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## DIETRICH BONHOEFFER'S "COSTLY GRACE" AS A REMINDER OF REFORMATION THEOLOGY

"During the Reformation, God reawakened the gospel of pure, costly grace through God's servant Martin Luther."<sup>1</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote these words in *Discipleship*, in the chapter in which he develops his bitter criticism of the church, which had changed the costly grace it had been granted into cheap grace, thus becoming like the world and rejecting the discipleship of Christ. With this reference and his following analyses, Bonhoeffer gives a clear signal that the concept of costly grace he presents is no novelty in Christian theology. The aim of this article is to investigate the connections between Bonhoeffer's statements concerning costly grace in the chapter of *Discipleship* entitled "Costly Grace," and the statements of the Lutheran Reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It thus contributes to answering the question concerning the relationship of the theological thought of the martyr of the 20<sup>th</sup> century church to the theology of Martin Luther and Lutheran Symbolical Books. As examples of this relationship, I will discuss the reformatory background of Bonhoeffer's statements defining the destructive influence of cheap grace, Luther's monastic experience, the interpretation of costly grace as a call to discipleship, resignation from one's own freedom, and reference to Luther's call to "sin boldly" (*pecca fortiter*).

### 1. The Definition of "Cheap Grace"

In defining cheap grace, Bonhoeffer first indicates what it is a distortion of. He begins by pointing to how cheap grace perverts the fundamental elements of the

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1 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, DBWE 4:47.

church's life: "Cheap grace is preaching forgiveness without repentance; it is baptism without the discipline of community; it is the Lord's Supper without confession of sin; it is absolution without personal confession."<sup>2</sup> These elements can all be found in Reformation teaching, in a form which precludes understanding them in the categories of cheap grace. They all held fundamental meaning for Martin Luther, for whom there was no Christian life without penance.

The first of these elements appeared in the *Ninety-Five Theses or Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences* from 1517, which reads: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent' [Matt. 4:17], he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance."<sup>3</sup> In the context of Bonhoeffer's arguments for the inseparable relationship between penance and preaching the forgiveness of sins, one should remember Luther's definition of penance, which he included in his theological testament – Smalcald Articles, which became one of the Lutheran Symbolical Books:

This function of the law is retained and taught by the New Testament. [...] This, then, is the thunderbolt by means of which God, with one blow, destroys both open sinners and false saints. He allows no one to justify himself. He drives all together into terror and despair. [...] This is what the beginning of true repentance is like. Here, man must hear such a judgment as this: "You are all of no account. Whether you are manifest sinners or saints, you must all become other than you now are and do otherwise than you now do, no matter who you are and no matter how great, wise, mighty, and holy you may think yourselves. Here no one is godly."<sup>4</sup>

The second element of true penance is the promise of the Gospel. Luther explains it at once, continuing the above-mentioned quote of Article III, part III of the Smalcald Articles:

To this office of the law the New Testament immediately adds the consoling promise of grace in the Gospel. This is to be believed, as Christ says in Mark 1:15, "Repent and believe in the Gospel," which is to say, "Become different, do otherwise, and believe my promise."<sup>5</sup>

For Luther, it is clear that one must not separate preaching of the Gospel, including the Promise of forgiveness of sins, and preaching of the Law. One cannot resign from the Gospel, because: "But where the law exercises its office alone, without the addition of the Gospel, there is only death and hell, and man must despair like Saul

2 DBWE 4:44.

3 All citations from the works of Martin Luther are from Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehman, eds., *Luther's Works. American Edition*, 55 vols. (Philadelphia: Muehlenberg and Fortress, and St. Louis: Concordia, 1955–1986) [further, LW]. Here LW 31:25.

4 T.G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 303.

5 *Ibid.*, 304.

and Judas"<sup>6</sup> – whereas the Law cannot be omitted, because without it there is no chance for a true penance. This last issue was trenchantly explained by Luther in his dispute with the Antinomians, who were negating the necessity of preaching the Law:

Preach that sinners must be roused to repentance, not only by the sweet grace and suffering of Christ, by the message that he died for us, but also by the terrors of the law. For they are wrong in maintaining that one must follow only one method of preaching repentance, namely, to point to Christ's suffering on our behalf, claiming as they do that Christendom might otherwise become confused and be at a loss to know which is the true and only way. No, one must preach in all sorts of ways – God's threats, his promises, his punishment, his help, and anything else – in order that we may be brought to repentance, that is, to a knowledge of sin and the law through the use of all the examples in the Scriptures.<sup>7</sup>

The next element negated by cheap grace mentioned by Bonhoeffer is the obligation resulting from Baptism. For Luther and the Wittenberg Reformation, it was clear that Baptism is the rite "through which we are first received into the Christian community,"<sup>8</sup> and that an inseparable element of the functioning of the Christian church is church discipline:

We consider the greater excommunication, as the Pope calls it, to be merely a civil penalty which does not concern us ministers of the church. However, the lesser (that is, the truly Christian) excommunication excludes those who are manifest and impenitent sinners from the sacrament and other fellowship in the church until they mend their ways and avoid sin. Preachers should not mingle civil punishments with this spiritual penalty or excommunication.<sup>9</sup>

In defining cheap grace, Bonhoeffer also writes about the Sacrament of the Altar without absolution of sins. From the perspective of a theological understanding of the Sacrament of the Altar, this statement can be interpreted as omitting absolution as its result. The Lutheran Symbolical Books oppose this tendency in the introduction to Luther's *Small Catechism*:

What is the benefit of such eating and drinking? Answer: We are told in the words "for you" and "for the forgiveness of sin." By these words the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given to us in the sacrament, for where there is forgiveness of sins, there are also life and salvation.<sup>10</sup>

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6 Ibid.

7 LW 47:111–112.

8 Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord*, 436.

9 Ibid., 314.

10 Ibid., 352.

Another of the fundamental elements of a Christian life negated by cheap grace is absolution without personal confession. For the Reformation it is clear that absolution has to be preceded by the confession of sins. Luther expressed this clearly in his definition of confession in the *Small Catechism*:

Confession consists of two parts. One is that we confess our sins. The other is that we receive absolution or forgiveness from the confessor as from God himself, by no means doubting but firmly believing that our sins are thereby forgiven before God in Heaven.<sup>11</sup>

It is also confirmed by clear statements on the preservation of private confession and its significance, expressed in “Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper,”<sup>12</sup> Smalcald Articles,<sup>13</sup> as well as in the Augsburg Confession.<sup>14</sup>

The destructive influence of cheap grace concerns not only the elements of church life mentioned above. “Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without the living, incarnate Jesus Christ.”<sup>15</sup> All these elements deprived of grace by cheap grace—i.e. discipleship, the cross and the incarnate Son of God—are also present in Reformation teaching. I will return to the issue of discipleship later; here I will deal with the other two.

The first of these is the relationship between grace and the cross. In one of his most important early theological declarations, the Heidelberg Disputation from 1518, Martin Luther formulates the bases for his *theologia crucis* (in theses 19 and 20), as the principles for theological knowledge: “That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.”<sup>16</sup> The significance of the cross, understood as a readiness to accept and carry it by Christians, is also confirmed in one of Luther’s late ecclesiological works, *On the Councils and the Church* from 1539, where the cross gains the status of one of the *notae ecclesiae*:

Seventh, the holy Christian people are externally recognized by the holy possession of the sacred cross. They must endure every misfortune and persecution, all kinds of trials and evil from the devil, the world, and the flesh (as the Lord’s Prayer indicates) by inward sadness, timidity, fear, outward poverty, contempt, illness, and weakness, in order

11 Ibid., 349.

12 LW 37:368–369.

13 Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord*, 312.

14 Ibid., 34.

15 DBWE 4:44.

16 LW 31:40.

to become like their head, Christ. And the only reason they must suffer is that they steadfastly adhere to Christ and God's word, enduring this for the sake of Christ, Matthew 5[:11], "Blessed are you when men persecute you on my account."<sup>17</sup>

For the Reformation, grace was also unthinkable without the person of the incarnate Son of God—Jesus Christ. It is expressed by the *solus Christus* principle, which is further developed in articles III and IV of the Augsburg Confession.<sup>18</sup> In an explanation of the second article of faith, found in his *Small Catechism*, Luther sharply outlines the inseparability of the person of Jesus Christ and the salvation of each Christian:

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, delivered me and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with silver and gold but with his holy and precious blood and with his innocent sufferings and death, in order that I may be his, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as he is risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.<sup>19</sup>

## 2. Luther and the Monastic Experience

Bonhoeffer describes Luther's road to a rediscovery of costly grace by making repeated references to the Reformer's biography. He points to the fact that Luther attended a monastery, in which the idea of the discipleship of Christ was originally enshrined. At the same time the orders, by becoming the only place one could fulfill the Evangelical counsels, became a justification for the rest of the Christian world to abandon discipleship and succumb to cheap grace. Luther first experienced monastery life, and then rejected it in favor of the discipleship of Christ in the world.<sup>20</sup>

This recognition of the negative role of the orders is visible in Luther's criticism of monastic life, which preceded his decision to leave the order. In his work *The Judgment of Martin Luther on Monastic Vows* from 1521, Luther formulated five charges against life in an order, based on which the vows of a religious order should be rejected:

I Vows Do Not Rest on the Word of God: They Run Counter to the Word of God [...]; II Vows Are Against Faith [...]; III Vows Are Against Evangelical Freedom [...]; IV Vows Are Contrary to the Commandments of God [...]; V Monasticism Is Contrary to Common Sense and Reason.<sup>21</sup>

17 LW 41:164–165.

18 Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord*, 29.

19 Ibid., 345.

20 DBWE 4:46–49.

21 LW 44:252, 273, 295, 317, 336.

In the context of Bonhoeffer's description, the following themes, which Luther developed in the individual sections explaining each of the charges mentioned above, are particularly significant. In developing the first of these, Luther called for the rejection of the distinction between commandments (which are binding for all Christians) and the Evangelical counsels (which are directed only to the monks), because both are binding for all Christians. They should not be understood as merits before God, or a special virtue, but rather as they are seen by the New Testament: obedience as humility passed on in the Gospel, poverty as lending one's possessions to help one's neighbor, and purity as sanctifying the body. Regarding the second charge, Luther stated that the vows of a religious order are considered a merit before God. This, however, opposes the faith, and thus they are nothing in the eyes of God and should be broken. A similar theme appears in the development of the fourth charge, in which the Reformer confronted monastic life with the claim of the first commandment, which demands an exclusive faith in the one God. This claim is of an absolute character; as such, it does not leave any room for human holiness built on an individual's deeds, an example of which would be the vows of a religious order.

The way Luther develops the third charge is also important for moving from discipleship in monastic conditions to the discipleship of Christ in the world. Here he refers to the concept of Christian freedom. Within this freedom, it is possible to sacrifice oneself to God in the form of monastic life, in which one trains the body, meditates on the Word and serves his neighbor. It is a calling like all other Christian callings in the world, and not a particularly holy or more perfect form of life, as had been proclaimed before.

Luther again clearly formulated the essence of his criticism of the confession of faith in the third part of the work "Confession Concerning Christ's Supper:"

Next, I reject and condemn also as sheer deceptions and errors of the devil all monastic orders, rules, cloisters, religious foundations, and all such things devised and instituted by men beyond and apart from Scripture, bound by vows and obligations, although many great saints have lived in them, and as the elect of God are misled by them even at this time, yet finally by faith in Jesus Christ have been redeemed and have escaped. Because these monastic orders, foundations, and sects have been maintained and perpetuated with the idea that by these ways and works men may seek and win salvation, and escape from sin and death, they are all a notorious, abominable blasphemy and denial of the unique aid and grace of our only Savior and Mediator, Jesus Christ. For "there is no other name given by which we must be saved" than this, which is Jesus Christ. And it is impossible that there should be more saviors, ways, or means to be saved than through the one righteousness which our Savior Jesus Christ is and has bestowed upon us, and has offered to God for us as our one mercy seat, Romans 3[:25].<sup>22</sup>

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22 LW 37:363.

Continuing his deliberations, Luther points out that religious orders can be useful only insofar as they are places where God's Word, Scripture and Christian morality are taught to young people, and where future servants of the church and people able to work for the civil government are educated. He also sees it as a place for women to prepare for their service at home. This educational element is a preparation for these three areas of Christian life, which Luther considered to be true religious orders: "But the holy orders and true religious institutions established by God are these three: the office of priest, the estate of marriage, the civil government."<sup>23</sup> At the same time, one should keep in mind that:

Above these three institutions and orders is the common order of Christian love, in which one serves not only the three orders, but also serves every needy person in general with all kinds of benevolent deeds, such as feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, forgiving enemies, praying for all men on earth, suffering all kinds of evil on earth, etc. Behold, all of these are called good and holy works. However, none of these orders is a means of salvation. There remains only one way above them all, viz. faith in Jesus Christ.<sup>24</sup>

In his explanations of the sixth and seventh Commandments in the *Large Catechism*, Luther stressed the significance of extending the role of a Christian's calling to such areas of activity as home life and authority, which according to medieval distinctions were previously considered as being inferior and unable to realize the Evangelical counsels.<sup>25</sup>

### 3. Costly Grace Calls to Discipleship

Bonhoeffer writes thus about costly grace: It is costly, because it calls to discipleship; it is grace, because it calls us to follow *Jesus Christ*.<sup>26</sup> He sees such a call in the heritage of the Reformation: "Luther's deed cannot be misunderstood more grievously than by thinking that through discovering the gospel of pure grace, Luther proclaimed a dispensation from obeying Jesus' commandments in the world."<sup>27</sup> The call to the discipleship of Christ and obedience of the commandments was a constant motif of Reformation teaching. Because of their negation of justification based on deeds, the Reformers exerted much effort into explaining the relationship between the grace which brings salvation and changes in the life of believers in good deeds, a topic which became clearly visible in the language of the 16<sup>th</sup> century disputes.

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<sup>23</sup> LW 37:364.

<sup>24</sup> LW 37:365.

<sup>25</sup> Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord*, 379–389, 392–394.

<sup>26</sup> DBWE 4:45.

<sup>27</sup> DBWE 4:49.

Awareness of the necessity to explain this relationship was essentially present from the very beginning of Luther's reformatory deliberations. A good example of this is found in the sermon "Two Kinds of Righteousness" from 1519, in which Luther explains his understanding of righteousness. Here he describes alien righteousness, i.e. Christ's righteousness, which is "instilled in us without our works by grace alone."<sup>28</sup> It is granted in Baptism and by every true penance. However, the question of a person's righteousness does not end here. Along with alien righteousness there is also proper righteousness, described by Luther as follows:

The second kind of righteousness is our proper righteousness, not because we alone work it, but because we work with that first and alien righteousness. This is that manner of life spent profitably in good works, in the first place, in slaying the flesh and crucifying the desires with respect to the self [...]. In the second place, this righteousness consists in love to one's neighbor, and in the third place, in meekness and fear toward God.<sup>29</sup>

Here, Luther clearly describes the relationship between the two kinds of righteousness. Proper righteousness "is the product of the righteousness of the first type, actually its fruit and consequence."<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, the motif of the discipleship of Christ appears directly in the description of how proper righteousness works in a person's life:

This righteousness follows the example of Christ in this respect and is transformed into his likeness (II Cor. 3:18). It is precisely this that Christ requires. Just as he himself did all things for us, not seeking his own good but ours only – and in this he was most obedient to God the Father – so he desires that we also should set the same example for our neighbors.<sup>31</sup>

A similar relationship between faith accepting grace, and deeds in the life of a believer, is found in the Augsburg Confession. Soon after Article IV, which describes justification "by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith,"<sup>32</sup> this relationship is developed further in Article VI, where we read: "It is also taught among us that such faith should produce good fruits and good works and that we must do all such good works as God has commanded but we should do them for God's sake and not place our trust in them as if thereby to merit favor before God."<sup>33</sup> The topic of good deeds is continued in article XX, in which Philipp Melancthon connects them first with obeying the Commandments, and secondly leaves no doubt

<sup>28</sup> LW 31:299.

<sup>29</sup> LW 31:299.

<sup>30</sup> LW 31:300.

<sup>31</sup> LW 31:300.

<sup>32</sup> Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord*, 30.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.



about the significance of this aspect of Christian teaching for the Reformers: "Our teachers have been falsely accused of forbidding good works. Their writings on the Ten Commandments and also other writings, show that they have given good and profitable accounts and instructions concerning true Christian estates and works."<sup>34</sup>

As an example of Reformation works dedicated to an explanation of the Ten Commandments, one can use both Luther's early *Treatise on Good Works* from 1520,<sup>35</sup> and his explanation of the Commandments in both Catechisms. The relationship between faith and deeds is also clearly voiced in the *Large Catechism*, in the part dedicated to the Commandments. Specific to Luther's interpretation of the first Commandment is that he connects it inseparably with faith: "The purpose of this commandment, therefore, is to require true faith and confidence of the heart, and these fly straight to the one true God and cling to him alone."<sup>36</sup> In addition, it becomes a necessary starting point for the fulfillment of the other Commandments: "This is exactly the meaning and right interpretation of the first and chief commandment, from which all the others proceed."<sup>37</sup> The same connection is expressed clearly in the *Small Catechism*, where the explanations of Commandments II–X begin by quoting the explanation of the first one: "We should fear and love God."<sup>38</sup>

The significance of life change resulting from being granted grace is visible as well in Luther's theology of Baptism. Namely, it is not only an initiation into Christian life, but also a gift of grace, which "effects forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and grants eternal salvation to all who believe, as the Word and promise of God declare."<sup>39</sup> This receiving of saving grace, accepted through faith, also results in everyday commitment: "the old Adam in us, together with all sins and evil lusts, should be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance and be put to death, and that the new man should come forth daily and rise up, cleansed and righteous, to live forever in God's presence."<sup>40</sup>

#### 4. Resignation from the Freedom of One's Own Will

In his explanation of costly grace, Bonhoeffer wrote: "His acknowledgment of grace was for him [Luther] the final radical break with the sin of his life but never its justification. Grasping at forgiveness was the final radical rejection of self-willed

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34 Ibid., 41.

35 See LW 44:21–115.

36 Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord*, 365.

37 Ibid., 409.

38 Ibid., 342.

39 Ibid., 348.

40 Ibid., 349.

life; the acknowledgment of grace itself his first really serious call to discipleship."<sup>41</sup> Here there appears a motif of resignation from life according to one's own will, in favor of discipleship. For the Reformation, free will was also one of the key issues.

The basis for reformatory understanding of this question was explained by Luther in the Heidelberg Disputation in 1518:

Free will, after the fall, exists in name only, and as long as it does what it is able to do, it commits a mortal sin. Free will, after the fall, has power to do good only in a passive capacity, but it can always do evil in an active capacity. Nor could free will endure in a state of innocence, much less do good, in an active capacity, but only in its passive capacity.<sup>42</sup>

This conviction regarding the lack of freedom of the human will after the fall was an essential assumption of the whole of Luther's theology. It led to an argument with Erasmus of Rotterdam, and consequently with humanism. In the work *The Bondage of the Will* from 1525, a polemic directed at Erasmus, Luther paints this vivid picture of his understanding of man's condition and his captive will:

Thus the human will is placed between the two like a beast of burden. If God rides it, it wills and goes where God wills, as the psalm says: "I am become as a beast and I am always with thee." If Satan rides it, it wills and goes where Satan wills; nor can it choose to run to either of the two riders or to seek him out, but the riders themselves contend for the possession and control of it.<sup>43</sup>

Luther never relinquished this assumption. Additionally, his fundamental anthropological work, which consists of a short set of forty theses known as *The Disputation Concerning Man* from 1536, deals relatively widely with this issue in theses 22 and 23, as well as 26–31:

But after the fall of Adam, certainly, he was subject to the power of the devil, sin and death, a twofold evil for his powers, unconquerable and eternal. He can be freed and given eternal life only through the Son of God, Jesus Christ (if he believes in him). [...] Therefore those who say that natural things have remained untainted after the fall philosophize impiously in opposition to theology. The same is true of those who say that a man "in doing what is in him" is able to merit the grace of God and life; So also, of those who introduce Aristotle (who knows nothing of theological man) to witness that reason aspires to the best things; Also, those who say that the light of God's countenance is in man, as an imprint on us, that is, free will which forms the precept right and the will good; In like manner, that it rests with man to choose good and evil, or life and death, etc. All such neither understand what man is nor do they know what they are talking about.<sup>44</sup>

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41 DBWE 4:50.

42 LW 31:40.

43 LW 34:138–139.

44 LW 34:138–139.

All the statements quoted above point to the fact that for Luther getting under the work of grace, accepting it in faith, means subordinating oneself to Christ. Here the differences between Bonhoeffer and Luther also appear. The 20<sup>th</sup> century theologian describes the starting point for change caused by grace in terms of being dependent on a person's own will, whereas the Reformer writes above all about being made captive by sin and subjection to Satan's power. Nevertheless, when we take into account Luther's conviction regarding how deeply and seriously human nature has been contaminated by sin, and that in his eyes this contamination, by distorting a person's perspective of themselves and God, became the cause of further sin, it would be going too far to hold that Bonhoeffer's description of willful rejection on the part of human beings constitutes a rejection of the Wittenberg Reformer's position.

### 5. *Pecca fortiter*

Bonhoeffer, in disputing justification based on cheap grace, refers to a fragment of Martin Luther's letter to Philipp Melancthon from August 1, 1521: "Be a sinner and sin boldly, but believe and rejoice in Christ even more boldly."<sup>45</sup> Bonhoeffer comments on these words as follows:

For him, "sin boldly" is not something like a fundamental affirmation of his disobedient life, rather it is the gospel of God's grace, in whose presence we are always and in every state sinners, and who seeks us and justifies us exactly as sinners. Admit your sin boldly; do not try to flee from it, but "believe much more boldly."<sup>46</sup>

The background for Luther's statement was his anthropological diagnosis of the justified Christian, who remains *simul iustus et peccator* until the end of his life. Among other expressions of the human mechanism portrayed in this paradox, Luther had already included it in his description of the working of alien and proper righteousness in a human, as presented in the sermon about the "Two Kinds of Righteousness." Alien righteousness opposes original sin:

Therefore this alien righteousness [...] is set opposite original sin, likewise alien, which we acquire without our works by birth alone. Christ daily drives out the old Adam more and more in accordance with the extent to which faith and knowledge of Christ grow. For alien righteousness is not instilled all at once, but it begins, makes progress, and is finally perfected at the end through death.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> LW 31:299.

<sup>46</sup> DBWE 4:52.

<sup>47</sup> LW 31:299.

Here, Luther describes the process of growing righteousness which takes place in the life of individual believers; i.e. the process of overcoming sin through Christ's righteousness, which is instilled in them. Proper righteousness, dealing with actual sin, also operates in this process:

This righteousness goes on to complete the first for it ever strives to do away with the old Adam and to destroy the body of sin. Therefore it hates itself and loves its neighbor; it does not seek its own good, but that of another, and in this its whole way of living consists. For in that it hates itself and does not seek its own, it crucifies the flesh. Because it seeks the good of another, it works love. Thus in each sphere it does God's will, living soberly with self, justly with neighbor, devoutly toward God.<sup>48</sup>

Luther's understanding of a Christian as *simul iustus et peccator* was also reflected in his understanding of Baptism. The call to drowning the old Adam quoted above is expanded in the *Large Catechism* as follows:

The old man therefore follows unchecked the inclinations of his nature if he is not restrained and suppressed by the power of Baptism. On the other hand, when we become Christians, the old man daily decreases until he is finally destroyed. This is what it means to plunge into Baptism and daily come forth again.<sup>49</sup>

Therefore, Christians who do not update their Baptism every day through penance allow their sin nature, damaged as it is by sin, to prevail against them. In contrast, those who draw upon the power of Baptism by doing penance defeat this sinful nature, thus allowing the righteousness that was granted to them to become true in them.

Bonhoeffer's interpretation of Luther's words from the letter to Melanchthon as a comfort agrees with the reformatory understanding of the Gospel's promise, especially in terms of pastoral comfort against sin. We find confirmation of this in the Smalcald Articles: "We shall now return to the Gospel, which offers council and help against sin in more than one way, for God is surpassingly rich in his grace."<sup>50</sup>

## Conclusion

This commentary on Bonhoeffer's statements, which develops the concept of costly grace from the perspective of Reformation theology, shows that for him Reformation theology was more than just an illustration of the thesis of costly grace. To the contrary, his understanding of this phenomenon is deeply rooted in the principles of the Lutheran Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and its keywords *sola*

48 LW 31:300.

49 Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord*, 445.

50 *Ibid.*, 310.

*gratia, sola fide*, which we find both in the theological legacy of Martin Luther, and of the Lutheran Symbolical Books. Nevertheless, Bonhoeffer's interpretation does not merely repeat the Reformers' teaching; rather, it brings it up to date. The creative force of Bonhoeffer's update is visible not only in the concept of discipleship, which becomes for him a key demand, but also for example in the way he uses the concept of resigning from one's own freedom in favor of discipleship. The Reformation's thesis of captivity of the will is reflected in this concept, even though it is not expressed using the 16<sup>th</sup> century language of a battle between God and Satan, which was specific to Luther.

Bonhoeffer's update focuses on reminding us of the practical consequences of the Reformation theses of *sola gratia* and *sola fide*. Bonhoeffer criticizes the Reformation's heirs for the fact that, in drawing on its soteriological theological core, they reduced its consequences merely to an eschatological perspective. In contrast, Bonhoeffer clearly stresses that in reformatory thought the discovery of salvation from grace alone had specific consequences for the life of Christians. At the same time, he reminds us that the classical Lutheran explanation (not mentioned above) of the doctrine of justification, present in *The Freedom of a Christian*, is not limited to an explanation of the thesis "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none,"<sup>51</sup> i.e. the preaching freedom from all obligation in the context of salvation in the name of the gift of grace, but also equally includes the second thesis: "A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all,"<sup>52</sup> which describes the task of loving your neighbor, resulting from the freedom understood as "freedom to" described in the first thesis. In Bonhoeffer's work, this thesis takes the form of call to the discipleship of Christ.

## Dietrich Bonhoeffer's "Costly Grace" as a Reminder of Reformation Theology Abstract

This article discusses key elements of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's concept of "costly grace" from the perspective of the theology of the Lutheran Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Using examples taken from the definition of "cheap grace" in *Discipleship*, including the appeal to Luther's own religious experience, the call to follow Christ, the question of voluntarily submitting one's will to Christ through discipleship, and the appeal to Luther's famous declaration *pecca fortiter* ("sin boldly"), the author demonstrates how the thought of this 20<sup>th</sup> century theologian is rooted

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51 LW 31:344.

52 LW 31:344.

in the theology of Martin Luther and the Lutheran Symbolical Books. As a result, it is argued, the concept of costly grace served the Church of that day as a critical reminder of the practical consequences for Christian life that result from the Reformation doctrine of salvation *sola gratia, sola fide*.