Preserving the Ultimate: Using Maslow's Hierarchy to Apply Bonhoeffer's Ethics

Stephen Grusendorf, Capital Seminary and Graduate School

Abstract

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the twentieth century German theologian, wrote as he lived, in a manner that challenged the status quo, and his life was guided by one of his key ethical arguments: "the penultimate must be preserved for the sake of the ultimate." In order to understand this ethic adequately, the nature and practicality of the two key words "ultimate" and "penultimate" must be investigated. A methodology for the application of Bonhoefferian ethics can be developed by utilizing the twentieth century American psychologist Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. In return, Maslow's hierarchy can be informed by Bonhoeffer's theology.

Key Words: Bonhoeffer, Maslow, ethics, penultimate, sociology, theology

From his earliest days, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was interested in the intersection of theology and sociology. While it may be tempting to read the work of this modern martyr from a place of contemplation alone, to do so would be to misunderstand him. Bonhoeffer was deeply concerned with being Christian in the world and so focused his writing not only on the philosophical but on the practical as well. His work "Ethics" addressed directly how to engage the world without losing one's relationship with Christ. One of the most powerful statements in "Ethics" is that "the penultimate must be preserved for the sake of the ultimate" (1949/2005:168). This paper is dedicated to understanding better the practical outworking of this principle in everyday life. This will be accomplished first by investigating the nature and practicality of the two key words "ultimate" and "penultimate." A biblically based strategy for Bonhoefferian ethics can then be advanced by utilizing Abraham Maslow's seminal hierarchy of needs. Having done so, it then becomes possible to inform Maslow's hierarchy with Bonhoeffer's theology in return.

Understanding the Ultimate

For Bonhoeffer, the ultimate represented an important aspect of theology. He used the word qualitatively to speak of what, according to the biblical record, was the pinnacle of human history. Thus, the *ultimate* represents "what the Reformation has called the justification of the sinner by grace alone," a single event that is the pinnacle event of all human history (1949/2005:146). For Bonhoeffer, this act was the act of Jesus redeeming the sinner through grace. Bonhoeffer used this ultimate act of Christ as the foundation upon which he developed his ethics. He suggested that this ultimate act made possible three otherwise impossible activities: reconciliation, confession, and justification. Reconciliation identifies the trajectory of humanity, confession protects the trajectory of humanity, and justification re-routes the trajectory of humanity. In order to comprehend the full nuance of Bonheoffer's conception of the ultimate, these three activities must be understood in greater depth.

The Act of Reconciliation

According to Bonhoeffer, "reconciliation overcomes the world not by destruction, but only by the consummate love of God really lived in Jesus Christ" (1949/2005:82-83). Through reconciliation, a world at war with God is being brought back into relationship with God. Bonhoeffer argued that the ultimate act of justification of the sinner initiated a universal process of reconciliation. Nevertheless, Bonhoeffer was not a Universalist. For while reconciliation is universal, he pondered the mystery that only a part of humanity recognized and embraced the reality of Jesus Christ, the Reconciler.

> There is no explaining the mystery that only a part of humanity recognizes the form of its savior. The desire of the one who has become human to take form in all human beings remains to this hour unsatisfied. He who bore the form of human beings can only take form in a small flock; this is Christ's church. (1949/2005:96)

Yet the question remains, how did Christ activate reconciliation? Bonhoeffer suggests that reconciliation finds a beginning in the act of Jesus Christ taking human form. Only when Christ took human form could humanity, as a whole, rediscover what it means to be truly human. However, when Christ took on human form he immediately exposed how sin had caused humanity to become inhuman. This, in fact, is the first step in the process of reconciliation. "In Christ the form of humanity was created anew. What was at stake was not a matter of place, time, climate, race, individual, society, religion, or taste, but nothing less than the life of humanity, which recognized in Jesus its image and its hope" (1949/2005:96). So it is, Bonhoeffer suggests, that reconciliation is the act of humanity taking on the form of Jesus within creation. Yet as Yoder suggests, "the humanity of Jesus does not ratify the established

world and human life as it exists in a fallen word…in Christ God judges our conceptions of what it takes to make and keep human life human" (1994:99). It is thus within Christian community that true humanity is fashioned. "The starting point of Christian ethics is the body of Christ, the form of Christ in the form of the church, the formation of the church according to the form of Christ" (1949/2005:97).

The Act of Confession

Bonhoeffer states that confession is the "acknowledgment of guilt based only on the grace of Christ" (1949/2005:135). As such, confession necessarily follows reconciliation. For Bonhoeffer, true humanity is only found within the church because it is the church alone that is pursuing the form of Christ on earth. Therefore falling away from Christ is a falling away from one's very nature. Yet it is only in the church that guilt is genuinely acknowledged, for it is the only place where humanity recognizes its inhumanity and seeks to correct it in Jesus (1949/2005:134).

Confession is an act in three distinct ways. First, individuals within the church confess individual sins. Of individual confession Bonhoeffer states, "it is the acknowledging of my sin as the origin of all sin, as in the words of the Bible, the sin of Adam" (1949/2005:137). Second, the church confesses its collective sin in failing to live up fully to the form of Christ on earth. So important is this act of confession that Bonhoeffer said emphatically, "the church can let this happen or it will cease to be the church of Christ" (1949/2005:142). Finally, the church takes upon itself, through confession, the sins of the world and finds itself culpable before God on all human accounts. "With this confession the whole guilt of the world falls on the church, on Christians, and because here it is confessed and not denied, the possibility of forgiveness is opened" (1949/2005:136).

The Act of Justification

According to Bonhoeffer, justification is "submission to the form of Christ" (1949/2005:142). It is this submission that awakens new life in the individual, not due to their own power, but solely through reliance on the grace of God. This submission to the form of Christ must come through the personal embrace of the public death and shame of the cross. Through this association with the death of Christ, humanity finds the glory of new life through Jesus.

The act inherent in justification is the experience of forgiveness. Where confession prepares the individual to experience forgiveness, justification is the application of that forgiveness. Justification brings a radical healing. Unlike other forms of healing found within created order, justification provides a "full break" and a "new beginning" in Christ (1949/2005:143).

Thus for Bonhoeffer, it is the act of Jesus Christ on the cross justifying the sinner through grace alone which is the ultimate act. It is the pinnacle event of human history. This singular act enabled humanity to experience reconciliation, confession, and justification. In turn, this ultimate act created the potential for the Christian community to act on that which they received and extend the practical benefits of reconciliation, confession, and justification into the world.

Understanding the Penultimate

Understanding the ultimate is prerequisite to understanding the penultimate. The penultimate comes before the ultimate and becomes what it is only through the ultimate (1949/2005:159). Bonhoeffer considered two qualities to be penultimate: being human and being good. Considering each of these individually grounds the understanding of the penultimate.

As mentioned above, humanity finds it basis in Christ alone. Bonhoeffer argues that "only from the perspective of the ultimate can we recognize what being human is, and therefore how being human is based on and determined by being justified" (1949/2005:160). So it is that true humanness precedes justification precisely because it is only human beings who are justified. The penultimate precedes the ultimate, while at the same time being defined by it.

Bonhoeffer defines goodness as "action that is in accordance with the reality of Jesus Christ" (1949/2005:229). Yet one must be careful to pursue the right action, for as Plant argues, "radicalism renounces the world while compromise embraces it" (2013:87). So too then, goodness requires the ultimate to find its true limit and end. Goodness may be understood and pursued precisely because Christ became human and is therefore knowable. Action that is in accordance with the reality of Jesus Christ has "love as its content and freedom as its form" (1949/2005:232). Thus, without that which is ultimate, goodness would be impossible, for Jesus himself informs what is good. Without Christ one cannot understand how to act in accordance with Christ. Again, the penultimate is defined by the ultimate. Yet goodness too must also precede that which is ultimate.

Bonhoefferian Ethics

Bonheoffer made the argument that "the penultimate must be preserved for the sake of the ultimate" because he believed that the wanton neglect or destruction of what is human and what is good in fact harms the ultimate. Humanity and goodness must be preserved and defended in order that the world might experience justification through Christ. From this, a practical Bonhoefferian ethic must be drawn out.

Bonhoeffer articulates the practical outworking of this defense using Isaiah 40:4 as the rationale for preserving humanity and goodness. In this text, Isaiah is discussing the preparation necessary for the Messiah to come. "Let every valley be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; let the rough ground become a plain, and the rugged terrain a broad valley" (Isa. 40:4). Bonhoeffer sees a twin application of this text. First, he links it to the work of John the Baptist who was to prepare for the coming of Jesus. However, he also connects this same passage to the second coming of Jesus during the eschaton. The only way, Bonhoeffer argues, that the second coming of Jesus will not be one of anger in which he strikes down humanity is if humanity and goodness themselves are preserved. It is at this point that Bonhoeffer asks the reader to avoid a dangerous conclusion. The point is not for individuals to ask what is good. "Instead they must ask a completely different question: what is the will of God?" (1949/2005:47). This question must be asked because goodness is inextricably related to the person of Christ (Green 1999:326-327).

In order to understand what the will of God is, Bonhoeffer turns his attention to concepts taken from Matthew 25. Doing the will of God necessitates that his people prepare the way for his coming. This preparation requires real work in the real world. For, as Bonhoeffer argues, "preparing the way is indeed a matter of concrete intervention in the visible world, as concrete and visible as hunger and nourishment" (1949/2005:164). But this work must be directional; it must lead to something ultimate. For "to give the hungry bread is not yet to proclaim to them the grace of God and justification, and to have received bread does not yet mean to stand in faith" (1949/2005:163). The work of preparing the way, Bonhoeffer argues, must initiate from a place of repentance, while also producing favorable conditions for repentance to occur.

In order to situate the origin of penultimate actions in a place of repentance, Bonhoeffer references Matthew 3:1 and suggests that from a place of personal repentance, the Christian cares for and protects the penultimate, meeting those deep and basic needs found in humanity so that repentance might be spread and the ultimate embraced (1949/2005:164). Repentance on the part of the Christian is necessary for two reasons. First, it is repentance itself that leads to action. Preparing the way is nothing less than a command placed on the Christ follower by God himself, a command that must be obeyed. Accordingly, "preparing the way…has quite definite conditions in view that are to be produced" (1949/2005: 165). The only way these conditions can be met by the Christian is through repentance, because "repentance means the concrete changing of one's way…repentance demands deeds" (1949/2005: 165). Yet personal repentance is essential for the penultimate act because it also acknowledges the impossibility of the individual to prepare fully the way on his or her own. "At the end of all preparing the way for Christ must be the recognition that we ourselves can never prepare the way, and that therefore the demand that we prepare the way leads us to repentance" (1949/2005:167). Bonhoeffer argues that it is nothing less than a spirit of repentance that ensures the Christian

does indeed prepare Christ's way and not a self-made way to Christ. Repentance recognizes the impossibility of the task of preparing the way and situates the individual in a place of absolute dependence on Christ.

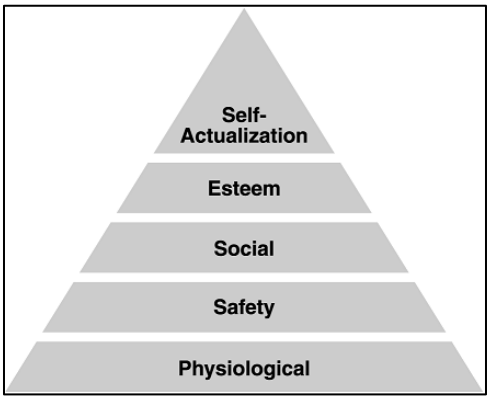
Penultimate actions must not only originate from a place of repentance, they must seek to produce favorable conditions for repentance to occur as well. As such these actions are to lead the way for people to experience repentance gently before Jesus, and ultimately experience justification through grace without the use of coercion. This is accomplished by understanding that while the ultimate and penultimate are related, they are, by necessity, different. The ultimate requires the proclamation of God's word. Yet, "if a human life is deprived of the conditions that are a part of being human, the justification of such a life by grace and faith is at least seriously hindered, if not made impossible" (1949/2005: 160). The fact is the Christian must always proclaim God's word and whenever that word is hindered, remove the barriers keeping an individual from that word. So the ultimate leads to repentance, and the penultimate protects the way to the ultimate. "Our task is to strengthen the penultimate through a stronger proclamation of the ultimate and to protect the ultimate by preserving the penultimate" (1949/2005: 169).

At this juncture it is important to note that Bonhoeffer sees no strings attached to penultimate acts. Penultimate acts themselves will never produce repentance. Rather, these acts protect the reception of the word of God. As such the aim and motivation of Christian charity must be the basic protection of what is human and what is good alone. For in valuing and protecting the human and the good, the Christian ensures that an ideal environment exists for the reception of the word of God.

Considering Maslow's Contribution to Bonhoefferian Ethics

What remains is for Bonheoffer's penultimate ideal to be divided into a series of actions which can be carried out by the church in concrete reality. To do this, one must see equal value in theology and sociology, and thereby open up new opportunities for learning (Hiebert 2008). It is in this endeavor where the work of Abraham Maslow helps transform Bonheoffer's ideal into action. In his foundational work, *Motivation and Personality,* Maslow articulated his now famous hierarchy of needs. This hierarchy articulates the full range of needs represented within humanity and ranks them from most basic to complex. In order from basic to complex, Maslow stated that the needs of humanity are divided as follows: physiological, safety, love and belonging, self-esteem, and finally self-actualization. Thus, this hierarchy provides care for all people from "the strongest person to the most crippled spirit" (Maslow, 1954:33).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



While Bonhoeffer and Maslow disagree on many subjects, they do find common ground in the way they perceive the physical and the spiritual to be related. Each saw the two as interconnected. Bonhoeffer did not conceive of the spiritual and the physical as existing in dichotomy, but rather in union. Bonhoeffer argued that "as long as Christ and the world are conceived as two realms bumping against and repelling each other, we are left with only the following options…give up on reality as a whole or try to stand in two realms at the same time" (1949/2005:47). When separated, Bonhoeffer saw a forced dichotomy that does not enable the Christian to make real decisions that accomplish the will of God in reality.

Maslow too saw an unhealthy and seemingly forced dichotomy. "Both science and religion have been too narrowly conceived and have been too exclusively dichotomized and separated from each other" (1964:11). In his estimation, a certain synthesis existed between the physical and spiritual that needed to be rediscovered. "Theologians have always found it necessary to attempt to reconcile the flesh and the spirit…but no one has ever found a satisfactory solution. Functional autonomy of the higher need life seems to be part of the answer. The higher develops only on the basis of the lower" (1954:103-104).

It seems then, that there exists the possibility to craft both a viable and biblical strategy for ethical action by synthesizing the work of Bonhoeffer and Maslow. What follows is an attempt to do just this, to offer a biblical articulation of such a structure.

Caring for the Ultimate by Meeting Physiological Needs

The most basic needs represented in Maslow's hierarchy are physiological in nature. These are needs like food, water and air, anything that sustains life. Over the course of his ministry, Jesus connected with many who were struggling to have these types of needs met in their life. In John 4 Jesus interacted with one such individual. In this text a royal official approached Jesus on behalf of his sick and dying son. After talking with the father, Jesus sent him away saying "Go; your son lives" (John 4:46-54). On his way home, the word of Jesus was corroborated by one of the man's servants who had come to tell him that his son lived. The

response was profound. The man and his entire household believed in Jesus. When Jesus preserved the penultimate by meeting the physiological needs of this man's son, the ultimate was preserved and embraced in the entire household.

Bonhoeffer spoke poignantly about meeting physiological needs. "The preservation of bodily life is the very foundation of all natural rights and is therefore endowed with special importance" (1949/2005:185). Regarding rights, he suggested that each human being was born with natural rights that entitled them to life, the freedom to reproduce, and basic freedom to live. In Bonheoffer's view, if a human being was stripped of these rights, they were seriously harmed. A Bonhoefferian ethic compels one to meet the physiological needs of others.

Caring for the Ultimate by Meeting Safety Needs

Maslow next lists safety needs as the second most basic need. Safety needs have to do with things such as shelter and stability. Jesus once encountered a man in the country of the Gerasenes who was possessed with demons. His possession caused the man to roam among the tombs of the local city. The man's condition was described starkly. He was naked and homeless. While he was able to care for his most basic physiological needs, he was not safe. In his discussion concerning the need for safety, Maslow suggests that "within our society we prefer a safe, orderly, predictable, and organized world, which can be counted on and in which unexpected, unmanageable or other dangerous things do not happen" (1943:5). This was certainly not the case for this demon-possessed man. In fact, the passage details how unmanageable the man's situation actually was. Furthermore, Maslow suggests that one who has an unmet safety need often searches for a strong protector (1943:6). Those within this man's community had unsuccessfully sought to protect him. However, they were simply not strong enough to do so. When Jesus met the man, he commanded the demons to leave him. Jesus proved he had strength enough to protect the man because he cast out the demons. The effect of Jesus' words on the man was astounding. His sanity was returned and he was pictured clothed and at the feet of Jesus. This picture of the man seated and rational shows that Christ brought him from the unfamiliar back into the predictable and familiar of society. When Jesus met this penultimate need, it enabled the man to receive Jesus' message. Because Jesus chose to deal with the penultimate, he in turn preserved the ultimate.

Bonhoeffer also speaks of the responsibility to meet safety needs. "Protection against the arbitrary encroachment on the freedom of the body is essential to the preservation of bodily life" (1949/2005:214). In particular, Bonhoeffer notes rape, exploitation, torture, and arbitrary robbing of the defenseless and innocent as particularly heinous transgressions done towards others. The essence of his thoughts regarding safety needs may be summed up in the idea that the individual's body inherently belongs to themselves.

Caring for the Ultimate by Meeting Belonging Needs

The third class of needs listed by Maslow is belonging needs. These are needs that are relational in nature. Jesus regularly interacted with the social outcasts of his day. In the New Testament, lepers were some of the most shunned within society. Men and women who struggled with various forms of skin disease were sent away and forced to leave behind family, work, and even their religious institutions. In Luke 5 Jesus interacted with a leper. The leper asked Jesus, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean," to which Jesus replied, "I am willing; be cleansed" (Luke 5:12-15). As Jesus spoke these words, he reached out and touched the man. In this instance it is not made clear whether this man responds to the gospel directly. But what is clear is that when Jesus cared for this man's needs, his actions pointed to the ultimate.

Bonhoeffer agreed with the conclusions of the Enlightenment that all people have equal dignity. This meant that Bonhoeffer disagreed with the idea that any group of human beings deserved special privileges because of their class (1949/2005:374). So a Bonhoefferian ethic is concerned with giving equal treatment and equal access to the basic rights of society to all human beings. Yet ever the practical theologian, Bonhoeffer also recognized that God ordained and culture allowed for certain levels of hierarchy to exist in the world. According to Bonhoeffer, this hierarchy could not do violence to the universal dignity inherent in every human being. Bonhoeffer discusses how both those who are above and below others must interact under the Divine authority of God, thereby exercising both authority and submission under Divine supervision. He notes four legitimate mandates in the created world where this hierarchy exists; church, marriage and family, culture, and government. Of their relationship, Bonhoeffer states,

> Being above is thus limited in a threefold way, each of which works differently. It is limited by God who issues the commission, by the other mandates, and by the relation to those below. These limits at the same time also safeguard being above. This safeguard serves to encourage the exercise of the divine mandate just as the limit is the warning not to transgress it. (1949/2005: 394)

Caring for the Ultimate by Meeting Esteem Needs

Maslow next details what he calls esteem needs. Once a person can conform to society, then they need to feel a part of that society. Jesus interacted with a man who was at odds with his community named Zacchaeus. What is known about Zacchaeus was that he was a self-serving Jewish tax collector who worked for the Roman Empire. He often abused his position by extorting money from those around him. When Jesus came to Zacchaeus's town, Zacchaeus found it difficult even to see him because of his short stature. The crowd around Jesus would not let Zacchaeus get close enough to see Jesus. When Jesus saw Zacchaeus on the fringe of the

crowd, He called to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house" (Lk. 19:5). Jesus stated in so many words that he needed Zacchaeus. This decision by Jesus immediately elicited a negative response by the crowd. The text states that the crowd grumbled and wondered why Jesus would associate with such a sinner as Zacchaeus. Maslow notes that the need for esteem is evidenced in two ways. First, "there is the desire for strength, adequacy, confidence in the face of the world, and for independence and freedom" (1943:7). One can infer that both by his position and considerable wealth, Zacchaeus had attained a reasonable amount of esteem defined by this first description given by Maslow. However, Maslow points out that the need for esteem is also evidenced in "a desire for reputation or prestige (defining it as respect or esteem from other people), recognition, attention, importance or appreciation" (1943:7). What is clear is that in the eyes of others, Zacchaeus was not esteemed. But Jesus saw in Zacchaeus someone worth his attention. Jesus saw a need for esteem in Zacchaeus. By addressing his need for esteem, Jesus was able to deal with the ultimate as well, for Zacchaeus later stated, "today salvation has come to this house" (Lk. 19:1-10).

In his earlier work Sanctorum Communio, Bonhoeffer speaks about the collective nature of humanity, and as he does one can begin to see him arguing for the necessity of meeting esteem needs. "Humanity is a comprehensive community that embraces all communities…this collective person of humanity has one heart" (1930/1998:120-121). He argued that to address the community is to address the individual and vise versa. This is why Bonhoeffer could suggest that "God can see the whole people in a few, as God could see and reconcile the whole of humanity in one man" (1930/1998:120). Meeting esteem needs is critical to a Bonhoefferian ethic, because to embrace the one is to embrace the whole. Furthermore, to reject or ostracize the one is to reject the entire community.

Caring for the Ultimate by Engaging the Desire for Self-Actualization

The highest and most complex need listed by Maslow is the need of self-actualization. Maslow offers this description of the need: "Self-actualizing people most of the time behave as though, for them, means and ends are clearly distinguishable. In general, they are fixed on ends, rather than on means, and means are quite definitely subordinated to these ends" (1954:169). It seems that according to Maslow, self-actualization is the individual's need to be self-determining. In Scripture, those struggling to have this need met often interacted with Jesus differently than did those dealing with the other four lower needs represented above. Where Jesus is the agent of help for those seeking to have all the lower needs met, Jesus becomes the agent of redirection toward those pursuing self-actualization. Yet from a divine perspective, this redirection may be seen as a form of indirect help in that it still led people to deal with the ultimate.

Saul offers a strong example of how Jesus redirected those pursuing the need of self-actualization. Saul was an ardent Pharisee who pursued a radical course of persecuting Christians. To use Maslow's terminology, he was subordinating the means of persecution to justify his end of serving God. Yet how does Jesus remove the barrier keeping Saul from dealing with the ultimate? He blinds him. He forces him to become dependent on others, thereby redirecting his ends. Jesus asserts authority over Saul and in so doing shows him who is in fact ultimate. "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do" (Acts 9:5-6). This intervention radically transforms Saul. It was a response couched in the physical, but directed at the spiritual. It led Saul to later write, "whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ" (Philippians 3:7-11).

In a somewhat sobering moment, Bonhoeffer speaks to the absolute failure of humanity, in and of itself, to rightly determine their own way. Speaking specifically of the ability to develop a responsible ethic, he argues that reason, fanaticism, conscience, duty, freedom, and virtue all fail to produce a responsible ethic within human beings (1949/2005:78-79). Bonhoeffer argues that instead of becoming self-determining, individuals must submit to the form of Christ and be obedient to the will of God. (1949/2005:99-101, 1953/2010:40).

It would be convenient at this point to say that Maslow and Bonhoeffer are not congruous and therefore at odds with one another regarding self-actualization. Bonhoeffer argues for absolute obedience to the will of God; Maslow argues for the pursuit of self-fulfillment. However, looking deeper into Maslow's self-actualization reveals a certain synergy between Bonhoeffer and Maslow.

Bonhoeffer's Contribution to Maslow's Hierarchy

The question that has driven this discussion to this point has been whether Bonhoeffer's penultimate could be preserved via Maslow's needs structure. It has been demonstrated above that it indeed does. Yet now one final question must be considered. Can Maslow's need structure be informed by Bonhoeffer's ultimate?

In articulating his conception of self-actualization, Maslow suggests that this need refers to "the desire for self-fulfillment, namely, to the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is potentially…to become more and more…everything that one is capable of becoming" (1954:7-8). For Maslow, self-actualization is all about a person becoming what he or she can, and thus, must be. He argues that when all the other needs of an individual are met, a new "discontent and restlessness will soon develop unless the individual is doing what he is fitted for" (1954:7). Self-actualization then is all about becoming what a person was always intended to be. In a sense, self-actualization has much to do with becoming human in the fullest sense. It is here where Bonhoeffer has much to offer Maslow's understanding of self-actualization.

Bonhoeffer argues that "in Jesus Christ, the one who became human was crucified and is risen; humanity has become new. What happened to Christ has happened for all, he was *the* human being. The new human being has been created" (1949/2005:91). Inherent within Bonhoeffer's concept of the ultimate is the notion of what it means to be human in the fullest sense or what Forell refers to as "authentic selfhood" (2009:209). Bonhoeffer makes this point clearly when he states:

> God did not become an idea, a principle, a program, a universally valid belief, or a law; God became human. That means that the form of Christ, though it is certain and remains one and the same, intends to take form in real human beings, and thus in quite different ways. Christ does not abolish human reality in favor of an idea that demands to be realized against all that is real. Christ empowers reality, affirming it as the real human being and thus the ground of all human reality. (1949/2005:99)

Thus for Bonhoeffer, as for Maslow, the pressing issue is that of individuals becoming human in the fullest sense. Yet where Maslow sees self-actualization as the pinnacle of humanness, Bonhoeffer argues that justification through faith is the beginning of true humanness, not its end (Zimmerman & Gregor 2012).

Maslow's psychology shows that individuals are naturally concerned with becoming human in the fullest sense. The example of Jesus shows that he redirected merely human pursuits of what it means to become human in the fullest sense toward a deeper truth. Finally, Bonhoeffer's theology informs us that to be human in the fullest sense one must experience what is ultimate. One must experience justification by Jesus through grace alone. So Maslow's need structure can be informed by Bonhoeffer's ultimate. First, Bonhoeffer more correctly defines how the highest need of an individual is met. That is, Bonhoeffer argues that the highest need of any individual is to become human in the fullest sense. Second, Bonhoeffer offers a better phrase to capture the true nature of this need. In place of "self-actualization", Bonhoeffer inserts "justified by grace" as the key need that must be met in order for an individual to feel human in the fullest sense.

Conclusions

Maslow's hierarchy of needs offers Bonhoefferian ethics a simple structure that assists in the working out of practical ethics. It provides a framework by which the penultimate may be preserved for the sake of the ultimate. Bonhoeffer's ultimate offers Maslow's hierarchy a clearer understanding of the pinnacle of human need, namely, that in order to be human in the fullest sense an individual must first experience justification through faith. This confirms what others have argued, that sociology and theology should converse, because they often inform

and support one another (Flanagan 2007; Millbank 2006; Wheeldon 2016). This particular investigation has created the opportunity for further dialogue between the disciplines of sociology and theology, and informs the individual seeking to meet his or her deepest needs from a Christian sociological perspective.

References

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. 1998. Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church. Vol. 1, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, edited by Clifford J. Green. Translated by Reinhard Krauss and Nancy Lukens. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. 2005. Ethics. Vol. 6*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, edited by Clifford J. Green. Translated by Reinhard Krauss, Charles C. West, and Douglas W. Stott. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. 2010. Letters and Papers from Prison. Vol. 8, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, edited by John W. DeGruchy. Translated by Isabel Best, Lisa E. Dahill, Reinhard Krauss, Nancy Lukens, Barbara Rumscheidt and Martin Rumscheidt. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

Flanagan, K.D.P. 2007. *Sociology in Theology: Reflexivity and Belief*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Forell, George. [1962]2009. "Realized Faith, the Ethics of Dietrich Bonhoeffer." Pp. 199-224 in *The Place of Bonhoeffer: Essays on the Problems and Possibilities of His Thought,* edited by Martin E. Marty. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers.

Green, Clifford J. 1999. *Bonhoeffer: A Theology of Sociality*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.

Hiebert, Dennis. 2008. "Can We Talk? Achieving Dialogue between Sociology and Theology." *Christian Scholar's Review*, 37(2):199-214.

Maslow, A.H. 1943. "A Theory of Human Motivation." *Psychological Review*. 50(4):370-396.

Maslow, A.H. 1954. *Motivation and Personality*. New York, NY: Harper Row.

Maslow, A.H. 1964. *Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences*. New York, NY: Penguin Compass.

Millbank, John. 2006. *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason.* Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing.

Plant, Stephen. 2013. "The Evangelization of Rules, Bonhoeffer's Political Theology" in *Bonhoeffer, Christ and Culture*, edited by Timothy Larsen and Keith Johnson. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press

Wheeldon, Jeff. 2016. "Theology and Sociology, Sociology as Theology." *Journal of Sociology and Christianity*, 6(2):6-23.

Yoder, John Howard. 1994. *The Politics of Jesus*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.

Zimmerman, Jens and Brian Gregor. 2012. "Introduction" in *Being Human, Becoming Human: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Social Thought*, edited by Jens Zimmerman and Brian Gregor. Cambridge, UK: James Clarke and Co.

Direct correspondence to Dr. Stephen Grusendorf at sgrusendorf@lbc.edu