

An Analysis of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Late Ethics and Theology Through the Lens of Old Testament Ethics

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 • 국 문 초 록 •

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본 논문은 디트리히 본회퍼의 후기 사상, 자유책임행위와 무종교성의 기독교에 나타난 구약성경의 영향을 살펴보는 것을 목적으로 한다. 본회퍼의 히틀러 암살 시도는 생존을 위협하는 상황에서 불가피한 제한적 폭력은 가능할 수 있음을 주장하는 구약성경의 평화윤리에 근거한 자유책임행위로 이해할 수 있다. 또한 본회퍼가 수감 중에 집중적으로 읽은 구약성경의 영향으로 그의 기독교론이 발전되어 무종교성의 기독교라는 사상을 전개할 수 있었다는 점을 논증하고자 한다.

본 논문을 통해 탈종교화되어 가는 한국 사회에서 한국의 기독교가 새롭게 될 수 있는 길을 본회퍼의 후기 사상에 대한 연구를 통해서 얻을 수 있으며, 본회퍼가 구약성경에 깊이 천착하면서 무종교성의 기독교라는 사상을 형성시킨 것에서 알 수 있듯이, 한국 교회의 성도들이 구약성경을 보다 더 깊이 있게 이해해야 한다는 점을 강조하고자 한다. 구약성경에 대한 온전한 이해를 토대로 할 때 본회퍼가 주장한 기독교 신앙에 대한 더 깊고 올바른 이해에 이를 수 있다는 점을 환기시키고자 한다.

주제어: 디트리히 본회퍼, 자유책임행위, 무종교성의 기독교, 본회퍼 후기사상, 본회퍼 사상에 끼친 구약성경의 영향, 구약윤리.

I. Introduction

The present essay aims to explore German pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer's late theological and ethical ideas, namely, the Christian peace ethic and religionless/worldly Christianity through the lens of Old Testament ethics. Dietrich Bonhoeffer (4 February 1906 – 9 April 1945) is well known among Korean Christians. One of the most widely known facts about Bonhoeffer is that he resisted National Socialism by participating in a conspiracy to kill Adolf Hitler and was executed in 1945. The Holocaust, one of the most tragic events in history, occurred in Germany, and it is important to understand Bonhoeffer's theological and ethical thoughts considering this historical and political context.¹⁾ In this paper, I investigate the significance of what Bonhoeffer calls "free responsible action," which may explain the theological underpinnings in the assassination plot²⁾ from the perspective of Old Testament ethics. Second, focusing on the crucial influence of the Old Testament on his later theology, I examine what Bonhoeffer meant by "religionless" Christianity, as it is written in *Letters and Papers from Prison*, an idea he struggled to conceive during the last days of his imprisonment. Through this inquiry, I argue that the Old Testament plays a pivotal role in shaping Bonhoeffer's late ethical and theological ideas; thus, to understand Bonhoeffer's theology correctly,

1) John A. Moses, "Bonhoeffer's Germany: The Political Context," in *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. John W. de Gruchy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 3-21.

2) Clifford J. Green, "Pacifism and Tyrannicide: Bonhoeffer's Christian Peace Ethic," in *Studies in Christian Ethics* 18, no. 2 (2005): 31-47.

a thoughtful understanding of the Old Testament is indispensable.

II. Free responsible action through the lens of Old Testament ethics

Did Bonhoeffer's participation in the conspiracy to assassinate³⁾ Hitler conflict with his theology of discipleship and pacifism, both of which were primarily based upon the obedience to commandments of the Sermon on the Mount? To answer the question, it is necessary to investigate his meaning of pacifism. The apparent contradiction between Bonhoeffer's involvement in the assassination plot and his theology of pacifism has been raised by many scholars who seem to assert that the foundation of the conflict is a principle that only nonviolent resistance can be labeled pacifism. In accordance with the principle of pacifism, some people regard Bonhoeffer's commitment to tyrannicide as contradictory. Yet does pacifism have to mean *only* nonviolent resistance? Is the claim of "true" pacifism the unconditional commitment to nonviolence without regard to any circumstances? One answer is found in Clifford J. Green's "Pacifism and Tyrannicide." According to Green, "Most people understand the word pacifist to mean a person who is opposed on principle to violence in any form, especially in war. Bonhoeffer's ethic was not an ethic of principles, and 'pacifism' cannot be summarized for him by a principle of nonviolence."⁴⁾ Green prefers

3) Although Green speaks deliberately of tyrannicide, not assassination or murder, in this article I will use both tyrannicide and assassination without such differentiation.

4) Green, "Pacifism and Tyrannicide," 33.

to use the term, 'Christian peace ethic' to differentiate Bonhoeffer's pacifism from customary pacifism, especially since Bonhoeffer did not insist on nonviolence on principle. Thus, in another article, Green, quoting Eberhard Bethge, Bonhoeffer's close friend, concludes that Bonhoeffer's Christian peace ethic was a conditional pacifism and that Bonhoeffer never became a fundamental pacifist (*grundsatzlich Pazifist*).⁵⁾ Perhaps, Bonhoeffer would have been aware of the fact that unconditional nonviolence would not be able to bring about peace when he saw Hitler and the Nazi regime's atrocities against the Jews. These atrocities included depriving their civil rights of them, confiscating their possessions, exploiting their labor force in concentration camps until death, unprovoked shooting, and death in gas chambers.

Bonhoeffer perceived that it was adhering to so-called nonviolent pacifism that resulted in actually helping Hitler and his regime to continue their genocidal policies and their power over German society. This assumption is buttressed by the fact that Bonhoeffer defined Hitler as a tyrant, describing him as 'tyrannical despiser of humanity.'⁶⁾ While his contemporary theologians and religious leaders in German churches including Protestants and Catholics regarded Hitler as the *Führer* (leader) for their nation,⁷⁾ Bonhoeffer rightfully discerned Hitler as a tyrannical despiser of humanity and clearly saw the need for his death.⁸⁾

5) Clifford J. Green, "Bonhoeffer's Christian Peace Ethic: Conditional Pacifism, and Resistance," in *The Oxford Handbook of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. Michael Mawson and Philip G. Ziegler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 344-362.

6) Green, "Pacifism and Tyrannicide," 42.

7) Moses, "Bonhoeffer's Germany," 4.

8) Moses puts Bonhoeffer's discernment regarding Hitler as follows: 'Out of the polit-

Bonhoeffer's motivation of the anti-Hitler plot was based on his mature theological peace ethic, in other words, free responsible action.⁹⁾ John A. Moses, quoting Bonhoeffer, draws our attention to Bonhoeffer's free responsible action, which 'depends on a God who demands responsible action in a bold venture of faith.'¹⁰⁾ Bonhoeffer's commitment to the *coup d'état* was not unrelated to his engagement with the Old Testament, which argues that peace necessitates establishing justice. Also, as Bonhoeffer admitted the inevitable limited act of violence by engaging in the anti-Hitler conspiracy, the Old Testament, more specifically, the Pentateuch describes God who punishes oppressors for the sake of the oppressed by means of an act of violence through the Ten Plagues, particularly plunging Pharaoh's horse, his chariots, and his horsemen into the midst of the sea.

Christopher J. H. Wright, a missiologist and Old Testament scholar, offers an insightful comment on what to do for the people of God in opposition to the oppressive, idolatrous regime represented by Egypt and Canaan. He says, "Both (Egypt and Canaan) are presented in the text also as idolatrous in nature, as enemies of the LORD and as a threat to his people. In both cases, the stance of the people of God towards the state when it displays such idolatrous hostility is one of con-

ical and economic chaos of the end-phase of the Weimar years (1929-33), arose the National Socialist dictatorship of Adolf Hitler, the Third Reich. It was this latter manifestation of the German spirit which Bonhoeffer judged as essentially evil, and which left him no alternative but to resist to the death.' See Moses, "Bonhoeffer's Germany," 3.

9) Green, "Bonhoeffer's Christian Peace Ethic," 354.

10) Moses, "Bonhoeffer's Germany," 20.

frontation, challenge, and conflict.”¹¹⁾ Wright's remark is very much in line with Bonhoeffer's discernment and action against Hitler and the Nazi regime's idolatrous nature.

As earlier mentioned, Bonhoeffer's participation in tyrannicide derived from his theological conviction, that is, free responsibility and its Christological foundations. Green continues, “the incarnate Christ resists the tyrannical despoiler of human beings. God's becoming human was to save, not to oppress humanity.”¹²⁾ In addition, Green details what free responsible action means. First, free responsible action is divine action for humanity, in other words, vicarious representative action.¹³⁾ The people to whom Bonhoeffer intended to be a vicarious representative at the risk of his life were the Jews killed in gas chambers and concentration camps. In Bonhoeffer's identification with the vulnerable, we note his explicit theological core, *Christology*, since Jesus Christ also identified himself with the least (Matt 25:40). Not only that, but Bonhoeffer also might have felt responsible for the attitude of German churches which were not able to prevent the genocide, and instead, silently or actively accorded with Nazi's genocidal policy. In Bonhoeffer's infinite responsibility, we perceive God who became human in Jesus Christ and came closer to humanity because of His infinite responsibility for humanity who was estranged from God. As a matter of course, throughout the Old Testament narrative, we find God's faith-

11) Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 226.

12) Green, “Pacifism and Tyrannicide,” 43.

13) Ibid.

fulness to the covenant with the Israelites, the people of God. God's faithfulness demonstrates His responsibility for His people.

Second, Green recounts that free responsible action is engaged in the concrete particularities of the actual situation and is deeply concerned with the painful reality of the vulnerable.¹⁴⁾ It is when the most fundamental human right, the right to live, is threatened by a despot's brutal violence can people commit to a form of free responsible action. Considering Old Testament ethics, it is evident that the Old Testament consistently emphasizes the covenantal people's obligation to be concerned with the painful reality of the weak, the poor, and the oppressed.¹⁵⁾ Third, drawing our attention to the fact that the responsible action should be based upon 'freedom,' Green emphasizes that what Bonhoeffer intended to mean by 'free' is not to justify any arbitrary and impulsive act, but to mean the 'freedom' by which God became human being in Jesus Christ, transcending God-self in order to love human beings.¹⁶⁾ For Bonhoeffer, this sort of divine freedom towards the vulnerable appears as freedom from his instinctive attachment to his own life. Here, the term 'divine' best means altruism, as transcendence from egocentric desire of self. Divine freedom means denying self and for the sake of others.

So far, we have examined why Bonhoeffer was involved in a conspiracy to violently remove Hitler contrary to a common understanding of pacifism. Simply put, Bonhoeffer saw that nonviolent resistance was

14) Ibid.

15) Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 146-181.

16) Green, "Pacifism and Tyrannicide," 43.

helpless stopping the Hitler and his pogrom. In addition, Bonhoeffer, as a Lutheran minister and theologian, might have been concerned about the negative influence of the Nazi pogrom on the future of his beloved country and its Church.¹⁷⁾ Thus, he assumed responsibility for the tyrannicide, knowing for sure that it would mark him a sinner.

To summarize, the main characteristic of free responsible action is to become a vicarious representative on behalf of the vulnerable and it is through divine freedom that leads one to identify with the helpless. Divine freedom is defined as freedom from egocentric interest, transcending oneself for others, particularly the victims, and risking one's life to prevent the innocent from being victimized.¹⁸⁾ For Bonhoeffer, this free responsible action was actualized in his involvement in the assassination plot. It is necessary to note that Bonhoeffer's free responsible action is a theological conviction that mirrors his understanding of who God is, and the God he understands is the God of the op-

17) F. Burton Nelson, "The Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer," in *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. John W. de Gruchy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 22. Nelson writes Reinhold Niebuhr's tribute in an article entitled "The Death of a Martyr." He wrote, "Bonhoeffer, less known than Martin Niemoller, will become better known. Not only his martyr's death, but also his actions and precepts contain within them the hope of a revitalized Protestant faith in Germany. It will be a faith, religiously more profound than that of many of its critics, but it will have learned to overcome the one fateful error of German Protestantism, the complete dichotomy between faith and political life." Ibid.

18) Ibid., 45. Nelson quotes Bonhoeffer's brother-in-law, Gerhard Leibholz: "Bonhoeffer's life and death belong to the annals of Christian martyrdom...His life and death have given us great hope for the future. He has set a model for a new type of true leadership inspired by the gospel, daily ready for martyrdom and death and imbued by a new spirit of Christian humanism and a creative sense of civic duty. The victory which he has won was a victory for us all, a conquest never to be undone, of love, light, and liberty." Ibid.

pressed who executes a limited act of violence to preserve the vulnerable. Also, this is based on the Old Testament ethics.

III. Religionless Christianity through the lens of Old Testament ethics

During his imprisonment, Bonhoeffer exchanged many letters with his best friend, Bethge. In these letters, Bonhoeffer articulated significant theological reflections on religionless or worldly Christianity. The concept of religionless Christianity, however, was left behind incompletely. Some people misunderstood it as secular Christianity on account of the misinterpretation of the term, ‘worldly.’¹⁹⁾ To correctly understand what he meant by religionless/worldly Christianity, it is significant to note that this idea is deeply related to Bonhoeffer’s rediscovery of the Old Testament.

It is widely known that when Jewish neighbors were deprived of their civil rights, their property confiscated, and they were ghettoized and killed, most German Christians were unconcerned with the tragic ordeal of the Jews. In his 20s, Bonhoeffer was not significantly different from most German church people. According to Andreas Pangritz, “Bonhoeffer shared in a widespread Protestant ignorance of the theological thinking of his Jewish contemporaries.”²⁰⁾ In June 1933, Pangritz

19) See Ralf K. Wüstenberg, “Religion and Secularity,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. Michael Mawson and Philip G. Ziegler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 321–330.

20) Andreas Pangritz, “Bonhoeffer and the Jews,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. Michael Mawson and Philip G. Ziegler (Oxford: Oxford University

continues, Bonhoeffer published an essay, "The Church and the Jewish Question," in which he argued for solidarity with the Jews; however, the essay contains several theological ambiguities.²¹⁾ Since Bonhoeffer was under the dominant influence of Lutheran tradition, it would have been difficult for him to overcome the anti-Jewish prejudices inherent in the Lutheran theology. However, during Bonhoeffer's directorship of the Confessing Church seminary in Finkenwalde, he began to have new perspectives on the Old Testament.²²⁾ During this time, Bonhoeffer wrote *Discipleship (Nachfolge)*. Quoting Bonhoeffer, "Christ is thus not separated from the law, but is the one who 'sets the law of the Old Covenant into force' and brings it to 'fulfilment,'"²³⁾ Pangritz states, "Here, a Christological hermeneutic renders the Old Testament law a witness to Christ."²⁴⁾ In other words, Bonhoeffer's new encounter with the Old Testament led him to understand better who Christ is and to recognize that the messianic event depicted in Isaiah 53 is now being fulfilled in the representative suffering of Israel for the nations. Bonhoeffer, according to Bethge, identified the suffering servant of God in Isaiah 53 with the Jews, which was Jewish tradition.²⁵⁾ Bonhoeffer's engagement with the Old Testament opened his eyes to the unique significance of the Jewish suffering for Christians²⁶⁾ and to the necessity

Press, 2019), 92.

21) Ibid., 93.

22) Ibid., 99.

23) Ibid.

24) Ibid.

25) Ibid., 104-105.

26) Ibid., 105.

of ‘a revision of the christological centre of Christian theology in light of the Old Testament.’²⁷⁾

Besides, Bonhoeffer’s intensified orientation towards the Old Testament influenced him to think of intriguing ideas, called ‘religionless Christianity’ in ‘a world come of age.’²⁸⁾ This idea is his revised Christology influenced by his new understanding of the Old Testament. Citing Martin Kuske, Michael Mawson also accentuates that “many of the provocative insights and concepts that Bonhoeffer developed in his late theology emerged from engagements with Old Testament texts.”²⁹⁾ Mawson continues that “Bonhoeffer insisted upon the importance of the Old Testament for Christians,”³⁰⁾ and that “in his prison letter Bonhoeffer appears to privilege the Old Testament for understanding Christ and what it means to be Christian.”³¹⁾ In that Jesus Christ read the Old Testament in his lifetime and tried to fulfill and embody what God intended for Israel, Jesus Christ was indeed a true Israel. Bonhoeffer realized what Jesus Christ wanted to do in his life and thus, he articulated the significance of mature faithfulness, which “world come of age” implies.

Regarding religion, Bonhoeffer had a negative view. According to Green, “Religion as turning to the power-God in human personal crises

27) Ibid.

28) Ibid., 104.

29) Michael Mawson, “Scripture,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. Michael Mawson and Philip G. Ziegler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 124.

30) Ibid., 128.

31) Ibid., 129.

and intellectual problems, religion as born of human weakness, suffering, and ignorance, religion as devoted to a deus-ex-machina theology – that is what Bonhoeffer rejected.”³²⁾ Bonhoeffer felt the decline of this definition of religion in the Western European civilization since the 18th century Enlightenment.³³⁾ Yet, in contrast to Bonhoeffer's assumption, we note that Christianity had a tenacious hold upon German Christians from the fact that most of the Germans identified themselves as Christians under the Nazi's regime.³⁴⁾ Then, what sort of doctrine did German Christians believe and how did they evade the moral dimension of the Jewish pogrom? To answer these questions, it is necessary to examine a few negative features of contemporary German Christianity.

In his letters to Bethge, Bonhoeffer claimed that religion flourished on account of the personal intimate areas of life which were used as bait or “the hunting ground of modern pastors,”³⁵⁾ pointing out the tendency to push God out of the public human existence, such as political,

32) Clifford J. Green, “Bonhoeffer's Quest for Authentic Christianity: Beyond Fundamentalism, Nationalism, Religion, and Secularism,” in *Bonhoeffer: A Theology of Sociality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 349.

33) Martin Rumscheidt, “The Formation of Bonhoeffer's Theology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. John W. de Gruchy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 50-70. This article explains the influence of the ideas of the American philosopher William James and the German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey on Bonhoeffer's critique of religion.

34) Robert P. Ericksen and Susannah Heschel, eds., *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 10.

35) Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 8, ed. John W. de Gruchy, trans. Isabel Best et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 455.

economic, social dimension and to confine God only “in the realm of the personal, the inner life, the private sphere.”³⁶⁾ The main reason for Bonhoeffer to view religion negatively would have been that most Christians involved God in their private inner life but not in political, economic, and social life.³⁷⁾ That God is excluded from public sphere resulted in failure to understand God’s love for the entire world and his concern for everything that happens in the world. Yet, as I have already emphasized, Bonhoeffer’s rediscovery of God who is concerned about the public area was deeply related to his engagement with the Old Testament during his later imprisonment.³⁸⁾

As Wright has clarified, the Old Testament is concerned with the reality of this earth. He says, “The ordering of social relationships and structures, locally, nationally, and globally is of direct concern to our Creator God.”³⁹⁾ Pointing out the order of the biblical narrative, and the fact that both the Babel event (in Gen. 11) and the call of Abram (in Gen. 12) are set against the background of the table of nations in Genesis 10, Wright continues, “What is the purpose of this slab of ancient ethnic geography?... This is not a mythical, prehistorical world of gods and monsters, but the sober ‘classifiable’ world of nations, territories, cities, kingdoms, and languages – a thoroughly recognizable, political human world.”⁴⁰⁾ To be sure, the Old Testament is inherently this-worldly. In

36) Ibid.

37) Wüstenberg, “Religion and Secularity,” 321-330.

38) Mawson, “Scripture,” 124.

39) Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 215.

40) Ibid., 217-8.

other words, it is social.

On the contrary, the privatization of faith prevalent in German Christianity was not unrelated to the derogation of the Old Testament. Yoram Hazony, an Israeli-American philosopher and political theorist, articulates aspersions against Judaism and the Old Testament (Hebrew Scripture) in Christian Europe. He says, "Associating the texts of the Jews with ignorance and superstition, they (the philosophers of the Enlightenment) argued that no genuine works of reason had arisen among the Jews and that nothing that was originally Hebrew had made a significant contribution to the history of ideas."⁴¹ It is significant to note that, as a result of long-lasting antisemitism and denigration of the Old Testament in Germany throughout history, German Christianity became perverted by aligning with the Hitler regime. Even the Confessing Church was not sufficiently supportive to prevent the persecution of the Jews.

Looking closely at Bonhoeffer's understanding of God, we note that the God we believe in is intricately connected to our attitude towards the suffering of the vulnerable. Bonhoeffer would have characterized God as a sovereign who controls over the world with strength, a widely accepted concept of God among those German Christians who acclaimed Hitler. In one of his letters from *Letters and Papers from Prison*, Bonhoeffer comments, "Who is God? Not primarily a general belief in God's omnipotence, and so on. That is not a genuine experience of

41) Yoram Hazony, *The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 14.

God but just a prolongation of a piece of the world.”⁴²⁾ Bonhoeffer argues that an authentic Christian understanding of God is in fact the opposite of a belief in an omnipotent God. Green clarifies that, for Bonhoeffer, the God of Christian Scripture is not a *deus ex machina* to be manipulated by human needs and ideologies, but is found in *theologia crucis*, the opposite of power idolatry.⁴³⁾ For Bonhoeffer, genuine Christian understanding of God is, unlike religious understanding of God, powerless and suffering.

Here, we can think about why Bonhoeffer associated God with the powerless and the suffering. He assumed that God Himself hurts and suffers because of the great many people who suffer poverty, famine, and genocide in His created world. This is contrary to Greek philosophical understanding of God, which portrays God as apathetic toward the suffering of the humanity. Bonhoeffer makes apparent his different view on God from other religious understanding of God in the poem, “Christian and Heathens.” He comments that “‘Christians stand by God in God’s own pain’- that distinguishes Christians from heathens... That is the opposite of everything a religious person expects from God. The human being is called upon to share in God’s suffering at the hands of a godless world.”⁴⁴⁾

Bonhoeffer’s call to participate in God’s own pain resonates with the Polish-American and Jewish theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel’s articulation of the theology of pathos and the religion of sympathy in his

42) Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 501.

43) Green, “Bonhoeffer’s Quest for Authentic Christianity,” 350.

44) Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 480.

book, *The Prophets*. Heschel says, "He (God) does not simply command and expect obedience; He is also moved and affected by what happens in the world and reacts accordingly. Events and human actions arouse in Him joy or sorrow, pleasure or wrath."⁴⁵⁾ Heschel continues, "This notion that God can be intimately affected, that He possesses not merely intelligence and will, but also pathos, basically defines the prophetic consciousness of God."⁴⁶⁾ Comparing with the God of the philosophers, Heschel argues that "the God of Israel is a God Who loves, a God Who is known to, and concerned with, man."⁴⁷⁾ Pathos, according to Heschel, "denotes a living care, an outgoing challenge, a dynamic relation between God and man."⁴⁸⁾ In a nutshell, the divine pathos is the fact of God's participation in the predicament of man⁴⁹⁾ and means that God is always partial to justice.⁵⁰⁾ In line with the concept of the divine pathos, Heschel also discusses *ira dei* (divine anger), through which he explains that "His anger is aroused when the cry of the oppressed comes into His ears,"⁵¹⁾ and "to man, the anger of God incites the fear of pain; to God, the anger is pain."⁵²⁾ Here, we observe that Bonhoeffer's reference to God's pain can be better understood with the exposition of Heschel's analysis of the divine pathos and divine anger.

45) Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2001), 288.

46) *Ibid.*, 289.

47) *Ibid.*

48) *Ibid.*

49) *Ibid.*, 291.

50) *Ibid.*, 298.

51) *Ibid.*, 392.

52) *Ibid.*, 400.

Also, Bonhoeffer's repeated emphasis on participating in the suffering of God leads us to continue to explore Heschel's elaboration of prophetic sympathy. According to Heschel, "The prophet is stirred by an intimate concern for the divine concern. Sympathy, then, is the essential mode in which he responds to the divine situation."⁵³⁾ Heschel's idea of prophetic sympathy aligns with Bonhoeffer's view that sharing in God's suffering in worldly life, which means being involved in the issues of the world, makes someone a Christian.

Based on the above discussion, we discern two sorts of Christianity: One functions as only religion, the other is religionless Christianity, namely, authentic Christianity (or faith, which is participating in the being of Jesus⁵⁴⁾). First, religious Christianity focuses on satisfying one's needs, being liberated from a sense of guilt and wishing to enter heaven after life. On the contrary, religionless Christianity puts an emphasis upon following the path of Jesus Christ, being for others, denying oneself, and committing to heal and repair the world. By arguing for a this-worldly religionless Christianity, Bonhoeffer accentuates that most Christians should overcome childish dependency on an omnipotent God. Instead, they should be willing partners of God,⁵⁵⁾ assuming divine responsibility for being involved in repairing the world, paying attention to the vulnerable victims of famine, genocide, and war.

53) Ibid., 394.

54) Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 501.

55) See Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Man Is not Alone: A Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976). Here, Heschel elaborates the theology of interdependence, which means that God needs Man to establish his righteousness on earth, thus Man is called to be God's partner.

Thus far, we have discussed Bonhoeffer's understanding of Christian God in comparison to the religious God. Simply put, the religious God, which is the opposite of authentic Christian God, refers to God who is confined only to the inner, individual, spiritual, and after-worldly dimension and is thus excluded from public, political, economic, social, and this-worldly dimension. On the contrary, the point of the authentic Christian understanding of God is that God suffers because most of the humanity, created in God's image, have endured numerous sufferings. Bonhoeffer highlights that participating in God's suffering as disciples is authentic Christianity: following Jesus Christ, who embodied God's pathos, lived for others, and struggled to restore the dignity of the vulnerable and the dehumanized. Bonhoeffer's emphasis on following Jesus Christ by participating in God's suffering is closely related to his insistence on the importance of the Old Testament.

As we have seen in Heschel's discussion of prophetic sympathy, it is Jesus Christ who identified his concern with God's concern elaborated in the Old Testament and felt deeply sympathetic with God's pathos. Jesus Christ was the embodiment of God's pathos, God's suffering. Thus, we should understand Bonhoeffer's Christology and his idea of religionless Christianity through Heschel's perspective, grounded in the Old Testament.

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, through Bonhoeffer's free responsible action and religionless Christianity, we learn that the authentic way of life for a

Christian should focus on taking responsibility for this world, a world that abounds in injustice and evil systems of power. The common emphasis of these two theological conceptions is based upon the divine responsibility which Jesus Christ showed toward the world. Like Jesus Christ, in his submission and obedience to God, defeating his self-centered desire and transcending himself by being crucified to restore and rescue the others, Bonhoeffer also transcended himself at the risk of his life by participating in tyrannicide to rescue the Jews from Hitler's persecution. It is his Christology that motivated him to participate in the plot. Based upon this Christology, which is God-becoming-human, Bonhoeffer realized the value of human being, like Jesus Christ who gave his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45), he also devoted his life for the powerless Jews. In his discussion of religionless Christianity, which began from his criticism of the way that individual Christians regarded God as a personal genie, the underlying foundation of his theology is the divine responsibility for the sufferers in this reality. Bonhoeffer summarizes his definition of faith in the following phrase: "Faith is responsible for humanity and history. Faith is participating in Jesus' being-for-others."⁵⁶⁾

Through this investigation, we realized that the Old Testament played a significant role in shaping Bonhoeffer's later theology. It is only by paying closer attention to Old Testament ethics that we can better understand Bonhoeffer's late thoughts and correctly grasp what he meant by his core Christology, *Discipleship*, free responsible action, and reli-

56) Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 501

gionless Christianity. The way the Korean Church can be renewed lies in learning about Bonhoeffer's authentic Christianity, shaped by his intensified engagement with the Old Testament.

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• ABSTRACT •

An Analysis of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Late Ethics and Theology Through the Lens of Old Testament Ethics

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This paper aims to examine the influence of the Old Testament on Dietrich Bonhoeffer's later thought, manifesting in his 'free responsible action' and 'religionless/worldly Christianity.' Bonhoeffer's attempt to assassinate Hitler can be understood as a free, responsible action grounded in the Old Testament pacifist ethics, which recognizes that unavoidable and limited violence is permissible in situations that threaten survival. Furthermore, this paper seeks to demonstrate that Bonhoeffer developed his Christology and formulated the concept of religionless Christianity through his intensive engagement with the Old Testament during his imprisonment.

In a de-religious Korean society, exploring Bonhoeffer's later thought can offer a path toward renewal for Korean Christianity. As is evident, Bonhoeffer developed the concept of religionless Christianity by deeply delving into the Old Testament. This paper emphasizes the necessity for believers in the Korean church to understand the Old Testament more deeply. It aims to highlight that a deeper and more accurate understanding of the Christian faith advocated by Bonhoeffer can be achieved only when grounded in a comprehensive understanding of the Old Testament.

Key words: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, free responsible action, religionless Christianity, Bonhoeffer's late theology, Old Testament influence on Bonhoeffer, Old Testament Ethics
