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## **Bonhoeffer and the Way of the Crucified: Methodeia, Doctrine, and the 'Powers'**

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## Bonhoeffer and the Way of the Crucified: *Methodeia*, Doctrine, and the ‘Powers’

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**Abstract:** The Greek word *methodeia*, the “schemes,” “tricks,” or “methods” of the enemy that move us away from Christ and from unity in his body, is uniquely found only within Ephesians 4:14 and 6:11. In Ephesians 4:14, Paul focuses on the unity of the body of Christ and the way Christians grow into unity and maturity with Christ is by avoiding the *methodeia* of the enemy. The term also appears again in Ephesians 6:11 where Paul urges believers to put on the armor of God to avoid the *methodeia* of the devil. In this chapter we consider Peter Rollins’ theological movement of “Radical Theology” as being an example of *methodeia* which might disrupt the transformational unity of the body of Christ and against which we need to arm ourselves. We especially examine the purported reliance of Rollins’ movement upon the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and to what extent Bonhoeffer may propose a still radical but, conversely, more clearly orthodox movement of deconstruction than that suggested by Rollins, one in which Christ alone must deconstruct the human “I” and supernaturally enable persons both to overcome sin and the devil and to do good in the world only in and through Christ, via the specific historic means provided by Christ.

**Key Words:** Apostolicity, a/theism, Body of Christ, Bonhoeffer, Church, Confession, Death of God theology, Deconstructionist, Devil, Ideologies, Institutions, Materialist, *methodeia*, Obedient Thinking, Orthodoxy, Pyrotheology, Radical Theology, Rollins, Sin, Systems, Temptation, The Word

### Introduction

The Greek term *methodeia* is uniquely used by Paul in Ephesians to refer to “schemes,” “tricks,” or “methods” of the devil that are employed to move Christians away from unity with Christ in his body and then, in isolation, bring about their destruction. In this chapter we will consider Peter Rollins’ theological movement of “Radical Theology,” or alternatively titled “Pyrotheology,” as an example of such

*methodeia* in which his movement disrupts the transformational unity of the body of Christ by leading us away from continuity and congruence with the core beliefs and practices of the Christian faith as transmitted via the apostles—including in Rollins’ denial of the transcendent—in exchange for a form of “Christianity” that reduces the entire faith to relativistic acts of “love” in the material. In so doing we will especially examine the purported reliance of Rollins’ movement upon the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and to what extent Bonhoeffer may propose a more radical yet orthodox movement of deconstruction than that suggested by Rollins, one that may prove more of a retardant for Rollins’ “Pyrotheology” than an accelerant. We will show how Bonhoeffer proposes a movement in which Christ alone must deconstruct the human “I” and supernaturally enable persons to overcome obstacles to unity and freedom in Christ—especially the schemes of the devil—and to then progress to do good in the world only in and through Christ, in the unity of his body, via the specific Christ-ordained beliefs and acts given to the body by Christ to supernaturally form us.

### **Doctrine, Deceitful Schemes, and the Devil in Ephesians 4:14 and 6:11**

The Greek term *methodeia* is only used twice within the New Testament. The term first appears in Ephesians 4:14 and it is then utilized by Paul again in Ephesians 6:11. Paul uniquely introduces this term to refer to “schemes,” “tricks,” or “methods” that originate with demonic powers and are employed, often through human agency, to move Christians away from unity with Christ in his body and to bring about their fracturing, isolation, and destruction. For Paul, the spreading of false doctrine is therefore a primary tactic by which the devil uses humans to attack the body of Christ.

In Ephesians 4, Paul stresses the necessity of the unity of the body of Christ. Toward achieving that unity, in Ephesians 4:14–15 Paul claims that Christians must remain in the “truth.” Alignment with apostolic doctrine as delivered is not optional. Correct apostolic doctrine conveys what is true about Christ, but even more, surrendering to true apostolic teaching is a vital way by which persons surrender to Christ and are formed in unity in Christ. Therefore Paul urges believers to speak only what is true and so grow to maturity together in Christ rather than being led astray by the immature doctrines of human invention. By this *methodeia* (“schemes,” “tricks,” or “methods”) Christians might depart from the truth, the love of Christ, and from unity in the body, all of which are held together only in Christ, in his body. In this instance, in Ephesians 4, when Paul first mentions the *methodeia*, they appear to be used by humans whose invented doctrines lead believers away from the truth of the Gospel, the love of Christ, and the unity of his body. However, Paul makes it clear in Ephesians 6 that the actual source of such doctrinal *methodeia* is supernatural.

When Paul reintroduces the term *methodeia* in Ephesians 6:11 he makes it clear that the real source of the *methodeia* is the devil and, in 6:12–13, he adds that the enemies

against which the body of Christ are actually contending are demonic powers that believers can only defeat in Christ himself by putting on the armor of God to overcome the *methodeia* of the devil. The false doctrines of Ephesians 4:14 are not incidental but a primary means by which the devil works through humans to attack and inhibit the growth and unity of the body of Christ. He does so by leading believers away from not only true apostolic teaching from-and-about Christ but from the unity of the body that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, has been entrusted to both live within and transmit the life and teachings of Christ.

Consequently, Paul similarly warned Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:1–2 that the Holy Spirit has said that false teachings are the chief means by which persons will be led away from the faith in the last days and that such teachings originate with demons working through human “liars.” Paul adds in 1 Timothy 1:6–10 that the doctrinal “myths” of such lying teachers, in service to the devil, are in opposition to the “good doctrine” that originates with Christ, and which also leads to godliness. How was one to differentiate between merely human doctrine, originating with the devil, and the authentic teachings of Christ? Paul adds in 2 Timothy 1:10–14 that Timothy was only to pass on the “deposit” of teaching that came from Christ via the apostles, which Paul again claims in 2 Timothy 1:9 also leads to a “holy life” as a fruit that validates the authenticity of that teaching. Thus, teaching that was trustworthy was only that which clearly came from Christ, as transmitted in public by the apostles, and that led to love, righteousness, and unity in the body, centered in the person of Christ himself. Conversely, false teaching—which would include a denial of the spiritual realities Paul was calling believers’ attention to—could be seen to originate with humans (though really being from the devil) and would produce division, isolation, and ungodliness. Thus in both Ephesians and in 1–2 Timothy Paul warns that the devil is using the *methodeia* of false teachings to not only attack individual believers, but also to wage war upon the body of Christ himself via false doctrines and theological error.

In this chapter we will explore an apparent contemporary example of such *methodeia* in Peter Rollins’ theological deconstructionist movement that—while claiming support from Bonhoeffer—serves to separate current persons from unity with the apostolic faith and the body of Christ through the centuries via an attack on apostolic teaching about Christ and the body. Rollins denies the reality of supernatural powers or obstacles to faith and unity, which removes any need to guard against powers and principalities, doing away with both Paul’s suggestion that the devil is the greatest enemy of the body and that Christians must put on the armor of Christ to guard against his attacks. He has turned both the devil and his *methodeia* into false ideologies that he alleges Christians have manufactured in order to manipulate persons into turning to Christianity and belief in a transcendent Christian God, and which Christians have manufactured as a panacea for problems he claims are only material and psychological in nature. Subsequently, Rollins has made orthodox

Christian belief in a transcendent God—and the necessity of the sacred practices of the faith given by Christ to believers to form the body in unity—into the very enemies of faith and unity. In so doing, he contradicts Paul and goes against apostolic teaching, which might suggest that Rollins’ theology is itself a *methodeia* by which the devil might use humans to accomplish an attack on Christian belief and unity in Christ. Bonhoeffer would disagree with Rollins—and in alignment with Paul—he sees the devil as a real and present enemy who stands against unity in Christ and who wages war on Christ by attacking the members of his body with temptations to sin. To stand firm against the devil, believers must put on the armor of Christ via surrender to the apostolic teaching about Christ, the preaching of the true Word as transmitted by the apostles, and adherence to the sacred Christ-ordained practices given to the body for its formation, beginning with confession.

### **Rollins and Radical Theology: False Doctrine as *Methodeia***

The theological approach of “Radical Theology” has been primarily ideated by Irish philosopher Peter Rollins.<sup>1</sup> In “Radical Theology” Rollins has argued that the essential problems facing humans are not sin, death, hell, or demonic powers, but rather that all Christian beliefs, doctrines, and practices are ideologically bound and that such false ideologies are themselves the problem. This approach to theology stands contrary to the apostle Paul’s emphases about the nature and function of doctrine and the powers in Ephesians. Nevertheless, for Rollins, deconstructing such systems, through both the death of ideologies and an experiential loss of God’s presence, will free persons by helping them to embrace materialist actualities where both God and truth are experienced as radically subjective. K. S. Moody has also noted that Rollins’ “Radical Theology,” which she claimed has been influenced both by “Death of God Theology” and “a/theism,” is a convergence of deconstructionism and materialism as seen in the work of a/theistic deconstructionists John D. Caputo and Slavoj Žižek,<sup>2</sup> the latter of whom Rollins has credited often in his magnum opus *Insurrection: To Believe Is Human To Doubt, Divine*.<sup>3</sup> Rollins has himself defined “a/theism,” which he also

1. See: K.S. Moody, “The Death and Decay of God: Radical Theology and Emerging Christianity,” *Modern Believing* 57, no. 3 (2016), 253–265. Moody has credited Rollins with being the foremost catalyst of “Radical Theology.”

2. Moody, “The Death and Decay of God.”

3. Peter Rollins, *Insurrection: To Believe is Human To Doubt, Divine* (New York: Howard Books, 2011), 38, 44, 46, 86. K.S. Moody (“Retrospective Speculative Philosophy: Looking for Traces of Žižek’s Communist Collective in Emerging Christian Praxis,” *Political Theology* 13 [2012]: 183, 189) also argued that Slavoj Žižek has had the greatest influence on Rollins’ a/theistic deconstructionism. Žižek (“Dialectical Clarity versus the Misty Conceit of Paradox,” in Slavoj Žižek and John Milbank, *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?*, ed. Creston Davis [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009], 287) has declared that “Christianity is alive only in materialist (atheist) practices which negate it.” Subsequently, Moody (“Retrospective Speculative Philosophy,” 196) claimed that Rollins’ Ikon community of “Christian a/theists” was following Žižek’s template for materialist communes and practices as evidenced, for instance, in Rollins’ talk



Jonathan K. Sharpe with Jerry Pillay: *Bonhoeffer and the Way of the Crucified* claimed to follow, as an experiential loss of God that moves beyond both theism and atheism, such as the “new atheism” of Richard Dawkins, which Rollins argued was only a “comfortable theoretical rejection of the divine,”<sup>4</sup> to embrace a deeper loss of God that Rollins asserted had “more in common with the Atheism we see expressed in Friedrich Nietzsche, whose blood-curdling proclamation of God’s death . . . was deeply felt.”<sup>5</sup> Rollins further defined his movement as a “fundamentally irreligious movement that has nothing to do with theism or atheism, or with doctrines,”<sup>6</sup> in which he aimed to “blur the lines between theism and atheism” by rejecting the “Good News” of Christianity for a “mature” doubt that “unravels” all knowing and meaning to “revel” in the “horror” of uncertainty, even of God’s existence.<sup>7</sup> After the “death of God”<sup>8</sup> and all “knowing,” he proposed forming materialist spaces for “being” in the world, where God and truth were reduced to existing in human acts.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, while Ephesians exhorts Christians to pursue spiritual maturity and health through avoiding “every wind of doctrine” and “human cunning” characterized by craft and “deceitful schemes,” Rollins’ *methodeia* involve the complete conflagration of Christian doctrine through an approach that he alternatively calls “Pyrotheology.”<sup>10</sup> Rollins’ pyrotheology is particularly striking (and ironic) when one considers it in the context of the “schemes (*methodeia*) of the devil” in Ephesians 6:11 which are characterized in part as “flaming darts” that must be protected against—not embraced—by means of the divine empowerment and protection that comes from the “shield of faith” (Eph 6:16).

In terms of Rollins’ influence, both Moody<sup>11</sup> and sociologists Gladys Ganiel and Gerardo Marti<sup>12</sup> have especially noted Rollins’ “Radical” or “Pyro” theology as of “Retroactive Justification,” wherein he claimed to be forming “a Christo-communist collective, an ‘insurrectionary’ force,” that embodied the resurrection through materialist praxis. See Peter Rollins, “Retroactive Justification,” accessed March 15, 2018, <https://vimeo.com/21173208>.

4. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 20–21.

5. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 20–21.

6. Peter Rollins, *The Divine Magician: The Disappearance of Religion and the Discovery of Faith* (New York: Howard Books, 2015), 6.

7. Peter Rollins, accessed January 6, 2020, <http://peterrollins.net/?p=3739>.

8. See Rollins, “Retroactive Justification.” Rollins has embraced the “Death of God” movement for his own theology.

9. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 36. See also John D. Caputo, *What Would Jesus Deconstruct?: The Good News of Postmodernism for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 130. Caputo suggested forming “spaces for being,” to place “experience” over knowing.

10. See e.g., Peter Rollins, “Pyrotheology,” accessed December 19, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gY-VITff7k4>.

11. See K.S. Moody, “Resisting Conformity at the Margins of Marginal Christianity,” The Religious Studies Project. October 9, 2014. Accessed February 2018, <https://religiousstudiesproject.com/2014/10/09/resisting-conformity-at-the-margins-of-marginal-christianity-by-katharine-sarah-moody/>, 2014 and Moody, “The Death and Decay of God.”

12. Gladys Ganiel and Gerardo Marti, “Northern Ireland, America and the Emerging Church Movement: Exploring the Significance of Peter Rollins and the Ikon Collective,” *Journal of the Irish Society for the Academic Study of Religions* (May 2014): 26–45.

being a catalyst for progressive elements of the Emerging Church (EC) movement and their successors. In my own research, I (Jonathan) have likewise traced Rollins' influence on EC theologians such as Brian McLaren,<sup>13</sup> Tony Jones,<sup>14</sup> and Ian Mobsby.<sup>15</sup> Rollins has also continued to influence young western Christians via his popular videos, blogs, and talks where he has repeated his thesis that persons must abandon all "knowing," such as belief in the physical resurrection of Christ, to instead engage in a subjective, materialist "life of resurrection."<sup>16</sup>

Attempting to justify his movement as still Christian, Rollins has also claimed theological support from Dietrich Bonhoeffer. For example, in his book *Insurrection*, where Rollins presented his vision for an emergent theology for a postmodern age, while leaning on Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, and Derrida, Rollins claimed to have been primarily inspired by Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers from Prison* (LPP) for his own movement to deconstruct historic Christian beliefs, practices, and forms, which Rollins believed prevented persons from authentically "being in" the current world.<sup>17</sup> Rollins credited Bonhoeffer, for instance, for showing persons how to "overturn the church as it presently stands," including, Rollins claimed, "orthodoxy," so exchanging the "impotent God" of religion for an authentic God of "religionless Christianity."<sup>18</sup> Rollins further proclaimed in *Insurrection* that he was now completing Bonhoeffer's work, showing what "faith beyond religion might look like."<sup>19</sup> Rollins likewise presented himself as Bonhoeffer's theological successor in his inclusion of Barbara Brown Taylor's declaration, in Rollins' 2015 book *The Divine Magician*, that "Rollins writes and thinks like a new Bonhoeffer, crucifying the trappings of religion in order to lay bare a radical, religionless and insurrectional Christianity."<sup>20</sup>

13. Brian D. McLaren, "Introduction" in Peter Rollins, *How (Not) to Speak of God: Philosophical & Theological Underpinnings of the Emerging Church Movement* (London: Paraclete, 2006). McLaren praised Rollins as creating the "first and most hopeful expressions to date of Christian theology being done in a postmodern context."

14. Tony Jones, "I Am (Not) as Smart as Pete Rollins," Theoblogy, accessed February 2018, <http://theoblogy.blogspot.com/2006/12/i-am-not-as-smart-as-peter-rollins.html>. Jones gushed that Rollins' book *How (Not) to Speak of God* was the seminal "negative theology for the emerging conversation that is poignant, beautiful, and profound."

15. Ian Mobsby, *Emerging & Fresh Expressions of Church* (London: Moot Community, 2007), 28–30. Mobsby praised Rollins' influence on the common belief, amidst progressive/emergent Emerging Church voices, that one must move past God as an "object" of knowledge to instead experience God as "radically subjective."

16. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 180.

17. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge (Munich: Touchstone, [1944] 1997) and Rollins, *Insurrection*, xiv–xv.

18. Rollins, *Insurrection*, xiv.

19. Rollins, *Insurrection*, xiv.

20. Barbara Brown Taylor in Rollins, *The Divine Magician*, 1.

## **Rollins' Co-Opting of Bonhoeffer for a Repackaged "Death of God" Theology**

In claiming to ground his a/theistic deconstruction of historic orthodox Christianity in Bonhoeffer's work, Rollins subsequently attempted to apply Bonhoeffer's "God of the gaps" theology—in which Bonhoeffer said it was wrong to "use God as a stop-gap for the incompleteness of our knowledge"<sup>21</sup>—to argue that Christians had misused the basic human psychological need for a "crutch," or for someone who could fix the world or give their lives meaning, to manipulate persons into seeing God as the solution.<sup>22</sup> Rollins' own antidote to such false "crutches" and constructs was for persons to "unplug from the God of religion," who could solve human problems, to instead enter a mode of "unknowing" where God's presence was viewed as absent.<sup>23</sup>

In comparison to Paul's vision in Ephesians 2:11–22, it is unclear how an absent God could correspond in any meaningful sense with the God who is said to be "dwelling" in the body of Christ as a temple by the Spirit (Eph 2:21–22). Likewise, the state of unknowing that Rollins describes as a solution to the problems he sees in Christian theology and experience stands in contrast to Ephesians 2:11–13 in which those who were "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise" are described as having had "no hope" because they were "without God in the world." This God, in verse 13, is then said to have come near to them in the person of Jesus Christ. Indeed, contrary to Rollins' ideal of "unknowing," the theology of Ephesians focuses on the maturity, spiritual health, and divine protection from the powers that come from knowing God. For Paul, in Ephesians, the love of Christ that we "know" (*ginōskō*) fills us with the fullness of God. This divine love is a love that "surpasses knowledge (*gnōsis*)" not a love that is devoid of knowledge. Knowledge of Christ's love, therefore, is a Spirit-ordained gift and a vital means by which believers experience God's fullness (Eph 3:19). This is the same love that grounds our unity in Christ (Eph 4:1–16) and that characterizes the manner of the Christian truth-telling about Christ that realigns the wayward doctrinal errors and *methodeia* that attempt to counteract or subvert the unity that comes through faithfulness to the Gospel transmitted by the apostles (Eph 4:15).

Contrary to the overall trajectory of Ephesians, Rollins claims Bonhoeffer's support for his own theological agenda without showing precisely how Bonhoeffer supported a "'Death of God' theology." He then delineates a "Death of God" movement as his solution to false constructs, referencing the cry of forsakenness expressed by Christ on the cross to contend that Christ, like Nietzsche, lost all certainty that there was a God who was "out there" and who "ensures life makes sense."<sup>24</sup> Further,

21. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 310–312.

22. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 9.

23. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 17.

24. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 27.



Rollins argued that “Jesus as Christ is cut off from his own essence on the cross”<sup>25</sup> and, thus, as Christ lost all hope, “God became an Atheist.”<sup>26</sup> As such, rather than proclaiming the “Good News” of the resurrection, Rollins declared that Christ has continued to hang on the cross in “weakness.”<sup>27</sup> Subsequently, current persons, Rollins charged, must undergo the “same troubling, terrifying process” that Christ endured by likewise losing God, hope, and meaning<sup>28</sup> being cut off from Christianity, its orthodox concepts of God, and even God himself, in terms of one’s experience of God and certainty about him.<sup>29</sup> At last, after all “meaning is ripped away,” Rollins said persons would find that there were no answers or purpose provided in exchange for the death of meaning, only “doubt, unknowing and loss”<sup>30</sup> since there was no God “out there” but God could only be had as a “presence that is made manifest in our very midst . . . in fully embracing” the secular world via a materialist “act of love.”<sup>31</sup>

Therefore, Rollins’ main thesis, which he boldly claimed was inspired by Bonhoeffer, was that, ironically, first, persons could know with certainty that Christ lost God on the cross in a way that revealed all religious belief and knowing as meaningless and insufficient. Second, in one’s entering into death with Christ, persons must also experience the same loss of confidence in God’s presence that Rollins then confidently presumed Christ experienced in order to “rupture . . . the way those beliefs function as a crutch to prevent the individual from actively participating in the difficult challenge of embracing the world.”<sup>32</sup> In this state, once freed from false systems of belief, persons could enter a non-religious human community where God was found only in subjective acts of love and “being” in that community.<sup>33</sup> In embracing the subjective and material as all that could be had, humans could create spaces “where people are invited to suspend their interpretations of the world . . . reimagining the kingdom of God in a way that is not constrained by the presently existing system.”<sup>34</sup> Third, Rollins suggested a new liturgical structure to guide persons through what he termed the “transforming trauma of Christ’s death,” via

25. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 28.

26. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 20. Rollins’ movement here mirrored Marxist a/theist Slavoj Žižek’s own claims about the cross, such as are seen in the film *Pervert’s Guide to Ideology* (directed by Sophie Fiennes and written by Slavoj Žižek [Blinder Films, 2012]), where he argued that Jesus’ death, rather than being salvific, showed humans that “there is no God” or greater meaning, only humans who exist together in the material.

27. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 28.

28. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 29, 35.

29. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 47.

30. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 23.

31. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 120.

32. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 72.

33. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 119–121.

34. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 26.

Jonathan K. Sharpe with Jerry Pillay: *Bonhoeffer and the Way of the Crucified* the loss of God, including meditating on God's absence<sup>35</sup> such as, for example, via practicing "Atheism-for-lent."<sup>36</sup>

Subsequently, Rollins also critiqued an orthodox focus on supernatural realities or an eschatological salvation, calling for persons to instead enjoy the pleasures of the present world, living fully in the material without certainty of the transcendent or eternal.<sup>37</sup> He additionally lamented that persons who had stepped away from Christian religion to embrace doubts about God's transcendence or aide had, unfortunately, often turned back to the church as a "safety blanket," returning to a "false myth" that said that God was "out there" and could solve human problems.<sup>38</sup> Likewise, again citing Bonhoeffer as his influence in *Church in the Present Tense*,<sup>39</sup> Rollins argued that instead of returning to orthodox Christianity, persons should embrace the "basic goodness" of humanity and the secular world. To do so, he interpreted Bonhoeffer's call in LPP for the church to be the church "for others"<sup>40</sup> to mean that true faith was found in abandoning Christian religion to embrace the secular world in all of its worldly fullness: "For that is faith."<sup>41</sup> For Rollins then, materialist acts of love and justice amidst current contexts were the "essence" and *telos* of the faith. It is hard to imagine, though, that the apostle Paul would envision such a humanistic interpretation of faith that relies on the basic goodness of humanity, especially given that he characterized humans who are apart from Christ as being spiritually "dead" in their "trespasses and sin" and under the control of the "prince of the power of the air" as people who were "by nature children of wrath" (Eph 2:1–3).

### Bonhoeffer's Key Contrasts with Rollins

At first glance, it could appear that Bonhoeffer's own seemingly radical theology provided tangential support for Rollins' movement via his concern about persons attempting to bind God or truth within human institutions or systems. In *Act and Being*, for instance, Bonhoeffer warned of the potential dangers of human references to an institutional church, orthodoxy as a system, or even to human hermeneutics or doctrines to claim to "have" truth or God, by which references persons could actually seek to place themselves over God, Scripture, and revelation.<sup>42</sup> However, a deeper

35. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 73.

36. Peter Rollins, "Atheism for Lent," accessed March 4, 2018, <https://peterrollins.com/atheism-for-lent/>.

37. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 72.

38. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 72.

39. Peter Rollins, "The Worldly Theology of Emerging Christianity" in Scot McKnight, Kevin Corcoran, Peter Rollins, and Jason Clark, *Church in the Present Tense: A Candid Look at What's Emerging* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2011), 28–30, 33–34.

40. See Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 486.

41. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 36.

42. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, vol. 2 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress, [1931], 2009), 92.

exploration of Bonhoeffer's theological corpus reveals more conflicts with Rollins' movement than support, especially in Bonhoeffer's focus on individual sin and Satan as being the greatest powers of destruction facing humanity, rather than human systems, and on salvation being only in and through the living person of the crucified and resurrected Christ, rather than via merely human communities and acts.

### **Bonhoeffer's Work Does Not Support a "Death of God" Theology**

In considering Rollins' inference that Bonhoeffer advocated an experiential "Death of God," as Martin E. Marty has similarly shown in *Dietrich Bonhoeffer's "Letters and Papers from Prison": A Biography*,<sup>43</sup> it is vital to note that attempts to claim Bonhoeffer in support of a Marxist atheistic "Death of God" theology were long ago rebuked by those who knew Bonhoeffer well and understood his Christology. Bonhoeffer's good friend, Paul Lehmann, for example, a Protestant liberation theologian who himself believed God was incarnate in current contexts,<sup>44</sup> nonetheless said that those who claimed Bonhoeffer for a "Death of God" theology, as Rollins has done, grossly misread Bonhoeffer's work:

"Death of God" theologians are perhaps the most conspicuous of Bonhoeffer's misrepresentation. They have seized upon the *Letters and Papers from Prison* . . . "the world come of age," "religionless Christianity," "true worldliness" . . . these same phrases have been appropriated as a . . . "new essence of Christianity" which claims Bonhoeffer for the tradition of Nietzsche and celebrates him as a forerunner of a theology without God. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that . . . atheistic celebrations of Bonhoeffer are grievous distortions of his thought and spirit . . . there is no informed and responsible way claiming Bonhoeffer for a theology without God.<sup>45</sup>

Against such misreadings of Bonhoeffer, Edwin H. Robertson, in the preface to his translation of Bonhoeffer's *Christ the Center*, argued that the lens through which to understand all of Bonhoeffer's theology, ecclesiology, and approaches to Scripture was through his Christology, such as presented in *Christ the Center*.<sup>46</sup> Within *Christ the Center*—containing Bonhoeffer's lectures defending an apostolic Christology against a revisionist Aryan-Christology being popularized in the Germany of the 1930's—Bonhoeffer made it clear that even as persons sought to discover who Christ was for them, in their actuality, this did not mean persons could subjectively decide

43. Martin E. Marty, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer's "Letters and Papers from Prison": A Biography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

44. See Paul L. Lehmann, *Ethics in a Christian Context* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, [1963] 2006), 25, 47, 82.

45. Lehmann, *Ethics in a Christian Context*, 365.

46. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, trans. preface by Edwin H. Robertson (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 8–9.

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who Christ was, since they must align with the Christ of “biblical fact” or it was not the historical Christ they were describing.<sup>47</sup> The Christ of biblical fact, Bonhoeffer argued, was a transcendent God incarnate in the world specifically in the person of Jesus Christ<sup>48</sup> and who could be “had” in the present only within the supernaturally formed body of Christ, which was Christ himself existing for humans as his body, rather than in merely human community.<sup>49</sup>

While Bonhoeffer did share some of Rollins’ concerns about Christian institutions and systems making God into an object of faith, Bonhoeffer’s main concern was not that such institutions and systems were false in their claims about God—and must therefore be abandoned—but rather that institutions and systems could be abused to maintain human control over an idea of God instead of surrendering to the actual living Word-of-God in the person of Christ. For example, he lamented that persons could wrongly create an “objectification of God” via “the Catholic canonization of . . . the church” or even in some theories of inspiration wherein persons could make God an object that was “there for the finding” by humans who, through their control of institutions and hermeneutics, might believe they were empowered to make trans-subjective claims about God or truth without authentically meeting or surrendering to the living God himself.<sup>50</sup>

At the heart of Bonhoeffer’s own critiques of institutions and systems was his point that Christians should be leery of appealing to human systems or institutions to claim to “have God,” or truth, since the sinful human “I” could reduce even God-given acts to a “doctrine, a principle, a system” without persons having surrendered to God who remained unbounded by human systems.<sup>51</sup> Yet, instead of seeking an experiential death to all Christian institutions and thought, and to God’s presence, Bonhoeffer called Christians to live fully in Christ amidst the same “profane” world where he died for their salvation.<sup>52</sup>

## **Bonhoeffer Believed God was Transcendent and Fully Present in the Person of Christ**

Bonhoeffer believed that it was only the living person of Christ himself who could bring persons into truth rather than humans placing themselves into truth via deconstruction or psychological experience. It was Christ alone who could save

47. Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 85.

48. Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 46.

49. Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 130–132.

50. Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 92.

51. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, vol. 4 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress, [1937] 2003), 45–46. Also see Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 92, 111; Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 61, 486.

52. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge (Munich: Touchstone, [1944] 1997), 486.

humanity via his salvific death. While Bonhoeffer did believe that Christ wished to break down the barriers of “false religious obligations and inhibitions,”<sup>53</sup> calling Christians to live fully in the world, in contrast with an a/theistic “death of God” theology he, again, did not believe that one must abandon belief in God’s transcendence and view God as only existing within subjective human experiences and contexts. Rather, Bonhoeffer asserted that the resurrected Christ is both transcendent and fully present in the church, where he exists for humans as the body of Christ.<sup>54</sup> Bonhoeffer argued that persons may, thus, only live in truth and freedom in the world in and through the person of Christ, that is, in the body of Christ and not in the body of the human self or community.<sup>55</sup>

For instance, quoting Ephesians 5:14, “Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead,” Bonhoeffer declared that one could not bring one’s self into authenticity via human thought or action. Rather, it was only “God’s word of creation itself that calls [a person] through the church to be awake,” which called believers not only to a material life but to “life before God.”<sup>56</sup> “Being awake,” Bonhoeffer asserted, “is something a person cannot give himself . . . God must call a person to this being awake . . . to be awake means to live before God alone.”<sup>57</sup>

Subsequently, when Bonhoeffer said this in LPP, namely, that God “who makes us to live in the world without the working hypothesis of God is the God before whom we stand continually . . . Before God, and with God, we live without God,”<sup>58</sup> he was yet again showing his suspicion of placing confidence in human knowing, institutions, and systems. Furthermore, according to Bonhoeffer, God was asking humans to give up their power and control—to give up their very selves—in surrender, not to the darkness and unknowing of a psychological death to God’s presence, but in surrender to the person of Christ himself who, rather than remaining powerless, “wins power and space in the world by his weakness.”<sup>59</sup> It was precisely in Christ’s faithful act of surrendering his power in dying, which Christ endured in faithfulness, that he could save persons, rather than simply being lost with them.<sup>60</sup>

Therefore, humans were asked not to give up belief in Christ’s objective presence and aid but to fix their eyes more fully upon Christ who, in his sacrificial surrender on their behalf, could now bridge the gap of separation between God and humanity. This, of course, is a central theme in Ephesians (cf. Eph 2:13–17). Christ

53. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 61.

54. Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 46–48.

55. Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 106.

56. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Berlin: 1931–1932*, vol. 12 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 221.

57. See Bonhoeffer (*Berlin: 1931–1932*, 301) where he references Colossians 2:3 in which we are brought into truth via the wisdom and knowledge available in Christ alone.

58. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 479.

59. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 479.

60. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 479.

Jonathan K. Sharpe with Jerry Pillay: *Bonhoeffer and the Way of the Crucified* was uniting persons with God rather than, as Rollins has argued, showing all belief to be futile. The best praxis for humans then, in Bonhoeffer's view, was not to focus on their own forsakenness, unknowing, or on a deconstruction of Christian systems. These approaches could allow humans to, in actuality, remain in control of both their own deconstructions and subsequent reconstructions of new human systems. Rather, contrary to Rollins, and in concert with Ephesians, Bonhoeffer instructed believers to look upon Christ in faith.<sup>61</sup> In looking to Christ, persons would also see that in his death, the Father had not abandoned Christ, nor humanity, but was reconciling all things to himself, destroying all separation, and offering salvation. Humans were no longer lost if they were in Christ:

In the body of Jesus Christ God is united with humanity . . . the world is reconciled with God . . . [in] Jesus Christ God took upon himself the sin of the whole world and bore it. There is no part of the world, be it never so forlorn and never so godless, which is not accepted by God and reconciled with God in Jesus Christ. Whoever looks on the body of Jesus Christ in faith can no longer speak of the world as if it were lost, as . . . separated from Christ.<sup>62</sup>

Bonhoeffer repeated this refrain in LPP, saying that, in his dying, Christ did not leave persons to feel abandoned but comforted in the reality that he had now made all things new.<sup>63</sup> The act of dying amidst the darkness was, for Christ, an act of rescue and redemption. So then, for Bonhoeffer, the death of Christ was not the terror Rollins proclaimed it as, nor a loss of God, but, conversely, it was thoroughly comforting because of Christ's conquering of our separation from God and his rescue of the lost.<sup>64</sup>

### **Bonhoeffer Believed the Principal Enemy of the Body was Satan and his Power of Temptation**

Instead of advocating an experiential loss of God in exchange for merely human community and acts, Bonhoeffer believed that God was specifically incarnate in the world in the person of Christ, who alone united humanity with God and placed them into reality in his body and not in merely human community and acts. In addition to this, Bonhoeffer provided another problem for Rollins' a/theism by declaring that the key impediments to a new life of truth and freedom in Christ were individual sin and the power of the actual person of Satan, as the "prince of this world," to tempt humans to sin.<sup>65</sup> While Rollins suggested that all religious belief, including belief in

61. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, vol. 6 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress, [1949] 2005), 53.

62. Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 53.

63. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 65.

64. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 65.

65. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall/Temptation: Two Biblical Studies* (New York: Touchstone, [1959] 1997), 110.



the supernatural, was a primary obstacle to an awakened life of freedom and “love,” Bonhoeffer taught that the true obstacle was Satan who, as a “power, as a liar and as accuser,” can drive persons into the “darkest night” of isolation and death via the power of temptation.<sup>66</sup> The space for isolation and doubt that Rollins seeks to create as a place of freedom is for Bonhoeffer the place of death where the devil seeks to trap believers. In referencing Ephesians 6, Bonhoeffer added that it was only Satan who truly bound humans by tempting them to sin, so separating them from the body and binding them in death.<sup>67</sup> Bonhoeffer added in *Life Together* that a person’s sin is the only thing that ultimately destroys them.<sup>68</sup> Bonhoeffer further claimed that humans could not overcome Satan’s power of temptation to sin via merely human means: “No creature can withstand temptation in his own strength. He must fall. So great is the power of Satan (Eph 6:12).”<sup>69</sup>

For Bonhoeffer (as for Paul in Ephesians), the devil could not be defeated by human insight or effort, but only in the power of Christ who had already defeated temptation and sin on behalf of humans. Every human effort to overcome temptation and sin in the flesh was “doomed to failure” but persons could escape death if they would “flee to the Crucified.”<sup>70</sup> It was God who now supernaturally empowered his followers, clothing them as one body in Christ, through whom God defeated temptation and sin on their behalf; it is “the victory of Jesus Christ which [believers] now share.”<sup>71</sup> It was Christ himself who was the armor of Ephesians 6 and who alone could set humans free if they would “humble” themselves “under the hand of God” and at last find protection from Satan in the “death of Jesus.”<sup>72</sup> In *Life Together*, Bonhoeffer added that how Christians were to put on Christ was initially via surrender to Christ in confession of sin<sup>73</sup> and, subsequently, by surrendering to the Word and sacraments as given to the body by Christ for their continual process of being clothed in Christ.<sup>74</sup>

### **Bonhoeffer Believed that Confession of Individual Sin was Required for Freedom**

An additional problem for Rollins is Bonhoeffer’s adamant claim that, as an alternative to the obstacles to life and freedom provided by sin and Satan, Christ

66. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 65.

67. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 65.

68. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, vol. 5 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress, [1939] 2005), 115.

69. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall/Temptation*, 109.

70. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall/Temptation*, 118.

71. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall/Temptation*, 118.

72. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall/Temptation*, 118.

73. Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 110–119.

74. See Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 110–119; cf. *Act and Being*, 129, 329; *Christ the Center*, 74; Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 56.

made himself a barrier to a life of freedom and love in the world. Bonhoeffer said, “Christ does set up a barrier,” not the need to deconstruct ideologies and experiential certainty, but rather “the gospel, the person of Jesus Christ.”<sup>75</sup> He added, Christ “stands between us and God . . . and all other men and things.”<sup>76</sup> Consequentially, before persons could overcome sin and Satan or advance to acts of love in the world, they first had to surrender to Christ—who stood before them as an obstacle to their freedom—via confession of sin. To offer the life and freedom found in Christ without repentance would be to tender “cheap grace,” which was “the forgiveness of sin . . . proclaimed as a general truth” that functioned sufficiently apart from “repentance” and “confession.”<sup>77</sup>

So then, while Bonhoeffer agreed with Rollins that one must embrace a transformative death and deconstruction before advancing to mature faith and life in the world—and that such a deconstruction happened at the cross—for Bonhoeffer the deconstruction required for a “breakthrough” to an awakened life of freedom in the world was more devastating than that advocated by Rollins. Bonhoeffer held that it was God who must deconstruct humans via the singularly painful death of one’s self in confession of sins to God and before others, rather than humans deconstructing the Christian faith in ways that allowed them to still retain their pride and control. The act of confession, in its indignity, was especially vital to evidence that one had surrendered to the Christ of Scripture who himself was humiliated as he bore humanity’s sins and bid persons to come and die with him, surrendering one’s “old-self” in its pride.<sup>78</sup> Thus, what must be forsaken was not one’s belief in God’s presence but one’s sin nature, which was also the true root of false systems.<sup>79</sup> Only in the humiliating act of confession could one be deconstructed by God, reorienting one’s focus from the self to Christ. Bonhoeffer also warned that those who refused the necessity of confession were trying to be “as God” who alone has no sin.<sup>80</sup>

Bonhoeffer did not, therefore, allow persons to conduct philosophical, psychological, or experiential deconstructions, and then to then claim to have advanced to a “mature” faith and being in Christ or in the world.<sup>81</sup> Bonhoeffer repeatedly stressed that it was individual sin that destroyed persons and it was only

75. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 106.

76. Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 95–98.

77. Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 45–48.

78. Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 111–112.

79. See Joel D. Lawrence, “Death Together: Thanatology and Sanctification in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer” (PhD diss., Jesus College, University of Cambridge, UK, 2006). Lawrence has argued that many scholars have misunderstood Bonhoeffer’s vision of how Christians might exist “for others” in the world because they misunderstood his soteriology and thanatology. Lawrence argued that, via Luther, Bonhoeffer believed that the root of human problems was the “heart turned inward on itself” and confession of sin to God and before others was how humans died to the self.

80. Lawrence, “Death Together,” 112.

81. Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 92, 94, 131.

in confession and forgiveness of sins, not via psychological experiences—including the types of psychological experiential methods advocated by Rollins—that Christ placed persons in truth.<sup>82</sup>

Consequentially, while Bonhoeffer cared about materialist realities and situations of injustice, such as can be clearly seen in his fight against Hitler, he argued that it was only as persons surrendered themselves to Christ—instead of to a psychological “unknowing”—that persons were then made able to love their neighbors and do good in the world.<sup>83</sup> For Bonhoeffer, one could only accomplish good for others in the world from within the living body of Christ.<sup>84</sup> In this body, the church, believers must also, while living in Christ within the world, give up attachments to the secular world and cling only to Christ, rather than, as Rollins suggested, give up attachments to God to embrace the secular world.<sup>85</sup>

### **Bonhoeffer Believed in Obedient Thinking and Surrender to Christ-given Agents of Revelation**

Bonhoeffer, in contrast to Rollins, grounded all belief (orthodoxy) and practice (orthopraxy) in the incarnate Christ existing as the body of Christ<sup>86</sup> rather than in systems or institutions. Yet, for Bonhoeffer, there must also be evidence that one had actually met the Christ of Scripture. This was evidenced by subsequent steps that Bonhoeffer articulated by which persons might center their lives in Christ.<sup>87</sup> These steps included: confession of sin, followed by surrendering oneself to the Scriptures, creeds, and sacred rites of the apostolic faith in “obedient thinking” and practice.<sup>88</sup> Bonhoeffer claimed, “[F]aith is only real . . . only becomes faith in the act of obedience.”<sup>89</sup> Thus, against Rollins’ belief that all Christian belief and practices must be deconstructed and replaced with subjective experiences and new liturgical structures, Bonhoeffer maintained that the apostolic canon and the core historic beliefs and sacred practices of the faith, including obedient preaching of

82. Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 115.

83. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 127.

84. Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 130–132.

85. Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 99.

86. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theology Study of the Sociology of the Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 127.

87. See Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 140. Bonhoeffer critiqued Barth as having promoted a “positivism of revelation,” which to Bonhoeffer meant that Barth had negated the need for the body of Christ by allowing individual revelation to be a sufficient means of knowing and following Christ.

88. Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 130–132. See also Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 74.

89. Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 69.

Jonathan K. Sharpe with Jerry Pillay: *Bonhoeffer and the Way of the Crucified* the Word and the sacraments and rites,<sup>90</sup> must not be altered but surrendered to as Christ-given agents of revelation, and the means by which one centered their life in Christ after being deconstructed in confession.<sup>91</sup> All Christian life, work, thinking, and preaching was to be practiced within the community of faith in the body of Christ. Even theology, Bonhoeffer said, must be done only by and for the body of Christ, and only in obedient thinking—meaning thinking that is not detached from the church and is based on the Word--since only “the community of faith knows that the word which is addressed to it, and which theology has for its subject matter” only makes sense where Christ is present and “confirms it in each instance.”<sup>92</sup> Within the new life of the body there was no “unknowing” or need to abandon one’s self to the darkness of doubt, as Rollins suggested a mature person should do, but rather, for Bonhoeffer, Scripture made all things clear for those who received the word together in the body in the presence of Christ.<sup>93</sup>

Similarly, against the temptation to revise Scripture through the lens of the current culture,<sup>94</sup> Bonhoeffer warned that the Church must stand by Scripture as received from the apostolic witnesses, as a sacred agent of revelation above the human desire to be relevant in the current age. Bonhoeffer argued, “Where the question of relevance becomes the theme of theology, we can be certain that the cause has already been betrayed and sold out.”<sup>95</sup> Thus, Bonhoeffer saw Scripture as he also saw the church: both were sacred instruments of revelation whereby Christ chose to reveal himself via the “sacred canon” and the “miracle of his presence in the Church,” where “he bears witness to himself as there in history, here and now.”<sup>96</sup> It was also in the living body where Christians would realize that the Christ who revealed himself “now” was the same eternal and unchanging Christ “which the Scriptures deliver to us,” coming “by no other way than by the Word of the Scripture,” rather than being a Christ of the current cultural or subjective views.<sup>97</sup>

90. See Richard Beck, “Insurrection: A Critique,” *Experimental Theology*, February 9, 2012. Accessed February 22, 2018, <http://experimentaltheology.blogspot.com/2012/02/insurrection-critique.html>. Beck argued that Rollins failed to address the importance Bonhoeffer placed on “religious rituals directed toward God as ‘object,’” which Bonhoeffer taught were to be kept in private, within the community of faith, due to a secular “world come of age” not understanding them.

91. Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, 56; Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 130–132; *Christ the Center*, 72.

92. Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 130–132.

93. Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 129.

94. See Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 2–3. Heschel has shown that Hitler, in fact, did what Bonhoeffer warned against, creating a Nazi-bible that removed references to miracles, Christ’s divinity, and Judaism.

95. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *No Rusty Swords: Letters, Lectures and Notes 1928–1936*, ed. Edwin H. Robertson (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 308–310.

96. Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 72.

97. Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 73.

Bonhoeffer then, unlike Rollins, seemed to refuse to depart from the “appointed witnesses” of Scripture on their testimony of who Jesus is and how persons are called to follow him. For Bonhoeffer, to try to deconstruct religious systems or belief in God’s presence via psychological experience or to embrace the world, as Rollins suggested, without being first transformed by Christ would be to retain control over one’s beliefs and deconstruction, thus perpetuating sinful human “self-assertion” by placing the “I” of self over God, revelation, and the other. Instead, for Bonhoeffer, the primary way for persons to be placed in a “God-given reality” in which one was, subsequently, able to authentically exist and act in Christ, and love their neighbor in the world, was not via deconstruction of Scripture, orthodoxy or doctrines. Nor did Bonhoeffer conceive of engaging in an orthopraxy of materialist love. Rather, it was through surrender to Christ in a death-to-self primarily evidenced by confession of one’s sins. On the other side of that death, Christians who were given new life together in Christ could then speak theologically and participate in love, justice, and reconciliation in the world via Christ himself.<sup>98</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter we have considered how Rollins’ theology exemplifies how human doctrines and theology might become a form of *methodeia* that Paul warned against in Ephesians 4:14 and 6:11, by which supernatural enemies might use human teaching to move Christians away from Christ and unity in his body. Doctrines and theology such as Rollins’ that are presented as Christian but that lack continuity and congruence with apostolic teaching, can be especially dangerous because they seemingly emanate from a member of the body, and thus can appear to come from underneath the armor that the body wears for protection. Rollins also seeks to further clothe his theology with the appearance of truth via sheltering under Bonhoeffer’s reputation. Rollins’ theology appears to especially be a form of *methodeia* because he not only contradicts Paul’s teaching that the true enemies of the body are the devil and sin, but Rollins further claims that belief in supernatural realities—even the presence or aide of God—are merely human ideologies used to manipulate persons into false belief and that block persons from mature faith. Against Rollins’ teaching, Bonhoeffer—in agreement with Paul—shows that the devil is in fact the primary enemy of Christ and his body against which believers can only find victory in the living, eternal person of the crucified Christ who is tangibly present for believers in the body of Christ. For Bonhoeffer, how a person enters into Christ, in his body, is by dying to one’s self and surrendering to Christ via confession of sin. Subsequently, they will remain in the body through obedient adherence to the true Word and the sacred acts that Christ ordained for the formation of his body, leading to humility, unity, righteousness, and alignment with apostolic teaching.

98. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 487.