

David S. Robinson, *Christ and Revelatory Community in Bonhoeffer's Reception of Hegel*

(Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), pp. xv + 260. €69.00.

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David Robinson's *Christ and Revelatory Community* is the first book-length treatment of Bonhoeffer's theological reception of G. W. F. Hegel's philosophy of religion. Robinson is a sophisticated and erudite writer, displaying a deft ability to negotiate highly complex material and ideas. His treatment of Bonhoeffer's reception of Hegel is wide-ranging; he skilfully moves back and forth across two extensive bodies of primary texts, and also makes astute judgements about secondary scholarship. *Christ and Revelatory Community* is an impressive and important accomplishment by any measure.

The core of Robinson's book consists of six chapters, each of which explores Bonhoeffer's reception of Hegel in relation to a particular *locus* or theme. Broadly, most of the chapters tend to display the following kind of pattern: (1) Bonhoeffer directly criticises Hegel by claiming 'x'; (2) a more careful reading of Hegel, however, indicates that this does not accurately capture his position; (3) aspects of Bonhoeffer's own thinking run closer to Hegel than is usually recognised; (4) yet there are still some differences. Robinson on this basis reads and interprets Bonhoeffer's theology as providing a kind of 'internal corrective', 'repair' or 'subversion' of Hegel's philosophy.

In Chapter 1, Robinson examines Bonhoeffer's two dissertations: *Sanctorum Communio* and *Act and Being*. Among other things, he attends to one of Bonhoeffer's central ecclesiological formulations, 'Christ existing as community', itself a modification of Hegel's 'God existing as community'. As Robinson demonstrates, Bonhoeffer deploys this (and other) Hegelian language in order to express God's revelatory presence in the Christian community. At the same time, a firmer christological focus allows him to give more emphasis to the externality of the Word and to a certain 'eschatological reserve' (p. 42), both of which are lacking or at least diminished in Hegel's philosophy as it stands. Chapter 2 turns to Bonhoeffer's reception of Hegel in his protology, concentrating on his 1933 lectures *Creation and Fall*. Here Robinson draws close parallels between Bonhoeffer's and Hegel's 'similar depictions of the fallen mind' (p. 70), namely the 'split cognisance' between good and evil that is constitutive for all human beings after the fall. In this chapter Robinson also draws attention to divergences between Hegel and Bonhoeffer on the 'volatility' and 'original unity' of creation.

The next two chapters focus on christology, drawing on Bonhoeffer's 1933 lectures on christology and notes from a seminar he gave on Hegel in the same year. In Chapter 3, Robinson presents Bonhoeffer's well-known accusation of Hegel's christology as 'docetic', showing this to be an oversimplification at best. In this context Robinson further argues that Bonhoeffer's presentation of Christ as *counter-logos* should not be understood as opposing human reason *per se*: 'Rather than depicting Christ as against reason *tout court*, Bonhoeffer affirms Christology as "the invisible, unrecognised, hidden centre of science [*Wissenschaft*]"' (p. 119). Even if true, Robinson might have given more attention here to what it means that Christ remains the 'unrecognised' and 'hidden' centre. Does Robinson's preferred language of a 'sublation' (p. 121)

downplay Bonhoeffer's own firm distinction between faith (in Christ) and human reason? Chapter 4 turns to Bonhoeffer and Hegel on Christ's presence in word and sacrament. Robinson provides helpful background in the form of Barth and Bonhoeffer's friend Franz Hildebrandt who had used Hegelian language for explicating Luther's *ist*. For Robinson, Bonhoeffer's theology displays both these influences. With Hildebrandt (and Hegel), Bonhoeffer develops the logic of Christ's 'real presence' in the bread and wine. With Barth (and against Hegel), he gives more emphasis to preaching in its 'disruptive' significance.

The final two chapters draw out some of the political implications of Bonhoeffer's 'correctives' of Hegel, mostly drawing on *Discipleship* and *Ethics*. In Chapter 5, Robinson contests ways in which scholars have straightforwardly juxtaposed Bonhoeffer's 'revolutionary spirit' with Hegel as 'Prussian state apologist'. He claims that Bonhoeffer's context required a greater emphasis (than Hegel) on the church as a distinct 'confessional space' vis-à-vis the state. Correlatively, he demonstrates that Hegel himself had often brought a 'critical rational principle' to bear 'on state action'. Chapter 6 extends and deepens this argument with reference to race, again contesting overly simplistic oppositions between the two. Here Robinson also briefly presents W. E. B. Du Bois as a lesser known 'critical line of Hegel reception', which also directly influenced Bonhoeffer.

As mentioned above, *Christ and Revelatory Community* is an important accomplishment. It is filled with rich observations and insights into Bonhoeffer and Hegel (most of which cannot, of course, be conveyed in a short review). As also suggested, Robinson's chapters follow a particular pattern; and he thus tends to frame and organise Bonhoeffer's reception of Hegel as an 'internal corrective', 'repair' or 'subversion'. My only real question is whether these insights and this material might have been organised otherwise. Would it be possible to read and interpret Bonhoeffer's many 'divergences' as indicative of a more thoroughgoing break, even if he remains willing to draw upon Hegel in discrete ways? The rich detail of Robinson's book and complexity of its structure would seem to allow such a question.

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Mikeal Parsons and Michael Wade Martin, *Ancient Rhetoric and the New Testament: The Influence of Elementary Greek Composition*

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This volume sets out to demonstrate how the *progymnasmata*, the 'building blocks of ancient Mediterranean literature' (p. 275), should be the starting point for critical study of New Testament literature. As the preliminary exercises for those going on to declamation, they are the 'theoretical lens' (p. 281) through which we can understand