



Mixology and Theology

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Week Eight: German Radler and Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Mixology: German Radler

The Radler is much like a Shandy — beer mixed with a citrus drink. Radler is German for “cyclist.” There are a few origin stories about how it came to be, one involving a large group of cyclists showing up at a German tavern. German Radlers often use sparkling lemonade rather than still lemonade or citrus wedges. Typically a German, hoppy pilsner or similar lager is used. It is a common summertime drink.

This recipe uses what amounts to a sparkling lemonade mixed with beer.

German Radler

6oz	beer	3 oz	club soda
2 oz	lemon juice	1 oz	simple syrup

Lemon slices for garnish

In place of the club soda, lemon juice, and simple syrup, you can use 6 oz lemonade, lemon soda, or 7-Up.

Add the club soda, lemon juice, and simple syrup to a beer glass. Stir gently to mix. Pour the beer in the glass. Garnish with lemon.

Arnold Palmer

The best mocktail I can think of for a German Radler is the Arnold Palmer. So mix together equal parts iced tea and lemonade and enjoy. Try the sparkling lemonade.

Theology: Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Introduction

Dietrich Bonhoeffer is one of the more influential 20th century theologians, partly due to his theological writings, but more so due to the way he lived his faith and theology during the rise of National Socialism in Germany and WWII. After his death, he has gained a significant amount of interest in his work and life both in academia and among the general population. The International Bonhoeffer Society was founded in 1973 to bring together those interested in studying Bonhoeffer's work and legacy. <https://thebonhoeffercenter.org/>

History

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was born in 1906 into a wealthy, educated family in Breslau, Germany. Bonhoeffer completed his Staatsexamen, the equivalent of both a bachelor's degree and a master's degree, at the Protestant Faculty of Theology of the University of Tübingen. At the age of 21, he went on to complete his Doctor of Theology from Berlin University in 1927, graduating summa cum laude.

In 1930 at the age of 24, Bonhoeffer went to Union Theological Seminary in New York City to do postdoctoral work (he was still too young to be ordained and serve as a pastor). He studied under Reinhold Niebuhr. He also became involved in work with the poor in Harlem and attended Abyssinian Baptist Church. These academic and church experiences influenced his faith and theology in significant ways. He was deeply impressed by the Black Church and faith deeply engaged in the struggles of liberation. Bonhoeffer began to see things "from below"—from the perspective of those who suffer oppression. He observed, "Here one can truly speak and hear about sin and grace and the love of God...the Black Christ is preached with rapturous passion and vision." Later Bonhoeffer referred to his impressions abroad as the point at which he "turned from phraseology to reality." Bonhoeffer saw clearly how racism impacted the American church, and he was the importance of the "Black Christ" for Christianity.

Bonhoeffer also met at Union the Reformed seminary student, Jean Lasserre. Lasserre, who later became a leading pacifist theologian, influenced Bonhoeffer's understanding of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5 — 7) and the challenge of discipleship.

Bonhoeffer returned to Germany to teach in seminary. During this time, the National Socialist began to take power. He became part of the resistance and the Confessing Church, speaking out against the anti-Semitism of the Nazis, and against the rise of the nationalist form of the church called the German Christians. The Confessing Church helped write the Barmen Declaration, with Karl Barth taking the lead. It is one of the most significant Christian documents of the twentieth century, taking a stand against the distortions of the church German church as it embraced racism and nationalism. https://www.ucc.org/beliefs_barmen-declaration

Bonhoeffer ended up joining the Abwehr, the German intelligence agency, to avoid being sent to fight in the war, and to secretly participate in resistance efforts. He ended up being part of a plot to assassinate Hitler. As a pacifist, he had worked through the need to take such extreme action for the sake of future

peace and ending the violence of the war and genocide.

April 5, 1943, Bonhoeffer was arrested for his resistance work and imprisoned at Tegel prison in Berlin. While in prison, he continued to write and work on his theology. He also continued to work with and support the efforts to assassinate Hitler. This culminated in the July 20, 1944 attempted assassination with a bomb. The bomb went off in a meeting room with Hitler, but failed to kill him. Later when documents revealed who participated in the conspiracy, Bonhoeffer was moved to Buchenwald and then Flossenburg concentration camps.

Two weeks before the Allied troops liberated Flossenburg, Bonhoeffer was hanged on April 9, 1945 at the age of 39. His body was never recovered and likely was cremated with others in the camp.

Theology

Incarnational Theology: Central to Bonhoeffer's theology was his understanding of the incarnation, the Christian belief that God's "Word became flesh" in Jesus Christ. Bonhoeffer sees in this central understanding of Christ a radical notion of God: God is not separate or above or outside creation and human life, but deeply embedded in it. Specifically because of the cross, God is seen as a suffering God, fully participating in the human struggle for liberation and redemption. Followers of Jesus are called into this same struggle within history, not focusing beyond the world but within it. The cross and the resurrection are the sign of the cost and the promise of engaging in this struggle.

"The Incarnation is the ultimate reason why the service of God cannot be divorced from the service of man." — The Cost of Discipleship

The Cost of Discipleship (also published as Discipleship). Bonhoeffer wrote this in 1937 as a reflection on the profound call of Christ on a baptized persons' life. Much like Kierkegaard, Bonhoeffer viewed Christian baptism as a radical call that had become tamed by Christendom — little more than a declaration of citizenship in the Western world. He saw the dangers of this lack of discipleship in the church in his own time. He wrote *Discipleship* to call people back to the way of Jesus. He used the Sermon on the Mount as the primary way of understanding what it means to follow Jesus in a relationship of grace and obedience. Two well-known quotes from the book give us a good sense of the overall theme:

Cheap grace is preaching forgiveness without repentance; it is baptism without the discipline of community... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without the living, incarnate Jesus Christ... Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again... It is costly, because it calls to discipleship; it is grace, because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly, because it casts people their lives; it is grace, because it thereby makes them live.

The cross is laid on every Christian. The first Christ-suffering which every man must experience is the call to abandon the attachments of this world. It is that dying of the old man which is the result of his encounter with Christ. As we embark upon discipleship we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with his death—we give over our lives to death. Thus it begins; the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise god-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.

Letters and Papers from Prison

While he was in prison, Bonhoeffer exchanged many letters with his family and his good friend, Eberhard Bethge. Bonhoeffer had so endeared himself to some of the guards in the prison that they smuggled his letters in and out. Bethge compiled these letters and published them in 1953, and later expanded the collection in future publications. These letters show a great deal of Bonhoeffer's faith, humanity, and suffering, and reveal the theological ideas he was developing in the last few years of his life. These ideas were left in an early state of pondering since he was executed before he could finish them. Some of the ideas he pondered in the letters that have become influential are:

World come of age: Bonhoeffer began using this term to describe the modern world that no longer needs "religion" to explain reality. He sees Christianity as needing to accept this world come of age, and no longer offer "religious" answers that no longer work, such as a God that fills in the gaps of the unknown, or a merely metaphysical, spiritual understanding of God. Bonhoeffer saw the world as having reached a point where a new opportunity for living the Gospel of Jesus Christ had come, and it looked very different from the past. He was not, however, simply promoting the liberal theological view of things — that Christian theology is limited by the terms given by the modern world. He did not believe in the demythologizing of the New Testament, like Rudolf Bultmann did. He saw the world come of age as a profoundly theological reality that now made the Gospel of Jesus Christ all the more relevant.

Religionless Christianity: The outcome of his understanding of a world come of age was his belief in a religionless Christianity. This lengthy quote from *Letters and Papers from Prison* gives a good sense of the questions Bonhoeffer was wrestling with:

*Our whole nineteen-hundred-year-old Christian preaching and theology rest on the 'religious a priori' of mankind. 'Christianity' has always been a form – perhaps the true form – of 'religion'. But if one day it becomes clear that this a priori does not exist at all, but was a historically conditioned and transient form of human self-expression, and if therefore man becomes radically religionless – and I think that that is already more or less the case (else how is it, for example, that this war, in contrast to all previous ones, is not calling forth any 'religious' 1 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (ed. Eberhard Bethge; New York: Touchstone, 1997). 1reaction?) – what does that mean for 'Christianity'? It means that the foundation is taken away from the whole of what has up to now been our 'Christianity', and that there remain only a few 'last survivors of the age of chivalry', or a few intellectually dishonest people, on whom we can descend as 'religious'. Are they to be the chosen few? Is it on this dubious group of people that we are to pounce in fervour, pique, or indignation, in order to sell them our goods? Are we to fall upon a few unfortunate people in their hour of need and exercise a sort of religious compulsion on them? If we don't want to do all that, if our final judgment must be that the western form of Christianity, too, was only a preliminary stage to a complete absence of religion, what kind of situation emerges for us, for the church? How can Christ become the Lord of the religionless as well? Are there religionless Christians? If religion is only a garment of Christianity – and even this garment has looked very different at times – then what is a religionless Christianity? (Letter to Bethge dated April 30, 1944)*

Who Am I? Bonhoeffer wrote a number of poems in his letters. One of the most powerful that shows his own faith in a time of great suffering is *Who Am I?*

Who am I? They often tell me
I stepped from my cells confinement
Calmly, cheerfully, firmly,
Like a Squire from his country house.

Who am I? They often tell me
I used to speak to my warders
Freely and friendly and clearly,
As though it were mine to command.

Who am I? They also tell me
I bore the days of misfortune
Equably, smilingly, proudly,
like one accustomed to win.

Am I then really that which other men tell of?
Or am I only what I myself know of myself?
Restless and longing and sick, like a bird in a cage,
Struggling for breath, as though hands were compressing
my throat,

Yearning for colors, for flowers, for the voices of birds,
Thirsting for words of kindness, for neighborliness,
Tossing in expectations of great events,
Powerlessly trembling for friends at an infinite distance,
Weary and empty at praying, at thinking, at making,
Faint, and ready to say farewell to it all.

Who am I? This or the Other?
Am I one person today and tomorrow another?
Am I both at once? A hypocrite before others,
And before myself a contemptible woebegone weakling?
Or is something within me still like a beaten army
Fleeing in disorder from victory already achieved?

Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine.
Whoever I am, Thou knowest, O God, I am thine!

Ethics: Bonhoeffer's unfinished work on his *Ethics*, which he considered his most important theological writing, was compiled and published by Bethge in 1949, with updates and newer publications following. Bonhoeffer builds his Christian ethics out of his theological commitment to God reconciling humanity as one in Christ. He sees this reconciliation as an accomplished new reality which is given social and historical expression in the life of the church in the world empowered by the Spirit. Bonhoeffer works out what he sees as the church's role in a postwar world, working for peace and rebuilding the world. He also wrestles with what it means to be committed to peace while living in extreme circumstances that require extreme responses, such as the plot to assassinate Hitler, or working for the downfall of your own nation so that the world has a future life.

Legacy

- Church deeply engaged in the real struggles of suffering in the world
- Lutheranism rediscovering its roots apart from state church conformity
- Resonance with Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Church in South Africa during Apartheid
- Today's church facing rising racism and nationalism within the church and the world