup>118</sup> Surviving members of the Confessing Church struggled with the guilt of inaction, with few were prepared to say it, and fewer still to listen.<sup>119</sup> The inaction of the Confessing Church was not lost on its own members, as Barth commented that the Church, when it *could* be speaking on the injustices done to others, only seemed to speak for itself.<sup>120</sup>

The aftermath of historical acquiescence to the Temporal Kingdom, as it had previously been defined, has not been forgotten. This failing was a private guilt, a torment made public with a stirring concern on how to prevent such atrocities from repeating. While the actions of some members of the Confessing Church were exemplary, the actions were viewed in retrospect as timid and restrained.<sup>121</sup> The choices of Christians during the war led people not to just abandon the Church, but also choose to forget about the God whom it had claimed to represent. The question was how to come to terms with the Nazi era, with older generations wanting to view it as a "highly unfortunate episode," and the younger wanting more accountability within a reconstituted Germany.<sup>122</sup> This looming shadow over Protestant Germany led to the choices and actions of the Church in its place within the DDR.

### **Barth and "Unbelief"**

Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, eventually leading to the concept of unbelief, begins with the discussion of the meaning of God.<sup>123</sup> This comprehension, for Barth, is predicated upon the understanding of divinity according to God's revelation of Himself to Creation (humankind -

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<sup>118</sup> Ericksen and Heschel, *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust*, 56; Hockenos, "The Church Struggle and the Confessing Church: An Introduction to Bonhoeffer's Context," 5.

<sup>119</sup> Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent: The Confessing Church and the Persecution of the Jews*, 225.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 95, 231. Barth lamented the events that had come to pass concerning the Jews, even while understanding the pressures that had been placed on the Church's members.

<sup>121</sup> Save for examples like the martyrdom of Bonhoeffer as a result of his aforementioned conspiratorial involvement.

<sup>122</sup> Conway, "The Political Role of German Protestantism, 1870-1990," 830.

<sup>123</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: a Selection*, Edited and translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, (New York, NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), 29, 34.

inclusive) and reconciliation in Jesus, attempting to think through the divine attributes from a theocentric perspective, as opposed to the naturalistic measure of God by the limitations of humanity's attributes.<sup>124</sup> Barth opposed the usage of the term "God," to signal the highest potential or ideal of humanity, thereby limiting God's transcendental nature. Instead, Barth emphasized the transcendental and dialectical "otherness" of God, who explodes the bounds of human comprehension.<sup>125</sup>

This is the seed from which Barth's "religion is unbelief" germinates. The naturalism Barth seeks to counter is a theology based on the comprehension of the physical delineation which constructs a template for the metaphysical parameters of a God, subject to an individual's ability to comprehend that "God." This places God at the distant, highest ideal to which one can aspire, yet can never attain. In doing so, God essentially becomes an end-point, a "finish line." The transcendent present, Barth states, is where the revelatory God is then ultimately replaced with human capacity:

Far too often this word ("God") is used simply as a pseudonym for the limitation of all human understanding, whether of self or the world. Far too often what is meant by it is something quite different, namely, the unsubstantial, unprofitable and fundamentally very tedious magnitude known as transcendence, not as a genuine counterpart, nor a true other, nor a real outside and beyond, but as an illusory reflection of human freedom, as its projection into the vacuum of utter abstraction. And it is characteristic of this transcendence that it neither has a specific will, nor accomplishes a specific act, nor speaks a specific word, nor exercises a specific power and authority. [...] Transcendence as they see it cannot mean anything more than that behind and above and before all human action there is this open sphere, this abyss as it were, into which every man is destined to plunge headlong, whether wise or foolish, whether blessed or judged, whether to salvation or perdition.<sup>126</sup>

God thus becomes a fixed-point on the theological "event horizon," seemingly offering a perception of depth instead of functioning as a transcendent light illuminating future possibilities

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<sup>124</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics: A Selection*, 29-30.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, 30.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*, 29-30.

of existence outside of current comprehension. At this point, Barth's concept of "unbelief" begins to take shape. By placing God *within* the sameness of humanity, the relationship of God and humankind is misunderstood, misapplying a theology based on what Barth views as common religion. Since "God is One and there is no other like Him," humanity's comprehension cannot be the extent of the fullness of that God, thus destroying all claims and/or constructs based in the assumption of a misunderstood "sameness."<sup>127</sup> Any faith based upon the analogy of human and divine power is regarded by Barth as merely belief in human potentiality writ large, or religion. With nothing revealed in the knowledge of Self, room is allowed for God to reveal God's-self within God's own terms; that being, the person of Jesus within Christianity.<sup>128</sup> Barth explains:

What happened was this, that under this name God Himself established and equipped the people which bears the name to be "a light of the Gentiles," the hope, the promise, the invitation and the summoning of all peoples, and at the same time, of course, the question, the demand and the judgment set over the whole of humanity and every individual man. As all these things happened under this name, the will of God was done. And according to God's self-revelation attested in Scripture, it is wholly and utterly in these happenings that we are to know what really is the good-pleasure of His will, what is, therefore, His being, and the purpose and orientation of His work, as Creator of the world and Controller of history. There is no greater depth in God's being and work than that revealed in these happenings and under this name. For in these happenings and under this name He has revealed Himself.<sup>129</sup>

The incarnation of Jesus allows, for the Christian, God to manifest physically within the material world. This incarnation means that God, not being found in the sameness or potentiality of humanity, is instead found in the immediacy of Jesus, placing God within the ever-present revelation as opposed to an eventual-possibility yet to be revealed.<sup>130</sup> In this dynamic of God's presence within history (albeit still partially), actuality replaces possibility, revelation displaces

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 38.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, 38-9.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, 42.

supposition, and the comprehension of Grace alludes to the fact that Grace has been imparted.<sup>131</sup>

By placing faith in the immediacy and differentiation of God's incarnation in Jesus Christ, that faith is justified in an ultimate truth destroying superstition. Or, it should.

For Barth, the beginning of Christian faith is the event of revelation, an event that relativizes religious faith. By continuing to philosophize and build a theology on the analogous sameness with humanity, the actuality of the incarnation is replaced by an idea, being "unbelief."<sup>132</sup> A theology built around religion is not, for Barth, a religion of the faith in Jesus' revelation, but is instead a religion of "unbelief."<sup>133</sup> What this unbelief equates to is what Barth would call a "Christianity without Christ."<sup>134</sup> This religion sets itself against the immediacy and presence of God, offering only resistance to that God and the continued anticipation of a revelation that has already been made known, in essence creating an idol of that religion.<sup>135</sup>

What complicates this concept of "religion is unbelief," is that Karl Barth admits and accepts that these religions *must* come to exist.<sup>136</sup> These religions, however, do not exist solely for themselves, but to be overcome by a true religion, in this case a faith grounded in the immediate revelation and manifestation of Jesus Christ.<sup>137</sup> Such an overcoming, or as an iconoclasm in one of Barth's examples, dually highlights both the tendency of humanity to revere its own greatness *and* the growth into an adult awareness of what is beyond our own imitations as finite beings.

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid, 51.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 91.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, 149.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, 53. After all, we are only human; and, we will construct a means to comprehend our existence.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

## Bonhoeffer and "Religionless Christianity"

Krötke's approach to religion in the DDR was also influenced by Bonhoeffer's controversial notion of "religionless Christianity." For Bonhoeffer, Christianity had become a form of religion the way that so many other religions existed: a cultural construct that divulges and teaches the faith onto which the religion is itself built.<sup>138</sup> Christianity exists as the culmination of the Christian faith as the continued presence of Jesus within the world. Consider Bonhoeffer's definition of the Church, which is that:

...the Church as a community which by the authority of the contemporary Christ speaks and acts in the power of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness to the concrete Gospel of forgiveness and to the concrete commandment. In respect of the commandment, the Church must therefore either maintain a "qualified silence" or take the radical step of declaring the concrete commandment with authority, on the basis of its knowledge of the case.<sup>139</sup>

On the subject of the persecution of the righteous, particularly those who voluntarily undertake a just cause, Bonhoeffer says it is in *that* situation where Christ becomes manifest in the unknown, where one is least likely to imagine finding him.<sup>140</sup> Bonhoeffer's place within German history led him to feel that the gospel is more accessible to those who transgress against the law.<sup>141</sup> Counter the German Church's overreach, Bonhoeffer posited that it was in this case where Christ was more present to those who opposed the law.<sup>142</sup> It is this presence in the church-body where God and the gospel are more readily found.<sup>143</sup> Bonhoeffer concedes that the true church would be the minority and, to the majority, religion would become rote, if not irrelevant. On 30 April, 1944, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote to Eberhard Bethge, saying:

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<sup>138</sup> This is a basis held in common with religions, both living and dead.

<sup>139</sup> Ulrich Duchrow, "The Confessing Church and the Ecumenical Movement," *The Ecumenical Review* 33, no. 3 (1981): 213, accessed May 12, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6623.1981.tb03310.x>.

<sup>140</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 54.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 148-9.

How can Christ become the Lord of the religionless as well? Are there religionless Christians? If religion is only a garment of Christianity - and even this garment has looked very different at different times - then what is a religionless Christianity? [...] For the religionless working man (or any other man) nothing decisive is gained here. The questions to be answered would surely be: What do a church, a community, a sermon, a liturgy, a Christian life mean in a religionless world? How do we speak of God - without religion, i.e. without the temporally conditioned presuppositions of metaphysics, inwardness, and so on? How do we speak (or perhaps we cannot now even 'speak' as we used to) in a 'secular' way about 'God'? [...] In that case Christ is no longer an object of religion, but something quite different, really the Lord of the world. But what does that mean? What is the place of worship and prayer in a religionless situation? Does the secret discipline, or alternatively the difference (which I have suggested to you before) between penultimate and ultimate, take on a new importance here?<sup>144</sup>

This form of the religion, the Western Church was dead, leaving a Christianity devoid, not necessarily of faith, but of the meaningful essence of religion, still adhering to its ritualistic formulae; i.e. a "religionless Christianity."<sup>145</sup> Bonhoeffer notes, seemingly religious Christians often only bring up God at the moments of last resort, where God is required in a time of despair or weakness.<sup>146</sup> Bonhoeffer, who would rather speak of God in times of strength than at the periphery of life, felt those who thought themselves religious still did not reserve room for God at the core of daily life, but instead as an addition to that life to be utilized when necessary.

The contexts within which "religion" or "religionless" concepts establish themselves are connected to religion in such a way that the absence of these faith-based constructs leaves a recognizably-Christian stylized emptiness. As Krötke explains of Bonhoeffer's writings:

A difficult problem soon arises when we understand the religions as well as the religionless as historically conditioned phenomena. The religions and Western religionlessness are not simply empty husks into which we can pour one form of human behavior or another. Rather, the religions and the religionless arise from

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<sup>144</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison: the Enlarged Edition*, Edited by Eberhard Bethge. (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 241.

<sup>145</sup> Hockenos, "The Church Struggle and the Confessing Church: An Introduction to Bonhoeffer's Context," 7. It should be noted that "religionless Christianity" is not the same as *Gottesvergessenheit*, and neither is "religionless Christianity" a specifically negative phenomenon, though it *does* arise from a negative scenario. "Religionless Christianity" doesn't necessarily occur in a personal context of disbelief in God or the tenets of Christianity, but is instead a disconnection of the person or group from the Church-body or religious dynamic in a personal, intimately engaging way.

<sup>146</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison: the Enlarged Edition*, 242.

very different foundational human experiences and make claims to truth that compete directly or indirectly with the Christian faith.<sup>147</sup>

Not only did the particular brand of Christianity present within the DDR grow specific to its environmental delineations, but so too did this specific *Gottesvergessenheit*. The culmination of modern Germany's historical narrative created the conditions that allowed for atheism and the decline of religious adherence in the way specifically seen within the DDR.<sup>148</sup> Like Barth, Bonhoeffer acknowledges the tendency to rely too much on humanity's acquired knowledge as a means of comprehending God's transcendence.<sup>149</sup> This comes to be a faulty line of thinking for Bonhoeffer as the removal of the acknowledgement of this form of transcendence (i.e., that God is sovereign) is what essentially allows the vacuum of religionlessness. God, in the manifestation of Jesus, is the God who lowers himself from a position of power to a position of weakness.<sup>150</sup> The manifestation of God in Jesus effectively renders moot, and is antithetical to, the dialogue of natural theology, interrupting the dialogue itself.<sup>151</sup>

Bonhoeffer speaks of the then-cultural familiarity with Judas Iscariot, turning over friends, family, and neighbors to a government authority.<sup>152</sup> In these instances of mistrust, of humanity handing over humanity, Bonhoeffer later reaffirms his faith that it is in God's hands that he trusts the workings of the world.<sup>153</sup> It is, then, in God's hands where even the "severest

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<sup>147</sup> Krötke, *Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologians for a Post-Christian World*, 139.

<sup>148</sup> Besier, "Seventy Years after 'Machtergreifung'. The German Churches' Political Stance 1933-2003," 467. It should be taken into consideration that the decrease of church membership in the formation of the DDR was, in part, due to the loss of property and territory as the national borders changed.

<sup>149</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison: the Enlarged Edition*, 243-4. This reliance on epistemology becomes a functional replacement for God within the core of one's life, confusing the comprehended attributes of a being for the fullness of the being itself.

<sup>150</sup> Krötke, *Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologians for a Post-Christian World*, 174. Whereas power is distantly lofty, this weakness reflects our own existence, making relatable that which is too unrelatable.

<sup>151</sup> Ziegler, *Doing Theology When God is Forgotten: The Theological Achievement of Wolf Krötke*, 41-2.

<sup>152</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison: the Enlarged Edition*, 17. Ultimately in the case of Bonhoeffer, the example of his concept of a "religionless Christianity" pervades and speaks through his own imprisonment, manifesting the concept into a lived experience.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid*, 150.

privation" becomes easy.<sup>154</sup> Cut off from both the "body" and "building" of the Church, as well as the rites and social patterns inherent to those bodies, Bonhoeffer nevertheless expressed and lived a Christian life. "There are always reasons for not doing something," Bonhoeffer writes, "the question is whether one does them nevertheless."<sup>155</sup> In an immediately experienced world that had forgotten God, only carrying the appearance of a Christian life, from his prison cell, it would have been easy for Dietrich Bonhoeffer to abandon the ties that connected him to God.

Bonhoeffer felt the world—since the thirteenth century—had been pushing God more and more out of life and the answers to humanity's existential questions in what he calls a "secularized methodism."<sup>156</sup> This was ultimately un-Christian as, even in the mind of the Christian apologist, confused Christ for "one particular stage in man's religiousness, i.e. with a human law."<sup>157</sup> As Bonhoeffer had stated, "when the law rules supreme and the transgressor of the law is disgraced and ostracized...the gospel of Jesus Christ discloses itself most clearly to men."<sup>158</sup> Particularly for those who, like Bonhoeffer, viewed the Western expression of Christianity to have died, leading to a "religionless Christianity."<sup>159</sup>

A moment should be taken to mention, though Bonhoeffer is here referenced as having informed Krötke's theology, Bonhoeffer was also an inspiration to the theologians in East Germany having to cope with the life and struggles in a socialist state.<sup>160</sup> That being said, the

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid, 279.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid, 279-80.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, 280.

<sup>158</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 54.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, *Letters and Papers from Prison: the Enlarged Edition*, 241.

<sup>160</sup> Claudia Lepp, "Die Evangelischen Kirchen in Der DDR Im Focus Der Forschung. Darstellungen Und Quellensammlungen Zu Einzelthemen (1990– 2009) (Teil 1)," *Theologische Rundschau* 74, no. 3 (August 2009): 349, accessed November 15, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1628/004056909788796002>. "Reflexionen von Zeitzeugen über den Beitrag Dietrich Bonhoeffers zum Christsein in der DDR enthält ein 1993 von Ernst Feil herausgegebener Tagungsband. Insbesondere Albrecht Schönherr, der Bonhoeffer am Predigerseminar in Finkenwalde kennen gelernt hatte, nahm in seiner aktiven Zeit sehr oft auf ihn Bezug und so ist es nahe liegend, dass er in der Publikation selbst zu Wort kommt, aber auch im Zentrum zweier weiterer Beiträge steht. Nach Schönherr hatte Bonhoeffer für die Kirchenvertreter in der DDR in dreifacher Weise wegweisende Funktion: im Glauben lernen sowie in der ekklesiologischen Auftragsbestimmung, Kirche für andere zu sein und selbstlos am Ganzen teilzunehmen. Fraglos

significance of Bonhoeffer in the DDR granted Krötke, an emerging expert on him, a favorable reception. Bonhoeffer and Barth, were recognized as having affected the shape of Protestantism in a world divided between East and West, and profoundly directed the trajectory of Krötke to address the absence of the Divine in the DDR.<sup>161</sup>

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half die Bonhoeffer-Rezeption vielen ostdeutschen Theologen, die schwierige Situation in der DDR zu deuten und zu bewältigen."

<sup>161</sup> Detlef Pollack and Hedwig Richter, "Protestantische Theologie Und Politik in Der DDR," *Historische Zeitschrift* 294, no. 3 (2012): 707, accessed November 17, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1524/hzhz.2012.0026>. "Um diese Spannung auszuhalten, bezogen sich die Theologen nicht nur auf Karl Barth, die Barmer Erklärung und das inzwischen weithin akzeptierte Darmstädter Wort, sondern auch auf Dietrich Bonhoeffer, dessen Rezeption insbesondere Albrecht Schönherr beförderte, und auf den sich im Ökumenischen Rat der Kirchen in Genf entwickelnden Ideenschatz."

## **Chapter Four: The Imposition of "God-Forgottenness"**

Krötke's theological language makes room for God and intentionally conflicts with societal "forgotten-ness." This acknowledgment confronted an atheism the DDR sought to systemically maintain, creating a concretely rooted socio-political opposition the government was forced to notice. The immediate permanence of God's is a threat to *Gottesvergessenheit*, as well as the established soviet structure. This presence not only includes, but supersedes, the humanistic goals the DDR implemented via secular programs. Krötke's theology addressing *Gottesvergessenheit* speaks to the secularly forgotten human condition in relation to the divine.

### **Krötke on Barth, Bonhoeffer, and *Gottesvergessenheit***

Official state atheism of post-war Germany was not altogether distant from the dead-end theology Bonhoeffer had initially criticized.<sup>162</sup> The individual could simply be "going through the motions" of the culturally significant portions of their faith. Opposite this example was Bonhoeffer's disconnection from the Church-body while imprisoned, resulting in a strengthened faith on his part, but also a disconnection from the functions of the Church in the everyday world that some would categorize as "religion." As Krötke explains:

In relation to the religions, the Christian faith understands that God encounters his free creatures who no longer can or will wait for him. [...] The Christian faith is thus critical of religion. But it is capable of distinguishing humans from their religion as well as their "religionlessness." Humans as distinguished from their religion are God's beloved creatures whose freedom for encountering God contains far more possibilities than any particular form of religious behavior. The Christian faith is not an abstract option in favor of understandings and forms of conduct that are typically "Christian" or the parts of the "Christian religion." Rather, as God encounters Christians, they discover in themselves new possibilities for relating to God, possibilities that perhaps one or another religion has already realized. [...] We can even say that Bonhoeffer can raise the question of the theological meaning of "religionlessness" only because of these

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<sup>162</sup> Krötke, *Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologians for a Post-Christian World*, 139.

possibilities. God in the mystery of his love does not cease to come to us at the point at which our "religious" or "unreligious" ways have long come to an end.<sup>163</sup>

Whilst in the context of this thesis, *Gottesvergessenheit* is a disconnection from the reality of God in the world; and, what Krötke describes is not the absence of God, but is instead the absence of the relevance of the *structure* one could define as "religion." Where God, in this case, is very much present, the process by which one can come into a relationship with God is no longer limited to the religious form, but is instead open to various possibilities of encounter. So, while "religionless Christianity" can lead to *Gottesvergessenheit*, it is not *Gottesvergessenheit* in and of itself. Krötke's explanation of Bonhoeffer does beg a larger question that may loom for many: are all cases of atheism or agnosticism forms of irreligion, or are they instead "misdiagnosed" cases of *Gottesvergessenheit* and/or "religionlessness," subject to the socio-cultural vocabulary that fails to discuss spiritual disconnection?

The Church's fate as a result of generations of unbelief came to exist within *Godforgottenness* in parallel to the Church's standing within Socialism. Both were islands within a sea of what was considered an absence of the Divine. This was, in Krötke's mind, a thematic echo of Christ as the manifestation of God in the physical world which had forgotten the Divine Presence. Where belief in God had become the "business of a tiny minority," Krötke found the evangelical ambassadorship of the Church as a theological responsibility.<sup>164</sup> As the Church was to continue to function as a "Church within socialism" ("*Kirche im Sozialismus*"), Krötke's theology found a parallel allowing for the concrete manifestation of God, neither alongside nor against, but within this socialist structure. Krötke emphatically stated that though

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid, 148-9.

<sup>164</sup> Ziegler, *Doing Theology When God is Forgotten: The Theological Achievement of Wolf Krötke*, 28.

the language of the state was that socialism was the reality of society, the Church, the reality where resides the Christian, "lives 'in Christ' and not 'in socialism'!"<sup>165</sup>

The reason to bring this to one's attention is to keep in mind that what Krötke ultimately addresses is not an oversimplified "religion *versus* irreligion," but instead a multi-faceted set of positions that can be made to function as "religion *within* irreligion." While the communist state carried with it atheism, that atheism could likely appeal to those who could fall into the category of having *Gottesvergessenheit*, those who were newly atheist, as well as those who were nominally or culturally Christian with no substantial adherence (which would nearly equate to a practical atheism). This was an uphill battle and Krötke knew it and saw it as a personally chosen responsibility, through theology, to revitalize the Christian identity and serve a role in society as a representatives of the Church, and therefore God through the example of the manifestation through Christ.<sup>166</sup>

Krötke's approach is at first counter-intuitive, leading not with the basis of Christianity in an academic sense, but instead leading with the concrete reality of the gospel as manifested *within* the reality of the socialist state. This theological approach is in response to the structure of natural theology, wherein the theological argument does not come from the basis of scripture or revelation, but instead in the naturally occurring intellect or in reason. Adapting religion into the limits of social and human evidence, as in natural theology, is dangerously close to secularizing God to the point of distorting the functions of faith and belief into a "pseudo-religion."<sup>167</sup> As

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<sup>165</sup> Krötke, "Die Kirche Und Die »Friedliche Revolution« in Der DDR," 531. "Eine Kirche lebt »in Christus« und nicht »im Sozialismus«! Doch »Sozialismus« war im Sprach gebrauch der DDR nicht bloß die Weltanschauung des Sozialismus, sondern die Realität der Gesellschaft. Diese Realität bejahten die Kirchen als Ort des Lebens der Christen. Sie wollten nicht Kirchen »für den Sozialismus« sein. Sie wollten die Menschen ernst nehmen, die von der sozialistischen Gesellschaftsordnung geprägt sind und sie durch ihr Leben in der Gesellschaft und im Beruf auch mitgestalten. In diesem Sinne stellen sie sich nicht gegen und neben den »Sozialismus«."

<sup>166</sup> Ziegler, *Doing Theology When God is Forgotten: The Theological Achievement of Wolf Krötke*, 29.

<sup>167</sup> Krötke, "Die Kirche Und Die »Friedliche Revolution« in Der DDR," 539-40. "Das mußte den christlichen Glauben selbstkritisch machen, sofern auch er religiöse Fähigkeiten des Menschen in Anspruch nimmt. Auch er ist in der Gefahr, den Glauben an Gott religiös zu verweltlichen. Das geschieht in der Regel so, daß sich der Glaube gesellschaftlichen oder einfach

such, Krötke took umbrage with this position, as it pushed away an argument of God's presence.<sup>168</sup>

The issue inherent to natural theology was that, for Krötke, it put God at a distance. The apologetics involved with natural theology places God, and anything manifest from God, on an ever-distant horizon. Humanity, to have the spiritual or revelatory experience, was constantly developing, constantly growing so that it would, at some point, be prepared to have the divine revealed to it. This causes a permanent separation from God, even as told within scripture, as that scripture is part of a removed time in our past, and telling of a further removed time into our future.

Such a description calls to mind the image of a street corner doomsayer with a sandwich-board, proclaiming "The End is Near." We all know this image because it is something of a cartoonish visual utilized for several generations, at this point. No matter how many generations of doomsayers have proclaimed this, the "End," whether or not it was real, was on an ever-distant horizon, pushed further away from the present by every consecutive self-proclaimed street corner prophet. As such, this oncoming "Near-ness" is shown to never be "Near" at all. Instead, this impending doom is declawed, defanged, and de-contextualized over time to the point of it being obtusely unrelatable.

As much as that may sound like an aside, I feel that it is an important example to keep in mind. It is easy to dismiss as a distraction lacking in direction because *it is* easy to ultimately dismiss that which becomes so obtusely unrelatable that it has no bearing on our actual reality. It is an example of how that which has no concrete manifestation is so easily disregarded from any

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menschlichen Evidenzen anpaßt. Mit dem Glauben an Gott werden dann ganz andere Dinge befördert, als eben dieser Glaube eigentlich intendiert. Darum ist es notwendig, daß eine christliche Kirche stets kritisch zwischen dem Glauben und der Religion unterscheidet. Nur so kann sie deutlich machen, daß ihre Verkündigung und ihr Dienst nicht allzu weltliche Interessen betreiben. Auf dem Grunde dieser Selbstkritik kann sie auch die Kompetenz zur Kritik an der Pseudo-Religion gewinnen."

<sup>168</sup> Ziegler, *Doing Theology When God is Forgotten: The Theological Achievement of Wolf Krötke*, 42.

serious consideration. If one would only replace "The End" with "God," then the successive exclamations of "God is Near" permanently, as Krötke would theoretically argue, places God in an un-manifested form beyond the reach of spirit or comprehension, leaving it to be dismissed as something unrelatable and without concrete form. *This* is what Krötke sought to rebut in natural theology.<sup>169</sup>

The God concretely manifested in the person of Jesus, for Krötke, removes the doubt of reality by bridging the gap between the God of revelation and the God of relatability.<sup>170</sup> In positioning itself as dealing with the concept of humanity and the concept of God, natural theology denies the actuality of both by operating purely in abstraction.<sup>171</sup> In the case of the former, the apologetics of natural theology function in the assumption of the inherent religious belief of every person, sidestepping the reality of those for whom religious belief does not naturally come; and, for the latter, focuses on the traits and being of a God who *may* appear, as opposed to the God that *did* appear. For Krötke, Jesus did not represent the God who existed at the periphery, where one can only wait in anticipation, but instead the God who would state that "*this* generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place."<sup>172</sup> In reflection on the aforementioned sandwich board, "The End is Near" is ultimately changed to "God is Here."

In writing on Bonhoeffer's concept of the religionless in 2012, Krötke states:

[Bonhoeffer] calls it "ignoble" to try to pressure people into faith by digging around in their weak places. Moreover, he found it unworthy of God when we cheaply sell him as a product to help people feel better. If genuine faith in God is to arise, it must occur by means of the freedom in which God's Spirit encounters us, and not as a religious mechanism that mere humans set into action.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid, 43.

<sup>170</sup> Christopher R.J. Holmes, *Revisiting the Doctrine of the Divine Attributes: In Dialogue with Karl Barth, Eberhard Jüngel, and Wolf Krötke*, Edited by Paul D. Molnar, Vol. 15, Issues in Systematic Theology (New York etc., NY: Peter Lang, 2007), 158.

<sup>171</sup> Ziegler, *Doing Theology When God is Forgotten: The Theological Achievement of Wolf Krötke*, 43.

<sup>172</sup> Mt. 24:34; emphasis added

<sup>173</sup> Wolf Krötke, "'A Jump Ahead': The Church as Creative Minority in Eastern Germany," Translated by John P. Burgess, *Theology Today* 68, no. 4 (2012): 442, accessed February 28, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040573611424221>.

Bonhoeffer's view would collapse the distance between God and the world by existing within the world as a community, as Jesus had, in solidarity *with* the world and its needs.<sup>174</sup> Natural theology, in placing God in a vague distance, limits God's possibility as a potential reality and limits God solely within the "ignoble" weaknesses of the human condition, thereby making God a "last resort" or an afterthought. With the manifestation of God in Jesus, the ethereal divine became, for Krötke, no less divine, though less ethereal by disclosing the attributes of God in a tangible moment.

This tangible experience for the presence of God in the world was, perhaps, due to the fact that by all measures in its time and place, the process of natural theology had run its course. This may be viewed by some as a measure of hindsight; however, one can see that the course of the Church's interaction with, and within, German history by the time of the Cold War had resulted in choices and actions that did anything *but* effectively demonstrate God's presence in the world. At the end of the line of asking "How does God's Church exist in *this* scenario?," or "How does God's people exist in *that* scenario?," the ultimate question of "How does God currently exist in *all* scenarios?" did not seem to be proposed to the modern German state until Krötke poses it in a theology of his own words, with accents of Barth and Bonhoeffer in his speech. Arguably, this proposition was the unfortunate "last resort" that Krötke wanted to avoid after previous theology had failed, now speaking into a void where God was then effectively absent. Nevertheless, the social situation within the DDR was the exact context in which could allow theologians, including Krötke, the opportunity to establish theological ideas which spoke

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<sup>174</sup> Wolf Krötke, "Karl Barths Und Dietrich Bonhoeffers Bedeutung Für Die Theologie In Der DDR," *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte*, Kirche und Diktatur: Zum Lebensmuster der Religionsgemeinschaften im SED-Staat, 7, no. 2 (1994): 298, accessed November 17, 2019, Z-Library. "Mir hat an dieser Bonhoeffer-Interpretation eigentlich immer nur das Moment der solidarischen Existenz der Gemeinde mit der Welt und für die Welt eingeleuchtet, wie es Barth ja auch immer wieder eingepreßt hat. Es kann von dem her, was Gott in Jesus Christus für die Welt getan hat, keine gott-ferne, Christus-ferne Welt geben, auch wenn sie sich so gebärdet und dafür ausgibt. Die Gemeinde ist "der Welt verpflichtet, für das, was aus ihr werden soll, verantwortlich gemacht."

anew to people, in their relationship to God, against a government that systematically sought to end the influence of God and the Church on all fronts.<sup>175</sup>

To speak of God, for Krötke, should not be done in the abstractions limited to natural theology, but instead in the concrete terms with which humanity can observe the direct interaction wherein God disclosed himself throughout history in the words and deeds of Jesus.<sup>176</sup> It is in these divine disclosures that speaking of God constructs, in the minds of those engaged in the conversation, the doctrines of a very real, very present God that allows no room for "forgotten-ness." In other words, to speak of God in abstract terms prepares the mind for the possibility of an abstract God; to speak of God in concrete language prepares the mind for the reality of a concrete God.

### **Krötke Utilizing His Influences**

Though the works of Barth and Bonhoeffer were written at a different time and under different circumstances, what they had to say was nonetheless influential in speaking to the *Gottesvergessenheit* of East Germany. The way Krötke speaks of Barth's and Bonhoeffer's theologies informs a language around the perspective of what can be argued to be a *Gottesvergessenheit* of our time. A religionless society is not the same as a "religionless Christianity." The Christian religion, arguably any religion, is the construction of the human mind.<sup>177</sup> It may have the grounding and basis in a text or a philosophy, but those are merely

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<sup>175</sup> Pollack and Richter, "Protestantische Theologie Und Politik in Der DDR," 691. "Nach dem Krieg forcierten die Theologen in Deutschland den Bruch mit der Vergangenheit und starteten mit einem fulminanten Neuanfang. Auch die Theologen in Ostdeutschland predigten selbstbewusst die Inhalte des Evangeliums, übten Kritik am totalitären Charakter der sich allmählich etablierenden staatssozialistischen Diktatur, traten für die Einheit Deutschlands auf der Grundlage von Demokratie, Recht und Freiheit ein und verstanden sich selbst als Klammer für den deutsch-deutschen Zusammenhalt. Die Kirchen stellten eine Festung dar, die für die SED und ihre Hilfsorganisationen trotz massiver Angriffe uneinnehmbar schien. Sie besaßen einen ungebrochenen Rückhalt in der Bevölkerung, von der achtzig Prozent der evangelischen Kirche angehörten. Ihre Autorität bezogen die Kirchen aus dem historisch nicht ganz korrekten Image, während des Dritten Reiches eine Bastion des Widerstands gewesen zu sein. Nicht zuletzt diese Konstruktion verpflichtete die Kirchenmänner geradezu zu einer antitotalitären Haltung."

<sup>176</sup> Holmes, *Revisiting the Doctrine of the Divine Attributes: In Dialogue with Karl Barth, Eberhard Jüngel, and Wolf Krötke*, 158.

<sup>177</sup> Krötke, *Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologians for a Post-Christian World*, 139-41.

building blocks for a structure that addresses the needs in a time and place. If that time and place passes, then that construct known as "religion" may also pass.

Krötke understands that Bonhoeffer's criticism of religion is in its temporary construction, *not* in the permanence of God as manifest in Jesus.<sup>178</sup> The concepts of "religionless Christianity" and a "Church for others" were instrumental in the construction of the Church within the DDR.<sup>179, 180</sup> Whereas "religion" could transcend what is temporally rational, a function that abused by the religion-like state of the DDR, Bonhoeffer's model bypasses this by starting with God as a basis instead of "religion."<sup>181</sup> Within Buchenwald, Bonhoeffer lived his "religionless Christianity" where there was no church. It was an institutionalized, systematized absence of the structure of religion, intent on dehumanization. One cannot argue, though, that every individual inside it, or any other concentration camp, was wholly without a relationship to God though they were without the construct of "religion." If faith can exist within the fences of a concentration camp, so, too, could it exist within the walls of a socialist state.

As Krötke frames Bonhoeffer's words, this God is the one that becomes a "companion" in suffering because the distance of expectation is overcome by the immediacy of now.<sup>182</sup> This, for

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid, 173.

<sup>179</sup> Krötke, "Karl Barths Und Dietrich Bonhoeffers Bedeutung Für Die Theologie in Der DDR," 297-8. "Von Bonhoeffer her ist dann noch auf dem Weg zur Gründung des Bundes der Evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR die Vorstellung von der "Kirche für andere" bzw. von ihrem Leben "im Dasein für andere" wichtig geworden. Im strengen Sinne des Begriffs aber bleibt das, worum es da ging, weit hinter dem zurück, was Bonhoeffer selbst vorschwebte. Er dachte ja daran, daß die Kirche all ihr Eigentum den Armen verschenken müsse, daß die Pfarrer von den freiwilligen Gaben der Gemeinde leben oder einen weltlichen Beruf ausüben, um frei zu sein, in der religionslosen Welt "an den . . . Aufgaben des menschlichen Gemeinschaftslebens" teilzunehmen und durch ihr "Vorbild" zu wirken. Wenn so eine Aussage auf die institutionalisierte Kirche und landeskirchliche Gemeinden angewandt wird, dann kann dabei nicht mehr viel anderes übrig bleiben als eine Tendenz. Sie besteht darin, daß die Christen "religionslos" existieren, indem sie sich nicht in "Innerlichkeit" und "Individualismus" vor der zurückziehen, sondern eben für andere da sind. Deren "Religionslosigkeit" kann "hoffnungsvoll" verstanden werden, sofern sie mündige Gestaltung der Welt unter der verborgenen Gegenwart Jesu Christi ist."

<sup>180</sup> Though, it fell short of Bonhoeffer's visualization of a Church that discarded its material possessions to the poor and existing on the basis of what the hidden presence of Jesus could do for those in and around a community.

<sup>181</sup> Krötke, "Die Kirche Und Die »Friedliche Revolution« in Der DDR," 539. "Wir können unter »Religion« die menschliche Fähigkeit verstehen, alles in der Welt zu transzendieren und rational nicht Erfäßbarem zu vertrauen und es zu verehren. Solche religiöse Fähigkeit des Menschen hat der Marxismus-Leninismus deutlich in Anspruch genommen. Er hat damit zugleich dokumentiert, daß »religiös« sein bei weitem nicht das Gleiche ist wie an Gott glauben. Mehr noch: Er hat gezeigt, wie »Religion« den Weg zum Gottesglauben geradezu verbaut. Statt auf Gott richtete sich die Religion hier auf Sachverhalte, die keinen Glauben, sondern rationale Begründung verlangen."

<sup>182</sup> Krötke, *Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologians for a Post-Christian World*, 174.

Wolf Krötke, is the importance of the concreteness of God. No longer a powerful abstraction on an unreachable horizon, for Krötke, Jesus is the tangible presence who suffers *with* us. In reflection of Bonhoeffer, Jesus' weakness is proved by religionlessness, where one does not turn to the institution of the Church to bestow an abstraction, but instead one turns inward toward a reflective relationship.<sup>183</sup> As Krötke explains it:

Bonhoeffer firmly believed that God himself was guiding the way. That faith gave him strength for the dangerous risk of resisting Hitler. In my view, Bonhoeffer's certainty that God is guiding the "religionless" world and that God is for the world through his worldly powerlessness stands behind Bonhoeffer's theological assessment of religionlessness. [...] But for Bonhoeffer it goes without saying that God does not simply give the world up to itself when he sets it free to be a world "come of age." [...] Bonhoeffer's faith in the Lord who guides us but for the sake of our freedom and maturity is powerless in the world suggests the following: God wills neither the phenomenon of religion, which falsifies him, nor the evil we inflict, but he does not cease to accompany us along the way that leads to him. [...] This certainty that we are being guided through life by the God who for our sakes in Jesus Christ takes on death undergirds a firm hope in God's kingdom and eternal life.<sup>184</sup>

This only aligns with Barth's understanding of religion in being theological as opposed to phenomenological, focused on acting out the comprehension or anticipation *of* God rather than the interaction *with* God.<sup>185</sup> In this way, religion does not function as a belief, but as a lack of belief, i.e., "religion is unbelief." A misreading of Barth places God in opposition to human existence, which would seem to undercut the cohesive comprehension Krötke places on Barth's and Bonhoeffer's theologies as they inform his own.<sup>186</sup> This is so particularly coming from a place of ever-increasing secularization, where humanity is edged-out by Barth's comprehension of God. The idea of God as being over and above reality, and that humanity should "follow him,

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid, 175.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid, 175-6.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, 48.

represent him, correspond to him, and belong to him" where God is the ethical imperative can be, at best, overbearing when thought of in these specific terms.<sup>187</sup>

Undoubtedly, such a reading would seem to further "*Gottesvergessenheit*" in a modern world by placing the concept of God in an unreasonable relationship with humanity. Krötke is quick to mention, however, that what sets Barth's theology apart from expectation is that it begins from a premise of the positive, as opposed to open-ended questions.<sup>188</sup> This places the incarnation of Jesus in the affirmative, rather than the theoretical; and, as Krötke phrases it, "takes Barth's theology and its view as the point, rather than actual event of the encounter between God and humans."<sup>189</sup>

The difficulty rests in the dynamic of the relationship between God and humanity as being partners, yet being hierarchical. This, though, is still too often framed in the comprehension humans have with other humans as partners, wherein both are existentially the same. God, being existentially outside of human existence, would hold a different dynamic of partnership, wherein language would have to follow Barth's hierarchical and sequential precedence over humanity without which, as Krötke is quick to note, we would "have nothing serious to say about God in relation to humans."<sup>190</sup> Within the trinitarian concept, with the incarnation of Jesus, God comes into relation with the triune aspects of God's-self, and one comes to know God's relationship to oneself, through the aspect of the Son in that earthly encounter.<sup>191</sup>

Thus, the encounter with God via the incarnation of Jesus establishes a relationship, a covenant, unlike any other between God and humanity. This covenant is built, not on the

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid, 46-7.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid, 48.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid, 49.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid, 51.

distance between God and humanity or the theoretical suppositions on which such a distance is based, but is instead built on the discovery and exploration of the relationship itself.<sup>192</sup> Jesus then becomes the direct confrontation with, and communication between, God and humanity, placing the relationship in the phenomenological, as opposed to the theological. As Wolf Krötke explains of Karl Barth's theology, religion is of the anticipatory-theological, but the relationship between God and humanity, wherein belief is placed in Jesus, is phenomenological.<sup>193</sup> "Religion is unbelief."

Religion, as a human construction, immediately dates itself, anchored to its own time and place. This foundation in time and place can be alienating to people. In uncomplicated terms, some may find comfort, and even a home, in a particular memory; for others, a similar memory can spark anything from pain to insouciance. Nostalgia affects everyone differently because we relate to that moment in time and place differently; and the more distant the reality of that moment is, the more the idea of that moment is passed along, the less grounded it is in the fundamental reality of the individual. Religion, as a nostalgia of the "divine moment," has the ability to become unrelatable to the individual, distorting itself and its mechanics as its self-realization of the "divine moment" becomes a less intimate relationship with the Divine.<sup>194</sup> In its struggle to re-establish its relevance, religion distorts itself by confusing the relational dynamics of God and humanity, resorting to a natural theology of the worshipful focus on the human attributes of God, thus falling short of the God humans require.<sup>195</sup> As Krötke writes:

Humans are not true to themselves when they fail to recognize and affirm that which comes to them only as an encounter. Without that encounter, not only God but also other humans, one's body, one's intellect, and one's time appear to be objects that belong to us and that we freely manage. A diminishment of reality

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Krötke, *Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologians for a Post-Christian World*, 28.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid, 31-2.

occurs. [...] We become alienated from ourselves when we seek to control that which comes to us as an encounter, whether it be God or something to which we relate in this world. [...] Openness to God is an ontological determination of humans that precedes any of their deeds. It does not require "proof" or construction. Faith in the God who encounters us establishes this openness as a self-evident feature of human existence. For this reason, Barth continually emphasizes that no human being can be "ontologically... godless" (CD IV/1, 480). Even when we most completely pervert our being through our deeds, we remain related to God. To be human and to be in relationship with God are one and the same thing!<sup>196</sup>

When this God becomes distorted, a nostalgic rumor, then this God becomes as alien as the religion that distorted, dismissed, or forgot its understanding of that God. Not as a product of the failings of God, but a product of the failings of the religion in question. God is an ontological reality prior to any cognitive assent or even knowledge of God. However, God, according to Krötke is the necessary determinate of all relationships and our failure to recognize this offers the appearance that all other relationships—including with our own time, body, and intellect—appear to us merely as objects of instrumental control.

The Church in the DDR, though utilizing the theologies of both, was reserved in its appreciation of Bonhoeffer and Barth.<sup>197</sup> Nevertheless, Krötke demonstrated that the ability to face the socialist system came about through a self-discovery, in dialogue with the theologies of Barth and Bonhoeffer, of the freedoms possible for the individual and the Church.<sup>198</sup> Jesus, for

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>197</sup> Krötke, "Karl Barths Und Dietrich Bonhoeffers Bedeutung Für Die Theologie in Der DDR," 282. "Es wäre verkehrt und völlig unangemessen, das Wirken dieses Mehrwertes der Kirche irgendeiner Theologie zugute zu schreiben. Dafür ist ein anderer zuständig. Es wäre auch schief, die Freude am Wuchern mit diesem Pfunde in der Kirche und in den Gemeinden bloß auf Bonhoeffer oder Barth zurück-zuführen. Die lutherischen Kirche und das meiste, was es an Theologie in der DDR gab, standen dieser Tradition theologischen Denkens ja doch bleibend reserviert gegenüber. Die explizite theologische Beschäftigung mit Bonhoeffer und noch mehr mit Barth war auch in der Pfarrerschaft ziemlich dünn."

<sup>198</sup> Ibid, 282-3. "Wo jedoch die Selbstverständigung der Kirche und der einzelnen Glaubenden über ihren Weg im Gespräch mit Barth und Bonhoeffer stattfand, da ging es immer um die Entdeckung der ureigensten Möglichkeiten der Freiheit der Kirche Jesu Christi, sich in *bleibender Überlegenheit* den Herausforderungen, vor die das sozialistische Gesellschaftssystem stellt, zuzuwenden. Wie wir sehen werden, hat es tatsächlich auch einen *Mißbrauch* der Theologie von Barth und Bonhoeffer gegeben, in der diese Überlegenheit nur gespielt wurde. Davor ist nichts Menschliches und erst recht keine Theologie geschützt. Jedes ernstliche Einlassen auf das, was Barth und Bonhoeffer je auf ihre Weise der Kirche einprägen wollten, aber führte darüber sofort wieder hinaus. Vor allen Problemen und Fragen, die im Hinblick auf mancherlei theologische und kirchenpolitische Zuspitzung der Beanspruchung Barths und Bonhoeffers aufzuwerfen sind, hat deshalb als erstes die Feststellung zu stehen: Es war gut, mit Lehrern der Kirche auf dem Wege zu sein, die uns entdecken ließen, daß der Herr unsere Füße in noch so bedrängenden Verhältnissen "auf weiten Raum" (Ps 31,9) gestellt hat."

Krötke, Barth, and Bonhoeffer exists, not as a God of a "divine moment" tied to history, made ethereal by the distance between the "then" and "now"; but, is instead the concrete manifestation of an ever-present God whose presence is always rooted in the "now." Because Krötke conceives of God's acting within contemporary life, he understands that a society that is bereft of religion is in no way bereft of God. Krötke writes that it was Bonhoeffer's christologically-based theology that helped to ground the Church in the immediacy of the moment, no matter the socio-political condition, allowing the Church and individual to be active participants in the Christ-community.<sup>199</sup>

### **Systemic *Gottesvergessenheit*: *Jugendweihe* and *Bausoldaten***

The DDR created institutional roadblocks to limit religious influence with the goal of pushing religion to the point of obsolescence.<sup>200</sup> This inadvertently built *Gottesvergessenheit* into the structure of society. The DDR heavily focused on societal development in the scope of scientific advancement as a means to fuel advancement.<sup>201</sup> The clergy were highly monitored by both *Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter* ("unofficial informants") and secret police planted in the churches by the state, with Church influence strictly limited, only extending beyond the church itself when it involved social work; and, religious education of any kind was solely within the private sphere.<sup>202</sup> Anything beyond that limitation was viewed as suspect due to church organizations

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid, 299. "Bonhoeffer's christologisch begründete Reflexion dieses Phänomens war war darin hilfreich, als sie deutlich machte, daß die Menschen damit der Gegenwart Christi nicht entlaufen und daß die Gemeinde in noch so kümmerlicher und ohnmächtiger Gestalt mit diesen Menschen zusammengehört. Es war deshalb auch berechtigt, nach den theologischen momenten der Wahrheit an dieser Lebenshaltung zu fragen und ihr so in verstehender Offenheit zu begegnen. Daß die Gemeinden nicht in Abkapselung von den Menschen dieser Gesellschaft, sondern in intensivstem Teilnehmen an ihrem Leben aus der DDR-Zeit hervorgegangen sind, hängt auch mit dem Geist zusammen, der von Bonhoeffer's Theologie her im Selbstverständnis der Gemeinden lebendig war."

<sup>200</sup> This, despite the protections of religious freedom.

<sup>201</sup> John P. Burgess, "Church-State Relations in East Germany: The Church as a 'Religious' and 'Political' Force," *Journal of Church and State* 32, no. 1 (January 1990): 23, accessed August 12, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/32.1.17>.

<sup>202</sup> Henkel, "State–Church Relationships in Germany: Past and Present," 311; James Strasburg, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the St. Nicholas Church, and the 1989 Monday Demonstrations: A Case Study of Theopolitical Engagement in the German Democratic Republic," *Journal of Church and State* 59, no. 4 (July 12, 2016): 554, accessed November 15, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/csw050>.

and Christian parents, the only allowed instructors of religious values and ideals in the DDR, being viewed as fostering ideologies counter to the state.<sup>203</sup>

Church organizations were accused of being illegal meetings under the guise of a religious organization, harboring agents against the safety and progress of the state, despite a lack of evidence to support the claim of such meetings having taken place.<sup>204</sup> People belonging to an intangible "citizenship" in the Kingdom of God could not be counted on to swear an allegiance to a state which may run counter to personal ethics. The DDR, in essence, attempted to replace the Lutheran foundation of German identity, specifically East German identity, with the socialist ideals of the state, reinventing German identity, while keeping intact Luther's concept of the German citizen as the "dutiful servant of all."<sup>205</sup> Church leaders were against this, fearing that communism was as equal a threat as national socialism had been, which may allow backsliding of the still-rebuilding country.<sup>206</sup> Youth were being heavily pressured to join state-run organizations, threatened with restrictions on future employment, as well as academic and social advancement.<sup>207</sup> Two institutionally mandated activities, the *Jugendweihe* and conscripted service, had differing success rates of separating an individual from the church.

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<sup>203</sup> Mary Fulbrook, "Co-Option and Commitment: Aspects of Relations Between Church and State in the German Democratic Republic," *Social History* 12, no. 1 (January 1987): 76, accessed August 12, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03071028708567672>; John S. Conway, "The 'Stasi' and the Churches: Between Coercion and Compromise in East German Protestantism, 1949-89," *Journal of Church and State* 36, no. 4 (January 1994): 744, accessed January 2, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/36.4.725>. Further, the state was concerned about the loyalty of Christians extending beyond the DDR. Whereas Roman Catholicism, for example, was loyalty a centralized body like Rome, the loyalties of decentralized Protestants were unknown to those in power in the DDR

<sup>204</sup> Fulbrook, "Co-Option and Commitment: Aspects of Relations Between Church and State in the German Democratic Republic," 76.

<sup>205</sup> Ramet, "Protestantism in East Germany, 1949-1989: A Summing Up," 172-3.

<sup>206</sup> Moses, "The Politicisation of Martin Luther in the German Democratic Republic," 289.

<sup>207</sup> Steven Pfaff, "The Politics of Peace in the GDR: The Independent Peace Movement, the Church, and the Origins of the East German Opposition," *Peace & Change* 26, no. 3 (2001): 284, accessed November 15, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1111/0149-0508.00194>. Of the stumbling blocks the DDR created to undermine the Church and its influence, the *Jugendweihe* was one of the most universal, functioning as an act of suppression, allowing only the participants to move on to higher education; Moses, "The Politicisation of Martin Luther in the German Democratic Republic," 289; Barker, "Church and State: Lessons from Germany?" 169. The personal rejection or refusal of the *Jugendweihe* was met with hardships placed on the youth in the form of knowing that an intentional lack of participation generally guaranteed future social persecution, imprisonment, and troubles with employment; Burgess, "Church-State Relations in East Germany: The Church as a 'Religious' and 'Political' Force." 23. To conflict further with the Church, the opportunities offered by making the choice to go through with the *Jugendweihe*, offered wider avenues of economic and educational opportunity that aren't offered by the Church in a practical sense; Henkel, "State-

## ***Jugendweihe* - Instilling *Gottesvergessenheit* in Youth**

The *Jugendweihe* (Youth Consecration), a state program on par with the Church's confirmation, was a political confirmation in which ninety-seven percent of youths would come to participate, dedicating one to the ideology and service of the state, as opposed to a religious confirmation that dedicates one to the ideology and service to the Church.<sup>208</sup> Initially intended to be a rite of passage into society, the *Jugendweihe* was quickly skewed to include instruction, vows, oaths, processional parades, and defense of the state; having been rooted in 19th-century German secular organizations, it was updated using Soviet concepts of society, and of religion being an outdated repetition of cultic activities.<sup>209</sup> The *Jugendweihe* had been structured into a liturgy of Marxist militarization, materialism, and the veneration of atheism, outlining the ideological and political instruction of the state, as well as the declaring the individual's loyalty.<sup>210</sup>

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Church Relationships in Germany: Past and Present,” 311; Krötke, “Die Kirche Und Die »Friedliche Revolution« in Der DDR,” 529. “Von dieser Grundanschauung ist der Staat in seinen Beziehungen zu den Kirchen als Institutionen praktisch zwar nach und nach abgerückt. Sie hat den Umgang mit den Christen im Alltag des gesellschaftlichen Lebens jedoch ausdauernd bestimmt. Wer Christ war, mußte mit massiver Benachteiligung rechnen. Er war immer in der Gefahr, als unzuverlässig im Sinne der Ideologie angesehen zu werden. Deshalb hat man jungen Christen Bildungszugänge verwehrt. Man hat sie von bestimmten Berufen ganz ausgeschlossen. Es wurde verhindert, daß sie Führungspositionen in der Gesellschaft, in der Wirtschaft oder im Kulturleben erlangen. Es erforderte deshalb schon einigen Mut und Standvermögen, sich unter solchen Bedingungen als Christ zu bekennen und sich zur christlichen Gemeinde zu halten.”

<sup>208</sup> John P. Burgess, “Christian Political Involvement in East and West: The Theological Ethics of Wolf Krötke,” *The Journal of Religion* 71, no. 2 (April 1991): 204, accessed February 12, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1086/488597>; Roland Smith, “The Church in the GDR,” *German Life and Letters* 39, no. 1 (October 1985): 78, accessed November 15, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0483.1985.tb00630.x>. This initiatory ceremony was introduced by the cultural establishment members, J. R. Becher and Anna Sehgers; Gerhard Besier, “The German Democratic Republic and the State Churches, 1958–1989,” *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 50, no. 3 (1999): 525-6, accessed November 15, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s002204699900175x>. The *Jugendweihe* was technically a reintroduction of an SED-backed ceremony previously abolished by the State in 1950.

<sup>209</sup> Nikolai Vukov, “Secular Rituals and Political Commemorations in the GDR, 1945-1956,” Essay in *Religion and the Secular in Eastern Germany, 1945 to the Present*, edited by Esther Peperkamp and Małgorzata Rajtar, First ed., 41–60, (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 54-5. The proposition for such a thing to exist was created early in the DDR, but was left on the backburner until 1953 when Moscow pushed for the rite to be formulated in a guise of seeming-religiosity to intentionally fill the role one would, from the outside, view the act of Confirmation to entail; Robert F. Goeckel, “The GDR Legacy and the German Protestant Church,” *German Politics & Society* 31 (1994): 85, accessed November 15, 2019, Z-Library.

<sup>210</sup> Mahmood Monshipouri and John W. Arnold. “The Christians in Socialism--and after: The Church in East Germany,” *Journal of Church and State* 38, no. 4 (January 1996): 766, accessed January 3, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/38.4.751>. Strangely within my sources, I could not find anywhere that mentions the DDR acknowledging that the Nazis used a similar tactic in creating ceremonies that echoed Christian appearance and function, yet were for the purpose of aligning the adherent with state ideology; Mary Fulbrook, *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker*, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 2008), 158-9. Were the phrase "socialism" not specified to the reader, the oath would have read as a devotional statement, confused for being entirely religious in nature.

Interest was initially low, with Confirmation still being considered mandatory, leading the state to enforce the *Jugendweihe* as mandatory in 1958, intending to show the Church was not the only institution capable of meeting the needs of East Germans.<sup>211</sup> The Church quickly fell short of its influence upon the mandatory *Jugendweihe*, intentionally mimicking confirmation.<sup>212</sup> When preparing for religious confirmation, one studied texts and doctrine in order to achieve a social recognition. Likewise, the *Jugendweihe* was a mostly standardized program for youths of various classes over the years.<sup>213</sup> Had one chosen to participate in the *Jugendweihe*, one was not allowed to *also* have a confirmation; the two ceremonies being seen as having incompatible ideologies, with most of the rejections of the *Jugendweihe* due to its inherent atheistic-materialistic outlook.<sup>214</sup> Confirmation numbers dropped so drastically, the Church was faced with having to re-evaluate its "all or nothing" stance, choosing to allow taking part in both ceremonies, inadvertently placing believers in the middle of *Gottesvergessenheit*.<sup>215</sup>

Several aspects of the preparation for the ceremony did *not*, in principle, contend with the Church's priorities, including visiting former concentration camps, studying the works of German writers and philosophers, and learning the functions of industry in the developing

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<sup>211</sup> Vukov, "Secular Rituals and Political Commemorations in the GDR, 1945-1956," 55. The Church's response to the introduction of the *Jugendweihe* was an insistence that youth receive catechism instead; Doellinger, "Constructing Peace in the GDR: Conscientious Objection and Compromise among East German Christians, 1962-1989," 272. Though initially promoted as being a voluntary rite of passage, secular and religious tensions created "persuasions" for people to make a more defined choice.

<sup>212</sup> Besier, "Seventy Years after 'Machtergreifung'. The German Churches' Political Stance 1933-2003," 469.

<sup>213</sup> Fulbrook, *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker*, 158; Besier, "The German Democratic Republic and the State Churches, 1958-1989," 525.

<sup>214</sup> Goeckel, "The GDR Legacy and the German Protestant Church," 85. This was viewed by Christian leaders as an attempt by the DDR to collapse the Church's societal underpinnings; Besier, "The German Democratic Republic and the State Churches, 1958-1989," 525-6; Mary Fulbrook, *A History of Germany, 1918-2014: the Divided Nation*, (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 158. The Church's confirmation brought, by default, an indirect punishment on behalf of the DDR. The choice of a child to go through the Church's confirmation additionally redirected focus onto the parents of the child, serving as a litmus test for adherence to the party.

<sup>215</sup> Gautier, "Church Elites and the Restoration of Civil Society in the Communist Societies of Central Europe," 297; Goeckel, "The GDR Legacy and the German Protestant Church," 86; Cordell, "Political Change in the GDR: the Role of the Evangelical Church," 162; Fulbrook, "Co-Option and Commitment: Aspects of Relations Between Church and State in the German Democratic Republic," 76. The Church's decision came down to having to face the fact that the *Jugendweihe* ceremony was not wholly incompatible with the Church's theology, as they both appealed to different "Kingdoms" as Luther had envisioned them.

nation.<sup>216</sup> What *were* issues for the Church were the rejections of anything not devoted to the progress of the state, and the continued emphasis on militarization.<sup>217</sup> Most contentious was the language of the final ceremonial speech of the *Jugendweihe*, using quasi-religious terminology in dedication to atheism; or, as the Church viewed it, a confirmation to the materialism and a spiritual detachment from ethics, replacing God with Soviet communism, placing socialism as the spiritual cornerstone of the individual, as opposed to God.<sup>218</sup>

Simultaneous to the implementation of the *Jugendweihe*, Barth wrote an open letter, *Brief an einen Pfarrer in der DDR* (Letter to a Pastor in the DDR), discussing the minority position of the Christian community, and its "prophetic task" by providing a Church for the people as a platform for interrupting the DDR's atheistic claims.<sup>219</sup> According to Barth, this is due to the

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<sup>216</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *Interpretations of the Two Germanies, 1945-1990*, Edited by Richard Overy, John Breuilly, and Roy Porter, (Studies in European History, New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 67. The secular ceremony taught the same lessons and features taught in public education already existing throughout the DDR. In essence, the Church's conflict had been based more on the required ceremony itself than on the lessons within the ceremony; *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker*, 158-9. Families already independently came to this conclusion, possibly from a combination of the social stress of having to balance two different worlds *and* the ability of human beings to rationalize conflicting points of interest. The other side of this was a reported rise in religiosity in places like Rostock, that also coincidentally reported that those who had taken part in the *Jugendweihe* were being denied religious burials; Krötke, "Die Kirche Und Die »Friedliche Revolution« in Der DDR," 531. "Die wechselvolle Geschichte der Beziehung von Staat und Kirche in der DDR ist hier nicht zu erzählen. Die Frage, ob ein Staat, der einen Totalitätsanspruch auf das ganze Leben der Menschen erhebt, von der Kirche überhaupt als rechter Staat anerkannt werden dürfe, hat in den fünfziger Jahren eine aufregende Diskussion hervorgerufen. Sie ist im folgenden von der Kirche dann aber nicht mehr in dieser Schärfe gestellt worden. Man ist zu dem Urteil gekommen, daß auch dieser Staat legitime Funktionen eines Staates für den Frieden, das Gemeinwohl und das Recht der Bürger wahrnimmt. Jener Totalitätsanspruch aber wurde kritisiert, weil er in Konkurrenz zum Glauben an die Herrschaft Gottes über das ganze menschliche Leben steht. Unter dem Vorbehalt dieser Kritik haben die Kirchen diesen Staat als »Gottes Anordnung« bejaht (vgl. Rom 13). Wollten sie für die Menschen dieses Landes eintreten, dann war es nötig, dieser Tatsache Rechnung zu tragen. Es wurde versucht, die durch den Staat geformte sozialistische Gesellschaft als den Ort zu begreifen, an den Gott die Christen mit ihrem Zeugnis und ihrem Dienst gestellt hat."

<sup>217</sup> Smith, "The Church in the GDR," 78; Strasburg, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the St. Nicholas Church, and the 1989 Monday Demonstrations: A Case Study of Theopolitical Engagement in the German Democratic Republic," 552. This led to the Church's pacifist movement as a highly-visible act of protest just a few years later.

<sup>218</sup> It is worth mentioning that this particular source of Fulbrook is one of the very few secondary sources that offers specific details on the *Jugendweihe*. What is outlined here is not very common. Though files do exist, though this ceremony was widespread, from the over-eighty sources I've gone through, it seems that few want to openly discuss the *Jugendweihe*. This could be entirely coincidental based on the sources available at the time, but it still seems that this is something that should be more prevalent in the documents I've collected. Even the primary sources seem limited on the subject. I believe this aspect, this non-discussion of obtainable information, is something worth meditating upon. Until I find more on the subject, I would have to lean toward the direction of there being some things which are sensitive still to a number of people, as well as the internal struggle they may have been forced to take. The intention of the ceremony did not uphold the humanistic values that socialism promoted, instead revealing the hypocrisy of the state and its potential inhumanity on par with the presumed "Western Imperialism" it sought to guard against.

<sup>219</sup> Pollack and Richter, "Protestantische Theologie Und Politik in Der DDR," 697-8. "Auch Karl Barth griff in die Diskussion ein und bestärkte einmal mehr vom Westen aus die Anpassungstendenzen. Mit einem offenen „Brief an einen Pfarrer in der DDR“ von 1958 bekräftigte er seine alte Position und deutete die kirchliche Lage neu: Durch ihre Minderheitensituation habe die

Soviet state building off the basis of a "conceptual idol" of the religion's potentialities, as opposed to the familiarity of a living God unknown by the Soviet state. The ceremony, granting one full citizenship in the eyes of the socialist state, was an affirmation and allegiance to the material nature of the Temporal Kingdom.<sup>220</sup> Conversely, choosing not to participate in the *Jugendweihe*, aligning oneself with the Church, made one a "second class citizen," marking an allegiance in either a philosophical, theological, or political sense.<sup>221</sup> Choosing confirmation socially cemented the Church as an oppositional force to the socialist government in a way unseen in other Soviet states.<sup>222</sup>

By mandating the *Jugendweihe*, the DDR was able to dismantle elements of the Church, filling in the societal roles the Church had inhabited. Working within the framework of diminished influence and diminishing attendance, the Church functioned as an advocacy group, focusing on the areas of faith, conscience, and/or discrimination by the actions and policies of

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Kirche in der DDR eine geradezu prophetische Aufgabe inne. Die Berufung der Christen dort könne es sein, „uns Anderen das Leben einer den neuen Weg einer Kirche für das Volk (statt des Volkes) suchenden und vielleicht schon antretenden christlichen Gemeinde als ‚Gottes (allen Ernstes besonders) geliebte Ostzone‘ exemplarisch vorzuleben“. In dem Brief depotenzierte Barth theologisch den staatlich verordneten Materialismus: Es gelte, dem Atheismus „mit dem fröhlichen Unglauben an die Möglichkeit dieses seines Unternehmens zu begegnen. Denn was der Atheismus leugnet, kann doch nur die Existenz eines ihm bekannten Begriffsgötzen sein, nicht das Sein und das Wirken des lebendigen Gottes, den sie nicht kennen.“ Die Adressaten des Schreibens, eine Reihe ostdeutscher Pfarrer, hatten sich zuvor in einem verzweifelt klingenden Brief an Barth gewandt und ihm ihre unerträgliche Situation in der DDR als Christen beschrieben. Barth aber entdramatisierte durchgehend die Situation unter dem Sowjetkommunismus. „Christusfeindschaft“ gebe es letztlich „auch in der angeblich ‚freien‘ Welt des Westens“. Oder: „Sicher geschieht jetzt bei Ihnen ein schmerzliches Aufräumen und Verbrennen, wie es über kurz oder lang in irgendeiner anderen Form auch der westlichen Welt (vielleicht von Asien und Afrika her!) nicht erspart bleiben wird.“<sup>220</sup>

<sup>220</sup> Besier, "The German Democratic Republic and the State Churches, 1958–1989," 526; Fulbrook, *A History of Germany, 1918-2014: the Divided Nation*, 158, 185-6. Typically for the families who were considered by the State to be the "bourgeoisie" in the previous societal construct, discrimination followed for the children and the parents alike. The Church was able to vocalize more publicly an opposition to the *Jugendweihe* ceremony on the grounds of a theological basis, as opposed to a political basis that would garner the Church unwanted attention. Alignment with political conformity created a new elite, a new "Soviet Bourgeoisie," that had gained upward mobility with allegiance to the Temporal Kingdom that was lost on those who professed a spiritual alignment with the Kingdom of God.

<sup>221</sup> Fulbrook, *A History of Germany, 1918-2014: the Divided Nation*, 222; Strasburg, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the St. Nicholas Church, and the 1989 Monday Demonstrations: A Case Study of Theopolitical Engagement in the German Democratic Republic," 553; Gautier, "Church Elites and the Restoration of Civil Society in the Communist Societies of Central Europe," 297; John P. Burgess, *The East German Church and the End of Communism*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 50.

<sup>222</sup> Fulbrook, *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker*, 159; *A History of Germany, 1918-2014: the Divided Nation*, 158. In this specific case, the Temporal Kingdom definitely won over God's Kingdom, as this particular mismanagement disillusioned generations of East Germans under coercive State actions and pressure; Besier, "Seventy Years after 'Machtergreifung'. The German Churches' Political Stance 1933-2003," 469. This tug-of-war on the youth of East Germany had an unfortunate impact which can be seen in the fact that still after the end of the DDR, people still preferred the state ceremony to the religious one.

the state.<sup>223</sup> Despite the hope of Protestant growth in the DDR after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Church membership did not bloom as had been expected, and youths still opted to perform the *Jugendweihe* into the mid-1990s.<sup>224</sup> Krötke argues that this continuation proves that materialist pseudo-religiosity is so empty that, as having been based on the structure of a religious ceremony, it is something that cannot be given any semblance of construction with solely its own resources.<sup>225</sup>

This getting used to life without God has led to a deep spiritual rupture with the past and therefore with Christian traditions and values that once imprinted themselves on the wider culture. Christian faith and Christian piety are no longer present in families. It is already the case that one's grandparents, perhaps even greatgrandparents [*sic*], were not in the church; neither are one's neighbors, friends, or work colleagues. A social milieu has arisen that pushes aside everything that has to do with "religion."<sup>226</sup>

These kinds of socialist structures are a negation, rather than a rejection, resulting in an atheistic inability to shape a spiritual or cultural future without borrowing from external spiritual structures.<sup>227</sup> The *Jugendweihe* had become exactly what it had criticized of the Church: an outdated repetition of cultic activities.

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<sup>223</sup> Burgess, *The East German Church and the End of Communism*, 50. Before ties had been completely severed with the Western Evangelical Church, the Eastern Church became steadily reliant upon Western funds just to survive. Including the limited range of allowed church activity and social influence, the lack of funds and disrepair of properties only gave the Church the ability to maintain basic operations; Goeckel, "Church and Society in the GDR: Historical Legacies and 'Mature Socialism,'" 215.

<sup>224</sup> Richard Schröder and Deborah Lucas Schneider, "The Role of the Protestant Church in German Unification," *In Search of Germany*, Germany in Transition, 123, no. 1 (1994): 251, accessed November 18, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351310086-13>; Henkel, "State-Church Relationships in Germany: Past and Present," 311; Monshipouri and Arnold, "The Christians in Socialism--and after: The Church in East Germany," 767. For a period of time, the continued use of the *Jugendweihe* was treated in the East as an addition to the existing Christian holidays; Cordell, "Political Change in the GDR: the Role of the Evangelical Church," 165. The issue of taking part in both ceremonies still caused personal struggles that existed until the *Jugendweihe* was no longer an issue at all in 1990; Mary Fulbrook and Andrew I. Port, eds., *Becoming East German: Socialist Structures and Sensibilities After Hitler*, 6. First ed., Vol. 6. 11 vols. (Spektrum: Publications of the German Studies Association. New York ; Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 268-9. What complicates the discussion about the *Jugendweihe*, as well as other related elements within the DDR, which measure religiosity and state allegiance is that there is limited reliability in reports beyond rudimentary discussion. Throughout history, regimes that have an interest in presenting an image of authoritarian power have little interest in recording anything but the support that upholds that image of power.

<sup>225</sup> Krötke, "'A Jump Ahead': The Church as Creative Minority in Eastern Germany," 445.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid*, 439.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid*, 445.

### ***Bausoldaten- Reinforcing Gottesvergangenheit among Adults***

The Church pushed back against any new policy until new compromises could be met.<sup>228</sup> Though having to accept conscription as the defense of peace through preparing for war, there was a general understanding to both Church and state that some Germans might not want to be as militaristic as in the past.<sup>229</sup> In the case of conscientious objection, the State instituted the position of *Bausoldat* (Construction Soldier) in 1964.<sup>230</sup> This military role was an unarmed, uniformed construction crew with differing insignia, fulfilling eighteen months of required service; and, was a role which the Church could not technically protest.<sup>231</sup> Though participating in unarmed training and political indoctrination, deployment was only intended for times of catastrophe. The *Bausoldaten* physically manifested an internal conviction, creating a social movement the DDR was forced to recognize.<sup>232</sup>

A *Bausoldaten* applicant had to state their grounds for conscientious objection, allowing public recognition that the State did not discriminate on the grounds of religious affiliation.<sup>233</sup>

"Tolerated" by the DDR, *Bausoldaten* were, upon leaving the service, met with hardship and

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<sup>228</sup> Mary L. Gautier, "Church Elites and the Restoration of Civil Society in the Communist Societies of Central Europe," *Journal of Church and State* 40, no. 2 (January 1998): 297, accessed November 17, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/40.2.289>. The Church would come to lead the way in pushing for alternatives to military service, though could not prevent the compulsory teaching of military science in schools.

<sup>229</sup> Karl Cordell, "Political Change in the GDR: the Role of the Evangelical Church," *International Relations* 10, no. 2 (1990): 162, accessed November 15, 2019 <https://doi.org/10.1177/004711789001000205>; David Doellinger, "Constructing Peace in the GDR: Conscientious Objection and Compromise among East German Christians, 1962-1989," Essay in *Christianity and Modernity in Eastern Europe*, edited by Bruce R. Berglund and Porter-Szűcs Brian, 269-91, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013), 273. This was made possible because of the history of Germany's role in the previous regime, as opposed to the rest of the Soviet states who were subject to the aggression of said regime. Contrary to the other positions in other Soviet states that had conscripted service for politically-suspect characters, this form of military service in the was voluntary. This is also not to overlook that the other Warsaw Pact nations might feel discomfort of being shoulder-to-shoulder with a fully remilitarized Germany.

<sup>230</sup> Robert F. Goeckel, "Church and Society in the GDR: Historical Legacies and 'Mature Socialism,'" *International Journal of Sociology* 18, no. 4 (1988): 222, accessed November 15, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15579336.1988.11769966>. The argument about the exact responsibilities of the *Bausoldaten* continued until 1975, limiting their duties to non-militaristic service.

<sup>231</sup> Anton Bebler, "Conscientious Objection in Socialist States: A Comparative Perspective," *Studies in Comparative Communism* 24, no. 1 (1991): 106, accessed November 15, 2019, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0039-3592\(91\)90030-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0039-3592(91)90030-2); Doellinger, "Constructing Peace in the GDR: Conscientious Objection and Compromise among East German Christians, 1962-1989," 272, 282.

<sup>232</sup> Doellinger, "Constructing Peace in the GDR: Conscientious Objection and Compromise among East German Christians, 1962-1989," 272, 282. They were the only military unit in the Soviet states allowing for non-combat personnel.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid*, 276.

most career possibilities were Church-related.<sup>234</sup> Neither wanting to compromise, the Church continued working toward peace within the state, and the state wanted to maintain credibility by not repressing peaceful movements.<sup>235</sup> The initial *Bausoldaten*, and the language used to circumvent remilitarization, built upon the Sermon on the Mount, was undeniably Christian.<sup>236</sup> For the conscientious objector in the DDR, political action was where the *Heiliger Geist* of theology intersected with the *Volksgeist* of the socialist State to shape the *Zeitgeist* of history.<sup>237</sup> With limited institutional help, the *Bausoldaten* used their free-time networking, advancing a theologically-based movement toward peace.<sup>238</sup> Meetings were intended to foster support, sharing information between the former-and-future *Bausoldaten*.<sup>239</sup>

The biggest topic discussed aside from difficulty of attending worship during conscription, was the *Bausoldaten* oath, becoming a line in the sand as to how far compromises could be pushed.<sup>240</sup> The oath stated that one was to use one's "strength for the heightening of [the DDR's] defense preparedness," and then asked one to secure victory by defending the "NVA

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid, 274-5. As for those who completely opted out of all military association *and* opting out of the *Bausoldaten* were labeled as "total resisters" and given a prison sentence.

<sup>235</sup> Fulbrook, "Co-Option and Commitment: Aspects of Relations Between Church and State in the German Democratic Republic," 80.

<sup>236</sup> Doellinger, "Constructing Peace in the GDR: Conscientious Objection and Compromise among East German Christians, 1962-1989," 277, 283.

<sup>237</sup> For both Church and *Bausoldaten*, political engagement was where the Kingdom of God encountered and held accountable the Temporal Kingdom.

<sup>238</sup> Doellinger, "Constructing Peace in the GDR: Conscientious Objection and Compromise among East German Christians, 1962-1989," 285-6.

<sup>239</sup> Goeckel, "Church and Society in the GDR: Historical Legacies and 'Mature Socialism,'" 222; Doellinger, "Constructing Peace in the GDR: Conscientious Objection and Compromise among East German Christians, 1962-1989," 280, 282-3. Unable to organize events outside the boundaries of the Church, meetings redirected frustrations at the DDR's policies through constructive means. This, despite a number of goals met by the *Bausoldaten*, could be due to the fact that the Church was already butting heads with the government about the issues at hand, both with the *Bausoldaten* and in other social arenas, and it is difficult to advance anywhere in a multi-fronted engagement without losing ground somewhere. There is little evidence to show, though, that the Church took or acted upon many of the recommendations formulated at the meetings.

<sup>240</sup> Doellinger, "Constructing Peace in the GDR: Conscientious Objection and Compromise among East German Christians, 1962-1989," 276, 279. The language of the oath would not be changed, and the conscripts would often refuse to utter the words, even in the face of duress. The words of the oath were representative of the State attempting to undermine the intended purpose of the *Bausoldaten* by pledging them ultimately to violence, and it was not uncommon for soldiers to spend time imprisoned for refusing the oath, in addition to their conscripted service. Though there was a limited precedence set for a unit serving without both taking the oath *and* receiving penalty, this was in the extreme minority. As conscientious objectors, the *Bausoldaten* were a construction corps branch of the NVA, and their official oath was outlining that they were being asked to build an infrastructure of military defense.

(*National Volksarmee*, or, "National People's Army") and its allies against enemies."<sup>241</sup> For the *Bausoldaten*, the construction of a new world was neither the rearmament against enemies, nor the building of infrastructure against the West.<sup>242</sup> Instead, peace was established and defended by cooperative construction and a network of people, within and beyond borders.<sup>243</sup> Refusal of the oath frequently led to arrest, with punishments following them into their civilian lives.<sup>244</sup>

Former-*Bausoldaten* promoted pacifism through outreach to conscientious objectors, regardless of demographic, with an end goal of bringing about a societal change of peace, responsibility, and humanity.<sup>245</sup> Pamphlets were publicly circulated, highlighting criticisms of the DDR, pushing for parents not to purchase military toys for their children, and as Krötke points out, protest against armament training, reaffirming a Christian response to the culture of militarization.<sup>246</sup> In this mentality, peace was to be found in the Kingdom of God, not in the Temporal Kingdom.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid, 275.

<sup>242</sup> The *Bausoldaten* pushed back against the idea, citing a Christian responsibility against justifying State-sponsored militarism.

<sup>243</sup> Doellinger, "Constructing Peace in the GDR: Conscientious Objection and Compromise among East German Christians, 1962-1989," 284. The *Bausoldaten* were already in the position of having to accept a compromise as the moral and ethical face of pacifism and still had to accept their outward appearance and affiliation with being part of the face of militarization they rejected.

<sup>244</sup> Conway, "The Political Role of German Protestantism, 1870-1990," 836.

<sup>245</sup> Doellinger, "Constructing Peace in the GDR: Conscientious Objection and Compromise among East German Christians, 1962-1989," 276, 287.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid, 276-8; Krötke, "Die Kirche Und Die »Friedliche Revolution« in Der DDR," 532. "Das Mißtrauen gegen die Kirche ist bei den »Staatsorganen« denn auch nie erloschen. Man hat es zwar immer gewußt, aber die Arbeit der Bürgerkomitees zur Auflösung des Staatssicherheitsdienstes hat es jetzt auch dokumentiert: Die Kirchen, Gemeinden und einzelnen Christen wurden wie große Teile der Bevölkerung im großen Umfange überwacht und ausspioniert wie eine feindliche Organisation. Das Reden von »vertrauensvoller Zusammenarbeit« war angesichts dessen eine Lüge. Zudem ließen die massiven Behinderungen und Benachteiligungen von Christen im gesellschaftlichen und beruflichen Leben keineswegs gravierend nach. Der Kirche wurde nach wie vor verwehrt, z.B. Einfluß auf das sozialistische Schulwesen zu nehmen. Die Proteste gegen die Einführung eines »Wehrkundeunterrichtsvon« in den Schulen blieben — abgesehen von Einzelfällen — wirkungslos. Denn in Fragen, die als »Machtfragen« angesehen wurden, ließ sich dieser Staat prinzipiell nicht hineinreden."

<sup>247</sup> Doellinger, "Constructing Peace in the GDR: Conscientious Objection and Compromise among East German Christians, 1962-1989," 286. In a statement issued by former-Bausoldaten in Leipzig: "[Peace is] not only the condition in which weapons are silent, but rather when people and groups of different or opposing opinions, world views, religions, and races work together for the well-being of mankind. [Peace] is a process in which the humanistic basic rights become gradually realized through personal, social and political acts.", "Der Begriff Frieden . . . ["The notion of peace . . .]," no date, PA-HB.

## The Attempts of the DDR to Invalidate the Kingdom of God

Past misapplication of Luther's theology allowed for the over-compartmentalization of life, both spiritual and material.<sup>248</sup> Luther had been accused of "blind faith in the authority of the state," forging an alliance between the "Throne and Altar."<sup>249</sup> Luther's theology, from strictly a position of defining German identity, had been weaponized to enforce state power in relation to religious authority.<sup>250</sup> Nygren explains:

Luther realised very well that there is a Christian and an unchristian way of using power. It is not the business of the spiritual ministry to bear the sword, but it must demonstrate the Christian way of bearing it. Without this very often neglected aspect of Luther's teaching, his whole doctrine of the two kingdoms becomes distorted and unintelligible.<sup>251</sup>

Voices within the DDR restructured Luther along new lines, dividing him along "progressive" and "reactionary" movements in German history, i.e. the "Two Lines Theory," using "progressive" characteristics to legitimate the DDR's existence.<sup>252</sup> The DDR viewed Luther in nuanced, often contradictory terms; some viewing him as a "betrayal of peasants," a defender of the people in the "early bourgeois revolution," or as someone who transitioned from

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<sup>248</sup> Nygren, "Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," 307. The argument becomes one of an applied misunderstanding of Luther, ultimately allowing room for a concept of "*Gottesvergessenheit*."; Hoffmann, "The GDR, Luther, and the German Question," 247, 250. Martin Luther came to be viewed as the "spiritual ancestor of Hitler," and came under tremendous scrutiny, along with his views, during the denazification on *both* sides of the Iron Curtain. The ideas Luther held on obedience to secular authority came to be distorted by the socialist government of the DDR in 1983 in its attempt to manipulate the image of Luther in the eyes of the Church and the public, and was able to attempt this because of the national identification with all things "Martin Luther."; With respect to the DDR, one should redefine what it means to have Two Kingdoms in an increasingly-secular world. In practice, in Germany, the idea had become that spirituality was internal, the secular was external, and neither encroached upon the other as they both functioned according to "physics" of their own designations.

<sup>249</sup> Brinks, "Luther and the German State," 3. The authority of the Kingdom of the World that resides in governments to right the wrongs and bring people to justice is why God allows those governments to exist. It is not for the Christian-German to question government as that government exists due to the will of God. Ultimately serving as a Sword of Damocles looming over history, one need look no further than another of Martin Luther's works praised by German nationalism, *Von den Juden und Ihren Lügen*, otherwise known as *On the Jews and their Lies*. See also: Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent: The Confessing Church and the Persecution of the Jews*, 147; Mork, "Martin Luther's Left Turn: The Changing Picture of Luther in East German Historiography," 585-592.

<sup>250</sup> Brinks, "Luther and the German State," 3-4; Moses, "The Politicisation of Martin Luther in the German Democratic Republic," 287, 287ff. A group known as the "Weissensee Circle" attempted to promote the theological idea that communism, as it was being then-realized, was the culmination of the Gospel, thereby making the Church unnecessary. Though headed by Professor Manfred Müller of Humboldt Universität (1952-1989), this idea gained little traction among the clergy, showing that a complete "religionless Christianity" might not be fully achievable in a practical sense. At least not within that particular cultural context.

<sup>251</sup> Nygren, "Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," 307.

<sup>252</sup> Brinks, "Luther and the German State," 5-6. While being viewed as having ties to nationalist undertones, Luther was dually argued to be the foundation of German cultural unity and identity; Goeckel, "The Luther Anniversary in East Germany," 115-6.

revolutionary to reactionary over time.<sup>253</sup> A "progressive Luther" was framed as reflective of the DDR in regards to the defiance of foreign powers.<sup>254</sup> "Revolutionary" aspects of Luther were repackaged as part of the process to establish the DDR, subtly attempting to transition constructive elements from "*Erbe*" (heritage) to "*Tradition*" (tradition), decoupling Luther from a religion, reframing fragments of "*Erbe*" as "*Tradition*."<sup>255</sup>

The DDR repeatedly attempted to use public occasions and holidays to prove that it, not West Germany, was more closely tied to the "true soul" of Germany by using systematic interpretation, yet could not without appealing to the historic ties between the state and the Church.<sup>256</sup> Professor of Political Science Emeritus at Taylor University, Stephen P. Hoffmann, explains:

During the 1970's the Evangelical church and the state arrived at a *modus vivendi* which church leaders termed "critical solidarity." Under this formula, the church encouraged respect for the state as well as cooperation with it in the service of humanitarian ideals which both institutions affirmed. At the same time it claimed the right to manage its own affairs and to criticize government policy discreetly when it deemed that policy to be in conflict with these ideals. The contemporary applicability of [bishop of Thuringia, Werner] Leich's citation of Luther's call to contradict "princes" when necessary could if not have been lost on the audience. Luther's insistence on locating the source of moral authority outside of human institutions as well as on the freedom of individual conscience has often led to conflict with the state in recent years. On the other hand, Luther's concern for order and deference to political authority is regarded negatively by many East German Lutherans. The lesson they draw from it is that the church in Germany ought to prevent itself from ever being co-opted by the state again.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> Mork, "Martin Luther's Left Turn: The Changing Picture of Luther in East German Historiography," 587-8; Besier, "The 'Church Struggle' During the Third Reich as a Subject of GDR Historiography: On The Conflict Between Contextuality and Ethics of Profession," 72. Part of the East German view on the Church's resistance movement during WWII was framed as a movement within the *bourgeoisie* that depended on the resistance *within* the working class; Brinks, "Luther and the German State," 6, 8. Within the DDR, the "reactionary" Luther's views was considered representative of West Germany; Goeckel, "The Luther Anniversary in East Germany," 112. Something to take into consideration is that the DDR's view of Martin Luther as a "reactionary" is, in part, a distortion of historical fact as historians within the DDR were known to reframe events and figures as "reactionary" when they did not fit the socialist narrative of the state.

<sup>254</sup> Brinks, "Luther and the German State," 6-7, 5;

<sup>255</sup> Hoffmann, "The GDR, Luther, and the German Question," 249, 255-6, 258-9, 592-3. Something like Martin Luther siding with the regional princes in the attempt to defy the papacy as a foreign power was, however, framed as being "revolutionary" or "progressive" as it aligned with state ideology. Until "*Tradition*" could be reached, the theological was downplayed, favorably drawing political attention to the secular class struggle instead of the theological struggle.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid*, 252, 258.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid*, 260.

The Church had become the target of criticism for its seeming-prioritization of maintaining itself *over* the serving people, spending time and focus solving its own internal struggles.<sup>258</sup> Growing secularization, coupled with declining membership, continued to plague the Church, while the increasingly secular DDR government pursued a policy of "militant atheism."<sup>259</sup> The Church's position was delicately balanced, a philosophical and societal island due to its *Weltanschauung*, always in danger of tempting fate and losing whatever progress it had made.

Church-state cooperation in advance of the Luther Jubilee in 1983 was viewed as having positive benefits from the increased dialogue between the two parties, resulting in a cautious optimism.<sup>260</sup> As a "church within socialism," the Church felt positive about cooperation with the state, yet felt the need to simultaneously dispel the DDR's propaganda about Luther.<sup>261</sup> Luther's Reformation-era opponent, Thomas Müntzer, having led a fondly romanticized peasant rebellion, had been politically resurrected by the DDR to represent a "People's Reformation," in contrast to what was seen as Luther's "Reformation of the Princes."<sup>262</sup> Müntzer was portrayed as being a "utopian," with Luther being a "realist."<sup>263</sup> The Church criticized the state's "reformist ideology,"

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<sup>258</sup> Burgess, *The East German Church and the End of Communism*, 78; Burgess, "Church-State Relations in East Germany: The Church as a 'Religious' and 'Political' Force," 23. By working hard to just maintain or sustain their own presence, the Church appeared to be more focused on itself rather than being a "People's Church." From the drop in Church membership, showing some amount of the DDR's maneuvering, the Church was incapable of collecting on the German Church-tax, thereby allowing the properties and holdings of the Church to fall into disrepair, meanwhile leaving the Church without the funds and possibilities to perform social outreach on the scale that it previously could; Krötke, "Karl Barths Und Dietrich Bonhoeffers Bedeutung Für Die Theologie in Der DDR," 296. "Unvergleichlich viel mehr Kraft, Zeit und dann auch Nachdenken wurde vielmehr darauf verwandt, wie die Kirche oder besser die Gemeinden aus sich selbst heraus ihre ureigensten Aufgaben in Angriff nehmen sollten. An diese wesentliche Dimension des Kircheseins, für die sowohl Barth wie Bonhoeffer eine nicht zu unterschätzende Bedeutung hatten, muß nachdrücklich erinnert werden."

<sup>259</sup> Goeckel, "The Luther Anniversary in East Germany," 119; Moses, "The Politicisation of Martin Luther in the German Democratic Republic," 291.

<sup>260</sup> Goeckel, "The Luther Anniversary in East Germany," 119.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid*, 119-20, 124. The Church also took the occasion to criticize "Luther's attacks on the peasants, the Jews, and the opponents of infant baptism."

<sup>262</sup> Brinks, "Luther and the German State," 6; Goeckel, "The Luther Anniversary in East Germany," 116; Hoffmann, "The GDR, Luther, and the German Question," 251; Mork, "Martin Luther's Left Turn: The Changing Picture of Luther in East German Historiography," 586.

<sup>263</sup> Goeckel, "The Luther Anniversary in East Germany," 117; Hoffmann, "The GDR, Luther, and the German Question," 255-6.

countering the idea of Luther as a secular initiator of the "early bourgeois revolution," stating that Luther functioned as a servant of God in Jesus Christ.<sup>264</sup>

As the Church viewed it, the state-sponsored version of Luther aligned with a specific ideology of the DDR, failing to equally present the aspects that contradicted that ideology, leaving a distorted image.<sup>265</sup> The DDR attempted to weave a thread through German history to highlight an "ideological conflict between socialism and imperialism."<sup>266</sup> The Church used the occasion to emphasize the separation of the Two Kingdoms, noting Luther's criticisms of the princes of his day in their own criticisms of secular authority and escalation of nuclear armament.<sup>267</sup> Professor of Political Science and International Relations at Geneseo State University of New York, Robert F. Goeckel, writes:

Luther's contention that the state was given by God to maintain order in the worldly kingdom has contributed to a tradition of Lutheran subservience to authority, a tradition that the churches have sought to shed since the Nazi era. The state has been ambivalent about the churches' treatment of the issue, but generally feels more comfortable with a position of deference to worldly authority. Thus it is not surprising that the regime should use Luther to encourage subservience to the socialist state.<sup>268</sup>

The DDR's heavy focus on the Luther Jubilee was its attempt to maintain a "tenuous domestic peace," generating a flow of currency by creating tourism tied to Lutheran heritage, and attempting to gain validation as a national power in an international setting.<sup>269</sup> The secular DDR was becoming bankrupt, by all measures, finding itself having to turn to the spiritual Church for

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<sup>264</sup> Goeckel, "The Luther Anniversary in East Germany," 119-21. The state-sponsored revision of Luther into being a major player in Germany's socialist cultural history was seen, by the Church, as illegitimate and dishonest considering the state's history of discrimination and censorship; Hoffmann, "The GDR, Luther, and the German Question," 259.

<sup>265</sup> Mork, "Martin Luther's Left Turn: The Changing Picture of Luther in East German Historiography," 589; Moses, "The Politicisation of Martin Luther in the German Democratic Republic," 286-8.

<sup>266</sup> Moses, "The Politicisation of Martin Luther in the German Democratic Republic," 295-6.

<sup>267</sup> Goeckel, "The Luther Anniversary in East Germany," 120.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid*, 123.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid*, 123, 129-30; Hoffmann, "The GDR, Luther, and the German Question," 247-8; Mork, "Martin Luther's Left Turn: The Changing Picture of Luther in East German Historiography," 589-91.

the meaning and stability lacked on its own.<sup>270</sup> The state-sanctioned "re-evaluation" of Luther was a documented attempt to "win the confidence" of those still associated with Protestantism and the Church's activities.<sup>271</sup> The end-goal was to visually realign the DDR with the values it deemed fit in the social conscience; and, by doing so, showing the Church as irrelevant to cultural identity, redirecting focus away from the DDR's shortcomings and gaining support from citizens.<sup>272</sup> This attempt at irrelevance did not work, as the Church spoke to existentially different needs than the state was able to address.<sup>273</sup>

Functioning as the "sword of secular authority," the DDR utilized the church-state cooperation to guarantee "subservience to and unquestioning acceptance of" the policies by which the DDR wanted the Church to function.<sup>274</sup> This included holding the Church to its own doctrine of Two Kingdoms, cutting off the Church's influence on anything beyond its ambit, leaving the "affairs of this world to the rulers of this world."<sup>275</sup> The DDR advisors only knew the outdated *misapplication* of the Two Kingdoms that caused so much regret on behalf of the Church's role in the WWII; however, theologians from Barth to Bonhoeffer to Krötke had so profoundly influenced a re-examination of the Two Kingdoms doctrine, a re-examination which would include a theology of resistance and of a rejection of unconditional submission, that the

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<sup>270</sup> Moses, "The Politicisation of Martin Luther in the German Democratic Republic," 284, 294. I would also argue that this turn was, in part, a way of sidestepping and re-addressing an issue concerning the Temporal Kingdom of having failed the people in its egalitarian vision of a communist society. Whilst those more aligned with the Communist Party in the DDR were rewarded with better housing, food, materials, and opportunities, the disaffection of the average citizen grew.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid, 285-6. The aforementioned "tenuous domestic peace" was an internal-sociological one more than a political.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid, 286 .

<sup>273</sup> Moses, "The Politicisation of Martin Luther in the German Democratic Republic," 286, 294. Worth mentioning is that this was all a reversal of policies from the 450th anniversary of the Reformation. Taking place in 1967, the policies were all outlining the direct exclusion of Church festivities, as well as restrictions and the denial of visas. While the celebration for the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's birthday was initially spearheaded by the Church, the government chose to collaborate with the Church in order to manipulate the Church and the celebration's projected outcomes. DDR officials later admitted the "earlier view of Luther was distorted or incomplete, colored by the historical experience of the German working class," viewing Luther through a narrow scope due to having been in the middle of a "struggle for power."; Goeckel, "The Luther Anniversary in East Germany," 128-9. Having put religious elements on the backburner in favor of focusing on the social and economic needs at hand, this view part of the "postrevolutionary malaise" after coming to terms with the DDR's "bureaucratized revolution."

<sup>274</sup> Moses, "The Politicisation of Martin Luther in the German Democratic Republic," 297.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid, 298.

previously-known dynamic of the doctrine could not be actively utilized against a "Church within socialism."<sup>276</sup>

### **Modern Reflection**

The church-state cooperation during the Luther Celebration did nothing to end the state ideology of atheism, an admitted consequence of pragmatic decision-making, nor did it limit the attempts to manipulate the Church.<sup>277</sup> What could be seen, however, was that the state required a sense of legitimacy from the Church and its connection to history.<sup>278</sup> Hoffmann states:

Authority, although it implies the idea of "right," is essentially an acceptance by the ruled of an institutionalized pattern of relationships with the powers that be. Legitimacy is more closely associated with an orientation of the ruled to their rulers that is characterized by moral approval and genuine commitment.<sup>279</sup>

The distortion caused by misunderstanding the Two Kingdoms is what allows for the secular view of the Kingdom of God. The secular functions as though it is the only valid reality, and that the spiritual is, at best, an isolated irrelevance. This is paralleled in the DDR's views and marginalizing of the Church, whereas the post-WWII Church attempted to function in both worlds. Nygren explains:

The error of the fanatics is clear. They do not take the present world with due seriousness. They seem to imagine that the kingdom of God has come in the fulness [*sic*] of its majesty. The Gospel applicable to the new world they make into a law applicable to the old. They do not face the reality of the old world, and thus they falsify the Gospel. But God has one order for this world and another for the new, and we may not confuse the two with impunity. It is equally clear where the secularists have gone astray. They live in this world as if it were the only one, as if there were no God. They take the view that even if Christianity has anything to say about a future life, it has no relevance to the present.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Ibid, 298-9, 308. The intended application being that neither temporal nor secular can dominate the other as both are "under the judgment of God."

<sup>277</sup> Goeckel, "The Luther Anniversary in East Germany," 131, 133; Moses, "The Politicisation of Martin Luther in the German Democratic Republic," 284.

<sup>278</sup> Moses, "The Politicisation of Martin Luther in the German Democratic Republic," 286 .

<sup>279</sup> Hoffmann, "The GDR, Luther, and the German Question," 248.

<sup>280</sup> Nygren, "Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," 309.

The DDR attempted to function as the latter of the two examples, while thinking the Church believed itself to function as the former. This leads to a concept not directly addressed in any of these sources: the fundamental difference in understanding the basis of reality. A hint of this can be found in Nygren's attempt to better explain the Two Kingdoms:

The wielding of secular power, like every other vocation, offers two alternatives, serving the devil or serving God. Any use of power for its own sake is serving the devil. Power is a deadly temptation to selfishness and vainglory, and for that reason Luther utters the warning, "He who would be a Christian ruler must put away the thought that he would rule and be mighty. For the mark of judgment is upon all life whose end is self-advancement, and upon all works which are not done in love. And these are done in love when their end is not the desire or advantage or honour or comfort of the doer, but the honour and advantage and good of others."<sup>281</sup>

The basis of reality, for the DDR, was wholly temporal. For the Church, reality functioned according to the principles found in the Gospel, understood via Luther; with both the Kingdoms under the purview of God, functioning per God's "requirements." The concreteness of God in Jesus is questionable, with the success of the arguments against *Gottesvergessenheit* predicated on the belief that God exists, Jesus existed, and that God was manifest in the person of Jesus. For the DDR, there was no God, and the world functioned according to the requirements of the state, in essence deifying the state. The Church's assumption is that the Temporal Kingdom furthers the Gospel through a ruling authority allowed by God; while, as an assumption of the Temporal Kingdom, it rules by the right it acquired by furthering itself. Neither of these entities would be able to fully communicate with one another because they are not speaking the same language.

The concept of "Christianity" as a state or social order is non-existent, as it is outside of a governmental authority, therefore making it "unaligned" with any "new" or "old" state power, as its only socio-political alignment is with Jesus and the theology that is rooted in his

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<sup>281</sup> Ibid, 310.

christology.<sup>282</sup> The state, in accepting the Church as a "church within socialism," accepted an unpredictable force that was not held to the terms dictated by socialism.<sup>283</sup> While the DDR focused on secularizing society, its own constitutional allowances technically gave the Church a level of autonomy in certain matters, allowing a voice in opposing State positions.<sup>284</sup> In negotiating with the State, the Church acknowledged the status of the government and its societal influence.<sup>285</sup> This interaction was a two-way street, both entities having to acknowledge the status and influence of the other. The State was forced to acknowledge the Church and the importance of *its* own role in society, and was forced to have to consider the validity of the Church's appeal. Enforcing its position as a "Church within Socialism" allowed for opposition groups to establish themselves, whether or not the those groups were members of the Church itself.<sup>286</sup> This was made possible by the allowance of three elements in the Church:<sup>287</sup>

1. Peace groups, such as pacifists and conscientious objectors.
2. Left-wing intellectuals and artists willing to question the government.
3. Social work and outreach for people who had been marginalized by the state.

Sociologist, Professor Dr. Andreas Hadjar, of the University of Luxembourg and the University of Fribourg, writes:

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<sup>282</sup> Krötke, "Die Kirche Und Die »Friedliche Revolution« in Der DDR," 536. "Aus dieser Erfahrung heraus könnendie Christen und die Kirchen nun auch mit einer gewissen Gelassenheit und Neuaufbau der Gesellschaft solidarisch und kritisch begleiten. Die »christliche« Staats- und Gesellschaftsordnung gibt es ohnehin nicht. Es ist darum gar nicht so gut, daß die vielen Theologen und Pastoren in der Regierung und in den Parteien fast zwangsläufig den Eindruck erwecken, so etwas anzustreben. Sie jagen der nichtchristlichen Bevölkerung damit eher einen Schrecken ein, als daß sie Sache Jesu Christi fördern. Das »Christliche« ist per definitionem die Freiheit von den Mechanismen der Macht. Die christliche Gemeinde kann sich darum »mit keiner alten oder neuen Staatsordnung auf Gedeih und Verderb verbinden« (K. Barth)."

<sup>283</sup> Ibid, 532. "Im nachhinein hat sich gezeigt, daß die Folgen dieses Verständnisses der »Kirche im Sozialismus« für den Staat viel problematischer waren als für die Kirche. Der Staat akzeptierte in seinem System des Gesellschaftsaufbaus eine sozusagen unberechenbare Kraft, die ihr Handeln und Reden nun gerade nicht vom »Sozialismus« abhängig machte. Die Kirche auf eine Bejahung des »real existierenden Sozialismus« festzulegen, wie der Staat wünschte, ist nie gelungen. Sie behielt sich bei allen auftretenden Problemen ihr eigenes Urteil vor. Sie war kein Akklamationsinstrument wie etwa die der SED zugeordnete Blockpartei der »Christlich Demokratischen Union« (CDU)."

<sup>284</sup> Doellinger, "Constructing Peace in the GDR: Conscientious Objection and Compromise among East German Christians, 1962-1989," 272.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid, 285-6. "By negotiating with the state, the Lutheran Church acknowledged the SED's role in the GDR (formally reaffirmed with the 'Church in Socialism' policy in the 1970s)."

<sup>286</sup> Andreas Hadjar, "Non-Violent Political Protest in East Germany in the 1980s: Protestant Church, Opposition Groups and the People," *German Politics* 12, no. 3 (2006): 107, accessed May 12, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0964400032000242716>.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

Most of the groups were involved in less provocative grassroot and parish work which included the organisation of parish and group meetings, weekly peace prayers, evening briefing sessions (e.g. on environmental issues) and the printing and distribution of parish publications. Weekly peace prayers were held in the Leipzig Nikolai Church from 1982 and annual peace workshops (*Friedensdekaden*) also took place.<sup>288</sup>

Separately, the Church and the groups it hosted would have had little power to successfully protest; however, the united groups offered a voice for civil rights and environmental action, while the Church offered organization and safety within its grounds.<sup>289</sup> Communication between disaffected groups within the DDR allowed for mass protest to easily erupt as most within the groups found themselves able to easily identify with each other's dissatisfaction.<sup>290</sup> A true "Confessing Church" is one where its unity is found in its confession, in that denominations are based in the confessional truth of a concretely present God.<sup>291</sup> In this sense, truth cannot be evaded or relativized in a way that could allow for something like the *Deutsche Christen* to come to exist because a same basis of belief wouldn't allow for such a deviation.<sup>292</sup> Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Heidelberg, Ulrich Duchrow, explains:

We must keep firmly in mind Bonhoeffer's main theses and questions: (1) the Church exists only as a church which confesses for Christ and against his enemies; (2) the confession embraces life in its entirety, i.e. including also the economic, social and political questions of humanity; (3) only within the ecumenical horizon is a confessing church conceivable, particularly when it is a question of world peace in all its dimensions; (4) this raises the question of the binding ecclesial character of the ecumenical movement and, conversely, the question each church is asked, namely, whether it really is a confessing church.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> Hadjar, "Non-Violent Political Protest in East Germany in the 1980s: Protestant Church, Opposition Groups and the People," 112.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid*, 114, 117. Many of these groups had differing ideas that conflicted with one another over what a democratic society should look like and how it should be achieved. So, one should not get the idea, just because these groups were all housed by the Church, that they were all on the same page.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid*, 114.

<sup>291</sup> Duchrow, "The Confessing Church and the Ecumenical Movement," 214.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid*, 215.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid*.

The existence of the Church on its own terms forced the DDR to acknowledge the role it must play in order to reform along the lines of the needs of the citizenry.<sup>294</sup> Unlike the DDR, the Church did not lack space for the representation of expressions independent of the government, offering room for dissent to grow. By 1988, only 28% of youth within the DDR self-identified as "proud citizens" of the state.<sup>295</sup> Though support varied from parish to parish, opposition groups still found a space for their existence within the Church.<sup>296</sup> Hadjar writes:

The churches offered places, times and occasions for people to meet likeminded people (e.g., peace prayer on Mondays at 5 pm at Nikolai Church in Leipzig). The opposition groups became symbols of mass protest, as they had dealt with forms of protest against the ruling system for decades. And both the church and the groups supported the communication within the country. Topics appeared on the agendas of the people that co-workers, students or even families did not talk about before.<sup>297</sup>

The varying degrees to which the Church supported opposition groups ranged from offering them rooms to meet, to negotiating with the state on the groups' behalf for the release of political prisoners. In a week of activities themed around "Justice, Disarmament and Peace," members of various churches gathered in protest, advocating for humanitarian action and disarmament of both the West *and* the Soviet Union. These protests, broken up by the state secret police (*Stasi*), elicited the unforeseen response of "activating" alternative groups that used various churches as meeting places. Years of the Church finding a common ground of humanitarian goals among the people forced the *Stasi* to recognize that, even with infiltration and information-gathering, what they thought were "destructive forces" were not from abroad,

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<sup>294</sup> Krötke, "Die Kirche Und Die »Friedliche Revolution« in Der DDR," 534. "Man muß es noch einmal unterstreichen: All dieses und vieles andere mehr taten die Kirchen und Christen für diesen Staat. Das bedeutet: Sie taten es, um ihn zu Reformen zu ermutigen. Es ging um einen Sozialismus, der die Menschen ernst nimmt und sie in Freiheit an den Problemen der Gesellschaft teilnehmen läßt. In diesem Sinne sollte auch die Öffnung der Kirchen für den politischen Dialog eine Signalfunktion für den Staat haben. Sie sollte zeigen, was jetzt eigentlich die Sache des Staates sein mußte. Denn die beginnende Massenflucht der Menschen aus der DDR konnte nicht mehr stillschweigend hingenommen oder mit den Lügen der offiziellen Propaganda zugedeckt werden. Sie forderte einschneidende politische Konsequenzen."

<sup>295</sup> Hadjar, "Non-Violent Political Protest in East Germany in the 1980s: Protestant Church, Opposition Groups and the People," 113.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid*, 114-5.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid*, 114.

but were homegrown.<sup>298</sup> One group would form rapidly, voicing concerns of women's issues, homosexual rights, ecology, and issues involving the abuse of the Third World.<sup>299</sup> Not every church went as far as others, some being reserved in their allowance of certain group activities that might endanger the Church's standing.<sup>300</sup>

The Church allowed the presence of ethical groups to become increasingly public, making room for them to exist within church walls, though at times straining the relationship due to a majority the groups not having an interest in the Church or Christian beliefs.<sup>301</sup> Some churches worried that certain group activities might be at the detriment of the Church's "primary commission," in that all activities were to clearly adhere to the Gospel.<sup>302</sup> Nevertheless, without the Church, no matter how conservative some parishes may have been, there would have been no organizational "safe house" for opposition groups.<sup>303</sup> Though appearing "limited" at first, the mandate of the Church was intended to uphold the separation of the Two Kingdoms, assuring that the Church was *not* a secular authority.<sup>304</sup> With the Kingdom of God having its beginning in Jesus, the incarnation of God in Christ transitions the spiritual principles of the Kingdom into physically-manifested political principles of justice and truth, as having been established in the

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<sup>298</sup> Conway, "The 'Stasi' and the Churches: Between Coercion and Compromise in East German Protestantism, 1949-89," 732.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

<sup>300</sup> Hadjar, "Non-Violent Political Protest in East Germany in the 1980s: Protestant Church, Opposition Groups and the People," 115; Besier, "Seventy Years after 'Machtergreifung'. The German Churches' Political Stance 1933-2003," 468; Burgess, *The East German Church and the End of Communism*, 106-7, 112-3, 170n17; Conway, "The 'Stasi' and the Churches: Between Coercion and Compromise in East German Protestantism, 1949-89," 726-730, 732, 736, 743; Fulbrook, "Co-Option and Commitment: Aspects of Relations Between Church and State in the German Democratic Republic," 80

<sup>301</sup> Matthias Petzoldt, "The Limited Political Mandate of the Church': Reflections from an East German Context." *Studies in Christian Ethics* 10, no. 2 (1997): 64, accessed May 12, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1177/095394689701000206>.

<sup>302</sup> Petzoldt, "The Limited Political Mandate of the Church': Reflections from an East German Context," 65.

<sup>303</sup> Hadjar, "Non-Violent Political Protest in East Germany in the 1980s: Protestant Church, Opposition Groups and the People," 116. The *Frauen für Frieden*, for example, attempted to exist outside the Church in order to directly affect society, but were quickly shut down, with many members arrested; Petzoldt, "The Limited Political Mandate of the Church': Reflections from an East German Context," 72. After the end of the Cold War, the Church continued to speak for interest groups in media and political institutions when invited.

<sup>304</sup> Petzoldt, "The Limited Political Mandate of the Church': Reflections from an East German Context," 66-7, 73. One must be reminded of the limitation and dimension of this representation, as the Church was self-limited in its expression to not be a secular authority.

Gospel, which bear responsibility to, and in, the social complexities of the world.<sup>305</sup>

Evangelischen theologian, Matthias Petzoldt, writes:

Luther's differentiation between the two Kingdoms and two Authorities plays itself out in modern Lutheranism in the Two Kingdom Theory (Zwei-Reiche-Lehre). Its history is a troubled one, for it can lead to a complete separation of private and official/public morals. During the period of National Socialism in Germany, it was on this theological rationale that it became possible for the German race, the seizure of power by the Nazis, and the office of the Führer, to be transfigured into the dignity of a spiritual revelation. But what is even more important to ask about the political commission of the church is whether, under the effect of other influences, the neo-Lutheran Zwei-Reiche-Lehre promotes the total separation of State and Church. The consequences are that consciousness of the social responsibility of the church as a church diminishes.<sup>306</sup>

The responsibility fell on speaking to the dimensions of inner-politics by the commission to speak for the Gospel. In this capacity, the Church invests a "great deal of energy, imagination and information both in finding ways to introduce Christianity," awakening an "understanding and awareness of questions of purpose and value and responsibility."<sup>307</sup> As a pendulum that swings to its extremes, secularization is met with its antithesis in fundamentalism.<sup>308</sup> With secularization as the response to religiosity, fundamentalism arises to combat what is seen as a threat to a cultural base. Petzoldt continues:

Secularisation is a complex cultural-historical process. It involves both theological re-evaluation, and legal and political emancipation processes. Through these processes it leads to increasingly complex developments: social differentiation of society combines with the formation of autonomous sub-systems and with accompanying religious changes. [...] The Christian churches are losing their dominant cultural role not only in Europe and America; the secularisation process, with all of its side-effects, has also taken hold of countries and cultures of the so-called two-thirds world. Fundamentalism is a discernible reaction to this development. The phenomenon has different manifestations. Typically, groups which belonged to previously dominant cultures fight against what is believed to threaten such cultures.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid, 69.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid, 67.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid, 73.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid, 75.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid, 74.

The unspoken dynamic of the Church addressing *Gottesvergessenheit* is then to confront religious fundamentalism with intellectual Christianity, spanning a broad base of human need, irrespective to what may be seen as a contemporary need, i.e. that which is representative of the Temporal Kingdom. As what is "temporal" changes with time, it is then the Kingdom of God that is permanent, concrete to be manifest within history and not at its periphery.<sup>310</sup> To what does this Gospel speak? Justice? Truth? Equity? The answer is "all of the above," as these are integral to the human condition which must be addressed in the ever-present; and, must be built upon that which does not seek superficial concerns, nor to strip away the humanity of one in favor of another. This makes Krötke's answer to *Gottesvergessenheit* a socio-political answer, bridging the economic needs of many, not by enforcing what *could* be done through legislation intertwined with religious motives (church and state, or "state-church"), but by what *can* be done by guiding the soul by the Gospel (church within state, just as "church within socialism"). The answer for Krötke, simply put, is the unyielding to "God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ" which grounds the Gospel in a permanently concrete relevance.<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Ibid, 76.

<sup>311</sup> Christopher R. J. Holmes, "Eberhard Jüngel and Wolf Krötke: Recent Contributions Toward a Trinitarian Doctrine of God's Attributes," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 22, no. 2 (2006): 159, accessed June 20, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.3138/tjt.22.2.159>.

## Conclusion

*Gottesvergessenheit* was an easy mode into which one could fall within DDR culture. For those who maintained a Protestant identity, the "sacred" Kingdom of God, by all appearances, ran counter to the "profane" Temporal Kingdom that enabled *Gottesvergessenheit*. Krötke's theology entered this conflict of ideologies, introducing the concept of reordering these seeming opposites into a relational structure of the concrete presence of Jesus *within* the temporal, both residing under the purview of the transcendent God.<sup>312</sup>

With this real presence, Jesus, existing in the here-and-now, the claims of temporal power are silenced. As is shown throughout German history, Krötke's theology reveals the echoes of an internal structure influencing the external, again revitalizing German Protestant identity as a representative-church of Jesus' immediacy, a manifestation of Christ. In this, the Church is shown as a threat to authoritarian power, with its true allegiance to the Kingdom of God as opposed to any temporal power that tries to assert control.<sup>313</sup>

At times, the confusion over Luther's words and intentions set Christianity and secularity at odds; further confusing even the religious into a lull of the false sanctification of the temporal.<sup>314</sup> This lull enabled an ease with which one could miss the role of God's Word in sanctification, leading one's assumption to be able to go one step further by eventually overlooking *both* the Word *and* God's roles within the temporal. Being that one kingdom resides within another, it is possible that Kingdom of God, from which faith and salvation is imparted as

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<sup>312</sup> Nygren, "Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," 308-9. As those under God are subject to both the Kingdom of God and the Temporal Kingdom, both kingdoms reside within God's power.

<sup>313</sup> Ziegler, *Doing Theology When God is Forgotten: The Theological Achievement of Wolf Krötke*, 29.

<sup>314</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 81; *The Cost of Discipleship*, 221; Nygren, "Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," 304.

they are not of this world, can at times exist within the Temporal Kingdom.<sup>315</sup> Luther's theology had been manipulated and misapplied to the point of spiritually and metaphysically disentangling God from the material world.<sup>316</sup>

The division of Kingdoms isn't the complete separation of them, as one would assume. The Kingdom of God exists such that it is, unlike the temporal, unchanging.<sup>317</sup> In being unchanging, the Kingdom of God speaks to the human condition, attempting to meet the existential needs that are beyond the Temporal Kingdom. Within this dynamic, the spiritual reaches across the divide to guide the soul and conscience where the secular falls short. This position is what keeps the Kingdom of God unchanging as, where it would exist internal to the Temporal Kingdom, it is grounded in permanent relevance counter to materialism.<sup>318</sup>

Though this world is where an actionable justice may be meted out, the actions and machinations of the Temporal Kingdom are not wholly free from error. On speaking to the human condition where secularity falls short, the influence of the Kingdom of God on the Temporal Kingdom, or for Krötke, the Church within the DDR's socialism, Christianity is capable of uniting society as a whole in the name of a "better secularity," correcting injustices that have taken place.<sup>319</sup> The Temporal Kingdom, though having its role in correcting injustices, in no way prevents it from acting out its own injustice. In speaking to the human condition where an injustice has occurred within the Temporal Kingdom, confronting the authoritarian tyranny is Christian duty.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> Luther, *The AGES Digital Library Collections: Works of Martin Luther Vol. 3*, 184; Nygren, "Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," 304.

<sup>316</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 81; *The Cost of Discipleship*, 105.

<sup>317</sup> Petzoldt, "The Limited Political Mandate of the Church': Reflections from an East German Context," 76.

<sup>318</sup> Holmes, "Eberhard Jüngel and Wolf Krötke: Recent Contributions Toward a Trinitarian Doctrine of God's Attributes," 159.

<sup>319</sup> Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 28, 157; Anders Nygren, "Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," *The Ecumenical Review* 1, no. 3 (1949): 305, accessed February 2, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6623.1949.tb03072.x>.

<sup>320</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 155.

If one is to follow that faith and salvation are not from this world, but issue from God on behalf of God's transcendent existence, then it should also display the broken-ness of natural theology's parameters of the highest potential of humanity.<sup>321</sup> The ideal of the natural is a faulty measure in the comprehension of the transcendent *super*-natural. God being misunderstood within the sameness of humanity ignores the very "other" nature of God, and diminishes the mystery of Jesus Christ simultaneously existing as both "same" and "other" within experiential reality.<sup>322</sup> Founding a religion based on the "knowledge" gleaned from natural theology is, by default, based in an unbelief in God.<sup>323</sup> Such a religion would eventually fall out of relevancy, having been based on the undercurrent human limitation, thus subject to the external governance under which humans live, allowing for its now-irrelevant God to be forgotten.<sup>324</sup>

If *Gottesvergessenheit* is part of the world, then it is not because God is gone, but because God is not truly known; and this forgetting is undone by the very real presence of Jesus acted out in the Kingdom of God. The Temporal Kingdom had, over time, over-extended its reach, limiting the spiritual freedom of individuals which were made free by God and under God's domain.<sup>325</sup> God had been limited and forgotten in this world, restrained and isolated to the point of irrelevance, meaning that the soul of the individual, too, had been secularized. People may wonder who will put food on the table or how the bills will be paid; however,

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<sup>321</sup> Nygren, "Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," 304.

<sup>322</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics: A Selection*, 30, 38.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid*, 52, 91.

<sup>324</sup> Luther, *The AGES Digital Library Collections: Works of Martin Luther Vol. 3*, 198; Barth, *Church Dogmatics: a Selection*, 38-9.

<sup>325</sup> Luther, *The AGES Digital Library Collections: Works of Martin Luther Vol. 3*, 194-6. In a world where this theology became a secular mainstay of societal dynamics, centuries of non-theologians came to accept these ideas to different degrees, most often overlooking that there is a second part to this whole idea: that there is an extent to the reach of *Temporal Authority*. Martin Luther writes that *Temporal Authority* with too wide a scope is "intolerable and terrible injury," and that it is far better to be too lenient than to be too strict. Luther explains that the governments of this world should be allowed to exist since God has ordained them to exist in order to enforce secular law, but that the reach and power ends where the soul of the individual begins, belonging to God, under the domain of God and God's Kingdom.

*Gottesvergessenheit* assumes that people, in any age, will entirely cease to ask any questions of spiritual weight or existential depth.

The reintroduction of God into a system of *Gottesvergessenheit* seemingly places God into opposition with human existence, asking one to cognitively de-sacralize the temporal.<sup>326</sup> Within Krötke's terms, it asks one to acknowledge and experience the concrete manifestation of Christ, thereby pushing back against societal norms. This threat to the status quo, this conflict that arises, is the birth pang of God's physical interruption of entering the material. Of God existing within the world in this capacity, potentiality is punctured by the actuality of the divine condition. The incarnation of God in Jesus transitions the spiritual principles into physical, establishing the Gospel of justice and truth into the social complexities of the world.<sup>327</sup>

Jesus, not being found in the sameness or potentiality of the physically material, is then found in ever-present immediacy, resulting in a covenantal relationship between two parties of existential differentiation.<sup>328</sup> This relationship allows for the dialogue and exploration prompted by phenomenological confrontation on behalf of both parts.<sup>329</sup> No longer is, in theory, humanity subject to the separation of God and world; but, instead, God exists within the world.<sup>330</sup> Time and space are then collapsed into the God that is "now here."

In this position within the world, a position of physical weakness, weakness becomes a strength in the mode of "relatability."<sup>331</sup> Jesus becomes a companion in both suffering and joy, extending from an inward reflection to that which is on the outskirts of one's being.<sup>332</sup> This is the beginning of the Christian faith. The gap between knowledgeable comprehension and divine

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<sup>326</sup> Krötke, *Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologians for a Post-Christian World*, 48.

<sup>327</sup> Petzoldt, "The Limited Political Mandate of the Church': Reflections from an East German Context," 69.

<sup>328</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics: a Selection*, 42.

<sup>329</sup> Krötke, *Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologians for a Post-Christian World*, 51.

<sup>330</sup> Ziegler, *Doing Theology When God is Forgotten: The Theological Achievement of Wolf Krötke*, 43.

<sup>331</sup> Christopher R.J. Holmes, *Revisiting the Doctrine of the Divine Attributes: In Dialogue with Karl Barth, Eberhard Jüngel, and Wolf Krötke*, Edited by Paul D. Molnar, Vol. 15, *Issues in Systematic Theology* (New York etc., NY: Peter Lang, 2007), 158.

<sup>332</sup> Krötke, *Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologians for a Post-Christian World*, 174-5.

transcendence is closed, diminishing the epistemologies of "could" with the theologies of "is."<sup>333</sup> No longer is God the weakened reflection of humanity's image external to itself, but humanity has transitioned to the strengthened position of God's image within the physical world.<sup>334</sup> Existing within the shared reality of humanity disallows the confusion caused by a God kept at humanity's periphery.<sup>335</sup> Humanity's preparation for the spiritual or revelatory experience of the divine becomes a need already met. Krötke's dislike of natural theology putting God at a distance is then resolved.

Jesus' manifestation creates the space for a religion which transcends the rational to act on behalf of Jesus by meeting the needs of those in and around a community.<sup>336</sup> This becomes a religion focused on others more than on the self, with its basis in the contextual relatability of a God within this world addressing the needs of the world.<sup>337</sup> In this case, that Kingdom of God is made manifest by the Church within socialism. This Church within the socialist state is the servant to all within the socialist state, though is spiritually subject to none of the socialist state.<sup>338</sup> This similitude of Christ within the world, both simultaneously leading and serving, is echoed in all strata of those who resist the DDR as an extension of the Kingdom of God.<sup>339</sup> Through this resistance, God is again made known, the presence of Christ is made concrete, and the redemption of the temporal is again made manifest by furthering the Gospel.<sup>340</sup>

Krötke's concretely existing Christ, as well as His spiritual byproducts, encounters the existential questions developed in the German mind historically pushing-apart of the spiritual

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<sup>333</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison: the Enlarged Edition*, 243-4; Krötke, *Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologians for a Post-Christian World*, 49.

<sup>334</sup> Krötke, *Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologians for a Post-Christian World*, 174; Ziegler, *Doing Theology When God is Forgotten: The Theological Achievement of Wolf Krötke*, 42-3.

<sup>335</sup> Krötke, *Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologians for a Post-Christian World*, 48.

<sup>336</sup> Krötke, "Karl Barths Und Dietrich Bonhoeffers Bedeutung Für Die Theologie in Der DDR," 297-8.

<sup>337</sup> Krötke, "Die Kirche Und Die »Friedliche Revolution« in Der DDR," 539.

<sup>338</sup> Luther, Grimm, and Lambert, "The Freedom of a Christian," Essay. in *Career of the Reformer* 31, 344.

<sup>339</sup> Krötke, *Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologians for a Post-Christian World*, 46-7.

<sup>340</sup> Nygren, "Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," 308-10.

and the secular that resulted in a Christ-shaped vacuum.<sup>341</sup> The *Gottesvergessenheit* within the DDR grew to the specific vacuum left in the wake of the Second World War, and was solidified by the demands and strictures of the soviet government, making Christian teaching unrelatable as it was no longer immediately relevant or believable in light of recent history.<sup>342</sup>

For those who had seen the outcomes of the Second World War, the abandonment of religion came easily. The *Deutsche Christen*, having sided with the social conditions that allowed national socialism to take root, taking national socialism as its source of revelation, placed itself within the Temporal Kingdom.<sup>343</sup> Combating this, the *Barmen Declaration* positioned the Confessing Church as existing for people by serving the Word of God.<sup>344</sup> Having done so, this leaves the Confessing Church, a theological island, the Kingdom of God residing within the temporal Third Reich that opposed the Word of God.<sup>345</sup> The mixed successes of the Confessing Church were overshadowed by the outcomes of the war, as a whole, further distancing humanity from the spiritual every time the question was validly asked: "Where was God?"

Those of the following generation had difficulty accepting the faith that had been present in prior decades. As Christianity is the culmination of Christ's continued presence, that presence had become forgotten. The concept of God might have been discussed in soviet society, but usually in the pejorative useless-ness of such a concept, thereby downplaying or dissolving any relevance of God and the place of religion. The interaction of the Church within the DDR was

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<sup>341</sup> Besier, "Seventy Years after 'Machtergreifung'. The German Churches' Political Stance 1933-2003," 467; Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison: the Enlarged Edition*, 279-80.

<sup>342</sup> Hockenos, "The Church Struggle and the Confessing Church: An Introduction to Bonhoeffer's Context," 7.

<sup>343</sup> Matthew D. Hockenos, *A Church Divided: German Protestants Confront the Nazi Past*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 4; Nygren, "Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," 301.

<sup>344</sup> Hockenos, "The Church Struggle and the Confessing Church: An Introduction to Bonhoeffer's Context," 11; Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent: The Confessing Church and the Persecution of the Jews*, 75

<sup>345</sup> Matthew D. Hockenos, "The Church Struggle and the Confessing Church: An Introduction to Bonhoeffer's Context.," 2; Conway, "The Political Theology of Martin Niemöller," 529; Hockenos, "The Church Struggle and the Confessing Church: An Introduction to Bonhoeffer's Context," 4, 13.

the concrete interaction of God with humanity, through the words and deeds of Jesus, allowing no room for the "forgotten-ness" of abstraction.<sup>346</sup> God was no longer the last resort at the periphery of life, but was transitioned into the moment of the encounter with life itself.<sup>347</sup>

The *Bausoldaten* and those who chose to go through with their confirmations of faith, too, functioned as microcosmic echoes of Krötke's theology, existing as immediate manifestations of Christ, speaking on behalf of the Kingdom of God toward the Temporal Kingdom, no matter the punishment.<sup>348</sup> With a government intent on rearming against Western "imperialism," and with a society intent on indoctrinating youth into a mandated control of the soul of the individual, resistance became the testimonial of the choice to remember God in the face of society's "forgetting."

The allowed existence of the *Bausoldaten* within the DDR highlighted the fact that the DDR was forced to recognize the influence of the Church existing within its borders, and having to take that influence seriously.<sup>349</sup> The very fact that its pacifistic direction was tolerated as an option was a testament to the effectiveness of the dynamic of placing the Church within socialism, as opposed to against it.<sup>350</sup> The choice to undergo the *Evangelische* confirmation placed one in visible opposition to the *Jugendweihe*, over time making the religious option a minority one.<sup>351</sup> Even the Church's eventual allowance of participation in the *Jugendweihe* agreeing with the humanitarian outlook, strategically placed the remembrance of God within

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<sup>346</sup> Holmes, *Revisiting the Doctrine of the Divine Attributes: In Dialogue with Karl Barth, Eberhard Jüngel, and Wolf Krötke*, 158.

<sup>347</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison: the Enlarged Edition*, Edited by Eberhard Bethge. (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 242.

<sup>348</sup> Henkel, "State–Church Relationships in Germany: Past and Present," 311; Krötke, "Die Kirche Und Die »Friedliche Revolution« in Der DDR," 529.

<sup>349</sup> Doellinger, "Constructing Peace in the GDR: Conscientious Objection and Compromise among East German Christians, 1962-1989," 274-5, 287.

<sup>350</sup> Fulbrook, "Co-Option and Commitment: Aspects of Relations Between Church and State in the German Democratic Republic," 80.

<sup>351</sup> Christine R. Barker, "Church and State: Lessons from Germany?" *The Political Quarterly* 75, no. 2 (2004): 168, accessed November 15, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-923x.2004.00599.x>.

systemic forgetfulness, ensuring that the atheistic outlook would now be influenced by the confirmand in a reversal of roles.<sup>352</sup> On the part of human flexibility, an "either/or" situation was resolved by placing the influence of one within the other.<sup>353</sup>

In keeping with Barth's *Brief an einen Pfarrer in der DDR*, Krötke's theology provided the capability of a Protestant minority in the DDR to interrupt the position of the socialist state by voicing the concerns of "others," undoing the lamented finality of the separation of the Two Kingdoms.<sup>354</sup> The immediate reality of Christ within *Gottesvergessenheit* speaks to the transformative nature of the spiritual confronting the temporal, leaving both changed.

As Krötke has noted, the direct action to circumvent the Church's role in spiritual development backfired.<sup>355</sup> While the state was trying to limit the influence of the Church, it had accidentally freed the Church from broader organizational responsibilities, on which the Church was able to capitalize on the predicament as a direct confrontation with DDR culture, combating discrimination and injustices implemented by the choices of the state. This removed the Church's theological abstraction, placing it in the realm of real action in a way unseen in other soviet states.<sup>356</sup> Finding itself removed from specific areas of the economic sector, the Church was able to redirect its focus toward advocacy of minority groups within the DDR.<sup>357</sup>

The Temporal Kingdom of East Germany was an economic structure founded on stating that the deception of a "God" had led to fascist authoritarianism. The idea of this "God," and the religion around it, initially had no contemporary relevance to the new East German society. The argument was, in its essence, that the road from fascism to the horrors of history was paved by

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<sup>352</sup> Smith, "The Church in the GDR," 78; Gautier, "Church Elites and the Restoration of Civil Society in the Communist Societies of Central Europe," 297; Goeckel, "The GDR Legacy and the German Protestant Church," 86; Cordell, "Political Change in the GDR: the Role of the Evangelical Church," 162.

<sup>353</sup> Fulbrook, *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker*, 158-9; "Co-Option and Commitment: Aspects of Relations Between Church and State in the German Democratic Republic," 76.

<sup>354</sup> Pollack and Richter, "Protestantische Theologie Und Politik in Der DDR," 697-8.

<sup>355</sup> Krötke, "'A Jump Ahead': The Church as Creative Minority in Eastern Germany," 445.

<sup>356</sup> Fulbrook, *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker*, 159.

<sup>357</sup> Goeckel, "Church and Society in the GDR: Historical Legacies and 'Mature Socialism,'" 215.

the fervor of religious-like triumphalism, i.e. Western imperialism. The confusion here is in the outsider perspective, forgetting that God and Christianity" are *not* rooted in the temporal, making it unaligned with state power.<sup>358</sup> The "Church within socialism" became an incomprehensible, unpredictable manifestation of God that the DDR was forced to acknowledge was in its midst.<sup>359</sup> *Gottesvergessenheit*, thus, invalidates the claim of whatever power attempts to weaponize it, making Krötke all the more relevant.<sup>360</sup>

Krötke instead argued a theological responsibility inherent to this manifestation; making room for the minority group, the disadvantaged, and those seen as unfit for the development of society.<sup>361</sup> The act of service toward the Temporal Kingdom is an active engagement.<sup>362</sup> In this engagement, the Kingdom of God echoes the manifestation of Jesus in concrete terms, reactionary in its immediate real presence. No distance is placed between the Kingdoms, as both are in constant interaction; and, *Gottesvergessenheit* is unmade, as the spirituality of the faith is intimately present within the individual as concretely as manifest-God within the world as Christ.<sup>363</sup> The divine moment of a church within socialism becomes more than the single fixed-point of religious "nostalgia," as the action is immediately ever-present. Krötke faced the socialist system through the concrete manifestation of an ever-present God whose presence is always rooted in the "now," allowing the freedom of the individual as an active participant in the Christ-community, no matter the social condition.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> Krötke, "Die Kirche Und Die »Friedliche Revolution« in Der DDR," 536.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid, 532.

<sup>360</sup> Ziegler, *Doing Theology When God is Forgotten: The Theological Achievement of Wolf Krötke*, 28; Krötke, "Die Kirche Und Die »Friedliche Revolution« in Der DDR," 531.

<sup>361</sup> Ziegler, *Doing Theology When God is Forgotten: The Theological Achievement of Wolf Krötke*, 28.

<sup>362</sup> Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans, with a New Preface by the Author*, 492.

<sup>363</sup> Krötke, *Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologians for a Post-Christian World*, 30.

<sup>364</sup> Krötke, "Karl Barths Und Dietrich Bonhoeffers Bedeutung Für Die Theologie in Der DDR," 282-3, 299.

Counter to intuition, Jesus becomes, not the secularized God, but instead the justifying and sanctifying power in the world of humanity, inverting the standards of a natural theology.<sup>365</sup> The concretion of God in the world, in the personage of Jesus, then echoes a state of being where the sacred is established within the profane, rippling through time and context. It is found where the Gospel speaks within an atheistic society. It is found where Bonhoeffer writes of faith within a prison. It is found where a church exists within socialism; where the Kingdom of God exists *within* the Temporal Kingdom. It is this remembrance of the living God that destroys God-forgottenness.

With intimate familiarity, Krötke's theology reminds us that that this echo of Jesus' sacred immediacy can be found within the individual, where that individual finds themselves in the midst of outcomes of a profane *Gottesvergessenheit*. Not counter to its *Sitz im Leben* ("setting in life"); but interjected, interrupting the dialogue of the status quo by asserting the holiness of how things should *and can* be, rather than how they have been. From this position, God's presence is inarguable, as it exists in the midst of a shared reality.<sup>366</sup>

The Confessing Church had tried in its capacity to be a voice for those whose voices could not be heard. Authoritarianism is the howl of rallies, the earth-shaking armaments, and the fiery speech of propaganda allowing no room for the small, still voice of the oppressed "least" of us to be heard as it has been deemed socially irrelevant. The DDR's mandated *Gottesvergessenheit* is, then, the authoritarianism of the soul, allowing no space for the Word of God made flesh, as it had, too, been deemed socially irrelevant. The "*Kirche im Sozialismus*" was the conscience of the Kingdom of God, speaking the Gospel into the Temporal Kingdom, reminding it under whose authority is still ultimately rests.

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<sup>365</sup> Krötke, "Die Kirche Und Die »Friedliche Revolution« in Der DDR," 539-40.

<sup>366</sup> Ziegler, *Doing Theology When God is Forgotten: The Theological Achievement of Wolf Krötke*, 41.

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