

# *Silence Before God*

by OSWALD BAYER

I will never forget the determination with which my wife, in an interview shortly before her death, answered the question: “What is it that makes the greatest impression on you in the Divine Service?” She answered without hesitation: “The great stillness when everyone is silent.” *Silentium* is, in fact, a precious thing—rising out of invoking God’s aid in the preaching service in Württemberg, where stillness serves as “the appeal to the Holy Spirit, both for those who preach and for those who hear the Word.”<sup>1</sup>

As an invoked silence, this is a contoured and properly-oriented silence that is concerned with the Word—the Word that is to be spoken just as it is to be heard and taken to heart. For that reason, its religious dimension, especially the religious-psychological dimension, should not be denied, nor should its strange vastness go unrecognized, that vastness evident in the proclamation that is common: “The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him” (Hab. 2:20, Rev. 8:1).<sup>2</sup>

All busyness and activity, not least the often-uninterrupted talking and even chatter, comes to an end and gives way to an inaction, a Sabbath with which glory is given to the God who will himself do the decisive work. “The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent” (Ex. 14:14, cf. Isa. 30:15). “And put aside the work you do,/ So that God may work in you.” This Sabbath<sup>4</sup> is discerned in attentive—better relaxed than strained—hearing: in the hearing of the name of God as that mysterious “voice of silence fading away”<sup>5</sup> that Elijah heard after the wind, the earthquake, and the fire.<sup>6</sup> God comes not in the sensation and exhilaration of the large numbers, the clamor of the masses, or the cosmic and social revolutions that shake foundations, but rather subdued, softly; it is easy to miss him. The poet Paul Valéry writes pointedly, “Pay heed to this fine, unceasing noise;/ it is stillness./ Pay attention to what one hears./ when one hears nothing else.”<sup>7</sup> It resembles the stillness that ensues when an expected or sudden toll of the bell and then its reverberation

have faded away. Buddhism, especially Zen Buddhism, is familiar with this.<sup>8</sup>

Moses, much like Elijah, experienced this stillness in that he was allowed to hear the name of God as it faded away (Ex. 33:23).<sup>9</sup> This stillness that is empty of human activity and in this sense inactive is in no way empty. Rather, it comes from the fullness of God's name, which rings out, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy" (Ex. 33:19; 34:6f). In its relation to the name of God, silence is neither baseless nor pointless. It is a qualified and full silence that flows into a stillness that—to invoke an expressive antitype for it—radically contradicts Edvard Munch's "Scream."

*"Woe is me! I am reduced to silence!"*

It is worth reflecting further on this silence, a silence that is not at all vague but rather defined by human emptiness and divine fullness. Where does it come from? How does it come about? It is not a matter of an undefined encounter with the simultaneously repulsive and yet alluring supernatural—the *fascinosum* and the *tremendum*<sup>10</sup>—but rather initially a matter of the perception of a *silence inflicted by a human being on himself*, a speechlessness inflicted by ourselves. The great call narrative of the prophet Isaiah speaks of this. In the face of the majesty of the Holy One of Israel, Isaiah must lament, "Woe is me! For I am lost" (Isa. 6:5)! But it can also be translated, "Woe is me! I am reduced to silence!"<sup>11</sup> In the recognition of his sin and the sin of his people, the prophet has been left speechless—this speech that has been abused with "unclean lips," the speaking that misses our purpose, that perverts our dealings with things, that serves our self-assertion over the Creator as well as the vain and empty chatter and lies.<sup>12</sup> There needs to be a painful purification of lips with a burning coal, so that "your guilt has departed, and your sin is blotted out" (Isa. 6:7).

### *Our Abundant Speech and God's Deep Silence*

But God not only reduces the sinner to silence; he also keeps silent himself, conceals and withholds himself from those who seek

him and his Word “but shall not find it” (Amos 8:12). The lament psalms lament the hiddenness and the silence of God: “O God, do not keep silence” (Ps. 83:1, see also Ps. 28:1 and 109:1)! Step in at last and save and judge: set things right! How long will you keep silence (Rev. 6:10)? Impatience. Why? Incomprehension. Isaiah experienced the hard and bitter experience that God himself “hardens” so that those who hear do not understand and those who see do not perceive.<sup>13</sup>

The silence of God has taken a particular form in modernity and postmodernity—this has often been noticed and analyzed; I remember by way of example a written exchange between Hamann and Lavater concerning the time of silence.<sup>14</sup> In his letter to Hamann from 25 March 1784, Lavater laments the “thousand-formed, million-headed and completely heartless unbelief” and atheism of his day.<sup>15</sup> It was “a difficult time for the children of the truth—to stand for God without God and constantly to hear the taunt: Where is your God?”<sup>16</sup>—“a difficult time, the time of *our* abundant speech and *his* deep silence.”<sup>17</sup> On 2 May 1784, Hamann responds, “It is certainly a difficult time, but our responsibility is to endure it and to imitate his *deep silence*, as our abundant speech does not give him a chance to speak. The Lord will fight for us, but we must be still.”<sup>18</sup>

Such stillness is not speechless and dead but rather a living stillness, as God the Creator himself has a chance to speak in it; it is that human silence that waits on divine speech and action and makes room for it—consequently a silence dealing pointedly with the theology of justification. “Just as the beloved Sabbath becomes longer for some than the week, so also does sitting still, keeping silent perhaps contain a more difficult lesson and harsher work than eternal action, working, chatter—the *only* [or *unique*?] theory of God’s rest is perhaps a more delectable egg than the innumerable incubated cosmogonies.”<sup>19</sup> I will return later to God’s rest as an “orphic egg,” the origin from which all things come into being.

For the moment, I cannot expand on the significance of modern atheism, especially nihilism,<sup>20</sup> for an understanding of the silence of God; it does however point suggestively towards it. The deepest silence of God can be apprehended in the face of the Shoah. Yet whoever will not honor this deadly destructive power in silence cannot leave the unspeakable as unspoken and unopposed. Paul

Celan, Nelly Sachs, Rose Ausländer and others dismiss Adorno's judgment that "writing a poem after Auschwitz" is "barbaric."<sup>21</sup> However, this can only be almost falling silent. Even Adorno comes to this limit in his search for a "final vestige of the ontological proof of the existence of God,"<sup>22</sup> "in solidarity with metaphysics at the moment of its collapse."<sup>23</sup> At the same time, he takes up—like Max Horkheimer—the great tradition of mysticism, in which the biblical prohibition of images and the imagelessness of Neoplatonism are closely bound together.

### *Biblical Prohibition of Images and Neoplatonic Imagelessness*

Evoking the great tradition of mysticism, I refer paradigmatically to Max Horkheimer. With his "fear that there is no God,"<sup>24</sup> every positive statement about God, every *affirmatio* of a divine attribute is carefully and deliberately avoided. Yes, even God's name in its positivity and concreteness<sup>25</sup> is sacrificed to an "ultimate fidelity to the prohibition of images."<sup>26</sup> With Horkheimer, this fidelity joins itself together as if self-evidently with the Neoplatonic negative predication of God as the ἄρητον, the Unutterable, the Unnameable. "The pious Jew hesitates" "when he is supposed to write the word 'God.' He writes in its place an apostrophe because God is for him the 'Unnameable,' because 'God' cannot be represented in a word."<sup>27</sup>

In view of the enormous significance of the superimposition, the association, or even the identification of the biblical confession of God as the wordless and imageless Only-One (Deut. 6:4) with the question of the μία ἀρχή of Greek metaphysics—the question of a unity that culminates sublimely in the Neoplatonic εἷν—a foundational test and clarification of this superimposition is necessary not least for a philosophically and theologically cogent understanding of silence. We will first consider both sides—the biblical prohibition of images and the Neoplatonic imagelessness—each on its own, so that we can then critically determine their relationship to each other.

### *Neoplatonic Imagelessness*

The Neoplatonic tradition that was incorporated into Christendom and is extraordinarily influential even into modernity and

postmodernity manifests itself with its utmost clarity in the writings of (Pseudo-) Dionysius the Areopagite. These are summarized briefly in the treatise *On Mystical Theology*.<sup>28</sup> According to this treatise, if one wishes to speak about God at all and not keep totally silent about him, one ought to speak of him using the following ways or methods: first, in the “cataphatic” (positive) way, the way of *affirmatio*, of the affirmation that can speak of divine attributes, of the comparison of everything finite to the infinite; second, in the “apophatic” (negative) way, the way of negation, of the denial of everything finite, the way where one denies to God all attributes: God is what he is not. The third, the way of “mystical” theology, is not a method. Rather, it is the insight and experience that the divine original power, the *αἰτία*, is “beyond every assertion” and, “beyond every limitation, it is also beyond every denial.”<sup>29</sup> Thus this “mystical” theology is in no way identical with the “negative” theology—as is occasionally asserted. Rather, the “cataphatic” is lifted up through the “apophatic” into “mystical” theology. It concerns itself oxymoronically with the fullness that is emptiness and the emptiness that is fullness, with the silence that is word and the word that is silence, with the light that is dark and the darkness that is light. God is hidden insofar as he is free of attributes, “super-essential” beyond and above all definition.<sup>30</sup> Language finally breaks down, collapses into the ineffable; it is not possible to speak about such a hidden God, only to be silent. The ineffability of God is honored with silence.<sup>31</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein may move in this Neoplatonic tradition when he concluded his “*Tractatus logico-philosophicus*” (1921) with the famous thesis: “That about which one cannot speak, about that he must be silent.”<sup>32</sup>

### *The Biblical Prohibition of Images*

The biblical prohibition of images safeguards the freedom of God, who has promised his presence with his name. Hamann writes to Jacobi on January 23, 1785, “I am not aware of nor do I know another ‘Δός μοι ποῦ στῶ’ [Give me where I shall stand] than his Word, his oath, and his *I am*—and *will be*, wherein consists the entire splendor of his old and new name, which no creature is capable of expressing.”<sup>33</sup> His self-introduction, “I am” (Ex. 3:14), is in its claim and in its promise the essence of his new name, as the Gospel

of John expresses with particular clarity—and not only in the “I am . . .” statements. God’s invisibility—“No one has ever seen God” (John 1:18)—does not rule out, but rather rules in, the idea that he himself—as the Son—has made himself known: “the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known” (John 1:18). That God is invisible does not rule out, but rather rules in, that he acts audibly, indeed, in a certain way makes himself seen by hearing (Deut. 4:12). “Although one does not see the realm of Christ as one sees the temporal realms, yet one hears it.” For “Christ’s realm is a hearing-realm, not a seeing-realm. For the eyes do not lead and guide us to where we will find Christ. Rather, the ears must do this.”<sup>34</sup> Hearing and the Word that precedes it is—not only according to the Gospel of John—the egg from which everything came into being and without which nothing is that is. But now this eternal Word that called the world into being entirely unmerited—from nothing—and made the darkness into light has tangibly become human (John 1:14). The invisible God who safeguards his invisibility through the prohibition of images has made himself into a definitive image, has totally given himself over in this image, has “poured himself” into it.<sup>35</sup> Jesus Christ is the “image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15, Heb. 1:3)—not somehow only his likeness; rather, in him “the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (Col. 2:9, Col. 1:19).

In his christologically-determined personality, God addresses me together with all creatures, allows himself to be spoken with, hears me and answers me. “Our God comes; he does not keep silent” (Ps. 50:3). That which befits God (*θεοπρεπές*) in the philosophical doctrine of God—such as his impassibility, his apatheia—collapses into such a relationship with God constituted by his coming and speaking, yet without making room for an uncontrolled and uncontrollable mythologizing;<sup>36</sup> theology maintains a critical relationship to metaphysics as well as to mythology.

It is no easy task for theology—though it is not a task that can be refused—to think of God’s visibility and his invisibility together, simultaneously, in a unity; theology has to preserve the mystery of God’s name without concealing it but rather—as a “manifest” mystery<sup>37</sup>—to manifest it and in so doing not to shy away from speaking not only about God’s bodily Word but also about God’s

corporeality itself<sup>38</sup> without thereby falling into a crude materialism and naturalism. Then theology will—this is also of great significance philosophically—be aware of that Last and First that lies ahead of that antithesis of intellectualism and empiricism: the Word that is first perceived in hearing.

*Neoplatonic Imagelessness vs the Biblical Prohibition of Images*

For the Neoplatonism of the Areopagite, the greatest, the true worship of God takes place in mystical silence in the face of the ἄρητος; countless texts of Meister Eckhart testify to this,<sup>39</sup> and even Paul Tillich's talk of "God above God" and, correspondingly, of "absolute faith" at the end of *The Courage to Be*,<sup>40</sup> moves within this substantial tradition.<sup>41</sup> The decisive question is: does this silent worship, which even renounces the naming of the name of God and in this respect can be considered a form of atheism,<sup>42</sup> stand in a clear and sharp antithesis or even opposition to trust in the incarnate Word—in the one who has come down and remains down below? "It is down with us in our mud and toil that we smell his skin," as Luther preaches the name "Immanuel."<sup>43</sup> To say it another way: is the expressible—"manifest"—mystery of the revelation of Christ irreconcilably opposed to the "un-manifest," ultimately inexpressible mystery, as the Areopagite tradition maintained? Or can the two be conveyed together in such a way that negative theology is apprehended as speech from God on the basis of his revelation and God's hiddenness is understood as the hiddenness of the revealed God?<sup>44</sup>

Neoplatonism has a hard time speaking about God's πάθη—about his wrath and his mercy, for example. Such attributes of God are obviously anthropomorphic foreign substances in Neoplatonic thought,<sup>45</sup> whereas the texts of the biblical tradition are unthinkable without anthropomorphisms and thoroughly amenable to mythology.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, the question arises from the observations of the history of theology whether the necessary examination of the relationship of theology to mythology can take place without considering the three ways of the Areopagite. Are they not indispensable guardians of the invisibility of God and the mystery of his name? Do they not serve his freedom?

*Does God's Word Arise from His Silence?*

While we ask about the truth of the Neoplatonic insistence on the imagelessness of God, those moments of the biblical tradition gain a particular importance that appear to support the thesis that the Word does arise from silence not only in the human sphere, as will be shown, but rather already in the very being of God himself. According to Wisdom 18:14f., the antiphon for Christmas,<sup>47</sup> God's Word seems to arise from his silence. "For while gentle silence enveloped all things, and night in its swift course was now half gone, your all-powerful word leaped from heaven, from the royal throne . . ." The Word, jerking about like a flash of lightning from the silent heaven, sought and found a dwelling place in Zion,<sup>48</sup> which is to say in the Temple, which for Christians is Jesus Christ: "Through God's eternal will/ This Child to us was given . . . At midnight calm and still."<sup>49</sup>

Does God's Word thus come from the silence? This seems to be confirmed through the *Revelationsschema* that comes across repeatedly in the New Testament text—especially in the Deutero-Pauline and Pastoral Epistles. According to these, the divine mystery that had thus far been concealed was only first revealed in the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom. 16:25):<sup>50</sup> God broke his silence—also by speaking definitively through his Son, by defining himself definitively through him (Heb. 1:1–4), having spoken before in many and various ways to the fathers.

The question remains: Does the *Revelationsschema* with its contrasting of silence and sounding revelation not protect a moment of truth that is not to be passed over without noticing it, a moment that is only absolutized in the σιγή-theology of Gnosticism<sup>51</sup> and Neoplatonism?<sup>52</sup>

To characterize the issue as sharply as possible: with such an emphasis on silence, the opening and the goal of the priestly creation narrative (Gen. 1:1–3 and 2:1–4a) would be switched, reversed. God's Word would then arise out of his rest, his silence, his Sabbath. Is this what Hamann meant when he preferred the "theory of God's rest" as potentially the "egg more delectable" than "the innumerable incubated cosmogonies?"<sup>53</sup> Hardly. At any rate, it must be noticed

in connection with this controversy concerning the relationship of God's silence and his speaking that, according to the priestly creation narrative, God's Sabbath is the final thing, not the first. For the human, conversely, the Sabbath is the first thing, from which he may begin. Sunday, the first day of the week, forms the foundation of the workday; rest forms the foundation of work; the feast forms the foundation of the ethos.<sup>54</sup> The fact remains: in the beginning was the Word (Gen. 1:1–3; John 1:1), the power of communication—both in itself and empowering communication.

### *Silence as the Foundation of the Human Word*

Our human word, our human speech, behaves differently than God, who is the Word. Our word is not the first thing; rather, it is a secondary thing, as it is an answer. It is a consequence of hearing the efficacious Word of God that has already addressed me, that has already called me. This hearing is a silence insofar as it gives way to inaction, a Sabbath with which glory is given to the God who will himself do the decisive work.<sup>55</sup> In this way, into the human emptiness enters the divine fullness with its abundance of speech, from which human speech is nourished and within which interpersonal conversation “ultimately begins in the stillness of silence”:<sup>56</sup> in attentive listening to one another.

The silence that flows into stillness unmistakably denotes the asymmetry between hearing and speaking that is constitutive of human speech.

A theology of silence is well-advised if it seeks its concrete criterion in the invoking of God's aid, in the appeal to the Holy Spirit for those who preach and for those who hear the Word.<sup>57</sup> This appeal only appears to be particular; in reality, it paradigmatically represents the fundamental anthropological—yea, even more—the creation-theologically and ontologically universal state of affairs that is contradicted in unbelief but adhered to in faith. This appeal is not only for those who preach but for everyone who opens his mouth, who speaks—for every *animal rationale*, better expressed in Greek: for every ζῷον τὸν λόγον ἔχον, which is thus always simultaneously ζῷον πολιτικόν.<sup>58</sup>

*Final Remark*

The question of where *silentium* can be observed in the Divine Service can be answered in various ways; it can certainly be justified at several points. Its status can surely change in this regard, but not its fundamental function: as an invocational silence, it is a contoured and properly-oriented silence that is referred to the Word—the promising Word that is to be spoken just as it is to be heard and taken to heart.<sup>59</sup>

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## NOTES

1. Gerhard Hennig, *Sonntags ist Kirche*, ed. Christian Möller and Johannes Zimmermann (Stuttgart: CalwerVerlag, 2008), 55.
2. Compare, Gerhard Tersteegen, “Gott is gegenwärtig [. . .] Alles in uns schweige . . .” *Evangelisches Gesangbuch: Ausgabe für die Evangelische Landeskirche in Württemberg* (Stuttgart: Gesangbuchverlag Stuttgart GmbH, 1996), 165, v.1; “God Himself Is Present” *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 907.
3. Martin Luther, “Dies sind die heiligen zehn Gebot [e] . . .” *Evangelisches Gesangbuch*, 231, v.4; “These Are the Holy Ten Commands” (*Lutheran Service Book* 581:4).
4. Compare Jürgen Kaiser, *Ruhe der Seele und Siegel der Hoffnung. Die Deutungen des Sabbats in der Reformation* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), esp. 17–45, 112–135, 162–182 (on Luther).
5. *Die Schrift, Bd. 2, Bücher der Geschichte*, trans. Martin Buber with Franz Rosenzweig (8. ed., Gerlingen: Schneider, 1992), 406: “Stimme verschwebenden Schweigens.”
6. 1 Kings 19:11–13.
7. *Evangelisches Gesangbuch*, p. 891: Paul Valéry, *Tel Quel II* (Paris: Gallimard, 18th ed., 1944), p. 118: “Entends ce bruit fin qui est continu, et qui est le silence. Ecoute ce qu’ on entend lorsque rien ne se fait entendre” (Aphorism with the title ‘L’ouïe [The Hearing]). “Hear this fine, unceasing noise; it is stillness. Listen to what one hears, when nothing can be heard.”
8. Not coincidentally, it was Rudolf Otto, who made the suggestion in 1925 that the climax of the divine service is a kneeling and a silence ending with three tones of the

bell of prayer together with the speaking of the Lord's Prayer thereafter. Rudolf Otto, *Zu Erneuerung und Ausgestaltung des Gottesdienstes* (Gießen: Töpelmann, 1925).

9. Compare Luther's taking the "*posteriora Dei*" (Exod 33:23) into account in the Heidelberg Disputation (1518), WA 1:362.1–21 (Thesis 20), LW 31:40.

10. Rudolf Otto, *Das Heilige. Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen* (Breslau: Trewendt and Granier, 1917); Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*, trans. John W. Harvey (London/New York: Oxford University Press, 1958).

11. "Nidmethi" (the nipal perfect of damah) in Isa. 6:5 is not necessarily to be translated with "lost" but can also mean "to be brought to silence;" Ludwig Köhler and Walter Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden: Brill, 1953), 213. Compare, Ps 46:11 and Job 40:4 with Isa 6:5.

12. For the different dimensions of the Old Testament's concept of "sin," see, Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luthers Theologie. Eine Vergegenwärtigung* (4. ed., Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 163–164; Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 181–182.

13. In addition to Isa. 6:9–10, see also, Deut. 29:4, Matt. 13: 11–15, Luke 8:9–10, John 12: 39–40, Acts 28:16–27. Such hardness of heart is depicted in "The Scream" by Edvard Munch. Did the unbearable nature of silence give birth to the scream? Does Munch's "The Scream" express the longing for silence in the world of omnipresent noise? The virulent horror since Pascal of the "eternal silence of the infinite spaces" shows the ambivalence of silence, in which the modern "*horror vacui*" is alive and well. Blaise Pascal, *Gedanken*, Nach der endgültigen Ausgabe übertragen von Wolfgang Rüttenauer (Birsfelden-Basel: Schibi-Doppler, [no year]) 150, Nr. 314. "The eternal silence of these limitless spaces terrifies me." Compare Ludger Lütkehaus, *Stille, Schweigen, Musik* (Marburg: Basiliken-Presse, 2015) and composer John Cage's "4'33."

14. Oswald Bayer, "Zeit des Schweigens," in idem, *Gott als Autor: Zu einer poetologischen Theologie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 86–94.

15. Johann Georg Hamann, *Briefwechsel*, Bd. V, ed. Arthur Henkel (Frankfurt/M. Insel; 1965), 134.33–34 (Johann Caspar Lavater to Johann Georg Hamann, 25 March 1784).

16. Hamann, *Briefwechsel*, 135.10–11; compare Ps. 42:4 and 11; 79:10; 115:2.

17. Hamann, *Briefwechsel*, 136.4–5; cf. Ps. 28:1.

18. Hamann, *Briefwechsel*, 142.6–9 (Hamann to Lavater, 2 May 1784), he cites Exod. 14:14 ("The Lord will fight for us, but we must be still.").

19. Hamann, *Briefwechsel*, 398.27–31 (Hamann to Herder, 28 March 1785).

20. Wolfgang Müller-Lauter, Art. Nihilismus I, *Historisches Wörterbuch zur Philosophie* 6 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984): 846 (846–853).

21. Theodor W. Adorno, "Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft," in Theodor W. Adorno, *Prismen: Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1955), 26. Indeed, Adorno corrects himself: "the perennial suffering has as much right to express itself as the martyred; therefore it may have been false that after Auschwitz no poetry can be written." Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik* (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1966), 353.

22. Theodor W. Adorno, "Anmerkungen zum philosophischen Denken," in *Stichworte: Kritische Modelle 2* (es 347), (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970<sup>3</sup>), 18 (11–19).

23. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, 398 (the last sentence in this work).

24. In detail: Oswald Bayer, "Die Furcht, daß es Gott nicht gebe," in Oswald Bayer, *Gott als Autor*, 97–111.

25. Ex 3:14, 33:19, and 34:6–7, and in the New Testament only the “I-Am” statements. In more detail in footnote 33.

26. Speaking with Adorno (“Vernunft und Offenbarung,” in *Stichworte*, 28).

27. Marx Horkheimer, *Die Sehnsucht nach dem ganz anderen: Ein Interview mit Kommentar von Helmut Gummior* (Hamburg: Furcht, 1970), 58.

28. MPG 3: 997–1032 D. New critical edition in: *Corpus Dionysiacum Bd. 2, Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, De Coelesti Hierarchia. De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia. De Mystica Theologia. Epistulae*, ed. Günter Heil and Adolf Martin Ritter (Patristische Texte und Studien Bd. 36; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2014), 141–150.

29. MPG 3: 1033,1; *Pseudo-Dionysius The Complete Works*, tr. Colm Luibheid (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987), MT5, 1048B; 141.

30. For Meister Eckhart, compare, for example, Pr. 80 DW III: 380,3–4: “God is above every essence and above all that can be said and above everything that can be understood.”

31. Dionysius Areopagita, “De divinis nominibus,” I,1: I,4; “De mystica theologia,” I,1.

32. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* 7, in Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Schriften I* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969), 83; Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (Routledge: London, 1974), 89.

33. Hamann, *Briefwechsel*, 5:33,18–21 (Hamann to Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, 23 January 1785).

34. WA 51:11.25–32 (sermon on Psalm 8:16; August 1545, in Merseburg).

35. *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche*, ed. Irene Dingel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 1054–1055:24–30 (hereafter BSELK); *The Book of Concord*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 434 (hereafter BC): “Here we get to know the second person of the Godhead, and we see . . . how he has given himself completely to us, withholding nothing.”

36. Compare, for example, the so-called “Athanasian Creed:” Christ is “one not by the changing of the divinity into the flesh but by the taking up of the humanity in God” (BSELK 60,1–4; BC 25). The God who has become human remains God.

37. In German *kündlich*, 1 Timothy 3:16 according to Luther’s translation. The mystery can be said; it is to be said.

38. Emphasized by Hamann in a particularly offensive way, that sees “the Pudenda as the only bond between creation and Creator,” (Hamann to Johann Gottfried Herder, 12 December 1779); Hamann, *Briefwechsel Bd. 4*, ed. Arthur Henkel (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1959), 139:18–19.

39. Compare, footnote 30.

40. Paul Tillich, *Der Mut zum Sein*, in Paul Tillich, *Gesammelte Werke* 9 (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1959): 12–139, esp. 130–139; Paul Tillich: *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952).

41. Tillich conveys in substance and formulation the mysticism of Angelius Silesius. Compare, Oswald Bayer, *Theologie*, Handbuch Systematischer Theologie, Bd. 1 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1994), 244–245.

42. Compare, Gerald Hanratty, “The Origin and Development of Mystical Atheism,” *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie* 30 (1988): 1–17.

43. WA 4:608.32–609.1.

44. Ralph Stolina, *Niemand hat Gott je gesehen: Traktat über negative Theologie*, Theologische Bibliothek Töpelmann 108 (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2000).

45. Dionysius directs himself toward the ineffable: *de mystica theologia*.

46. "According to my anthropomorphism the 'Othem' of his nose and the breath of his mouth is enough," with a reference to Psalm 104:29ff. Hamann, *Briefwechsel*, Bd. 5, 275,24–25 (Hamann to Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, 5 December 1784).

47. More precisely, the Introit. Compare Karl Bernhard Ritter, *Gebete für das Jahr der Kirche* (Kassel Johannes Stauda, 1948), 60: "Da alles still war und ruhte und eben recht Mitternacht war, fuhr Dein allmächtiges Wort herab vom Himmel." Cf. Karl Bernhard Ritter, *Die eucharistische Feier* (Kassel: Johannes Stauda, 1961), 71.

48. Sirach 24, especially verses 4–15.

49. "Es ist ein Ros entsprungen . . ." *Evangelisches Gesangbuch* 30, v.2 and 1; "Lo, How a Rose Is Growing" *Lutheran Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), 67, v.2.

50. Compare, Colossians 1:26–27, Ephesians 1:9–10, 3:5f. 9–11, 1 Peter 1:20, 2 Timothy 1:9f, Titus 1:2f.

51. Sige-theology is widely used in Gnosticism, especially in Valentinian Gnosticism, which claims an initial pairing of the deep (bythos) and silence (sige), from which all things emerged: Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses I*, 1,1ff. Further: The "Valentinian explanation" from the discovery of Coptic-language texts at Nag Hammadi, NHC XI,2. *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1977). I thank Christoph Marksches for the reference to these sources.

52. Plotinus speaks of the "silent Logos" (*Enneaden III*: 8,6,11). For Proclus silence was the foundation of language (*De philosophia Chaldaica* 4,18; *In Parmenidem VII*).

53. See above in footnote 19.

54. In more detail: Oswald Bayer, "Von der Würde des Sonntags," in Oswald Bayer, *Freiheit als Antwort. Zur theologischen Ethik* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 47–54.

55. In his essay, "Das göttliche Wort und der menschliche Lobgesang," Jochen Klepper speaks of the "divine call, which commands ceasing from all that is one's own and only wanting to give God and his Word a place: 'be still and know that I am God' (Ps 46:11). As the final thing, the inescapable, but also the first, the foundational, before all human speaking stands being silent in God's presence." Klepper, *Nachspiel, Erzählungen, Aufsätze, Gedichte* (Witten/Berlin: Eckart, 1960), 130.

56. Joachim Bayer, *Werner Elerts apologetisches Frühwerk*, Theologische Bibliothek Töpelmann 142 (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2007), VIII.

57. "Silence in God's presence in expectation of his Word and Spirit is expressed in an extremely heightened manner in the 'silent worship' of the Quakers," Andreas Heinz, Art. Schweigen III, in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* 7 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004<sup>4</sup>): 1062.

58. Aristotle, *Politika I* 3, 1253a 1–3 and 7–10.

59. A twin brother of this lecture is especially "Neuer Geist in alten Buchstaben. Eine Rede für die Stille," in Oswald Bayer, *Gott als Autor*, 209–220.