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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

This volume documents the course of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's life and work from November 1937 to March 1940—a brief but decisive span of history that included the March 1938 Anschluß of Austria; the Evian refugee conference in France, at which thirty-two nations decided against easing immigration restrictions on Jewish refugees; the Sudeten crisis and Munich agreement, which led to the ceding of the Sudetenland to Nazi Germany; the November 1938 pogrom in Nazi Germany (Kristallnacht); and finally the beginning of the Second World War with the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939. Although the death camps were yet not in operation, the mass killings of Jews in eastern Europe began immediately with the German invasion of the east, and the “euthanasia” program—the Nazi murders of institutionalized patients—began in late 1939. Throughout this period there was a steady intensification not only of Nazi anti-Jewish laws but of laws and open violence against Jews throughout Europe.

For the Confessing Church, it was a bleak period that exposed both the church's lack of internal unity and its utter failure to oppose National Socialism. The early unanimity against the extreme “Aryan” theology of the German Christians had dissolved by the October 1934 Dahlem synod. Even most of those who hewed to the “radical” Dahlem line were not necessarily opponents of National Socialism. Nonetheless, in the wake of Dahlem the more radical members of the Confessing Church found themselves in a precarious political position—particularly in the Prussian churches, where

German Christians held governing positions and a state church commissioner (August Jäger) had been appointed to oversee the churches and was watching closely for any sign of potential political opposition that might emerge from Confessing Church circles.^[1]

In the immediate wake of the Dahlem synod, such opposition seemed possible. In March 1935, seven hundred Prussian pastors were arrested briefly after reading a Confessing Church pulpit proclamation that criticized Nazi racial ideology. The most explicit church condemnation of Nazi anti-Jewish policies came in May 1936 with the “Hitler memo,” a statement written by the Confessing Church’s provisional church government that openly criticized the regime’s anti-Semitic policies. After the memo was sent to foreign journalists, those immediately involved were imprisoned, and Friedrich Weissler, a Jewish lawyer who had worked on the memo, was murdered.^[2]

Yet these incidents did not lead to a more sustained and broad resistance against the state; instead, they alarmed clergy throughout the country and further polarized the different church factions. Those who had declared themselves “neutral” in the Church Struggle, including the leading Lutheran bishops, urged greater caution in the public sphere and the avoidance of open conflict with the Nazi state to avoid persecution; several of them viewed the outspoken Confessing Christians as extremists who were as much of a threat to church unity as the German Christians. Within the Confessing Church itself, there were increasingly sharp divisions between those who agreed with the “neutrals” and others who urged the church to speak out in political opposition against the regime, particularly in response to the growing persecution of the Jews. It is important to recall that at this stage even someone like Martin Niemöller—who was furious at the “neutral” bishops and considered himself part of the radical Dahlem group—nonetheless urged his Confessing colleagues to refrain from open political criticism of Nazism.^[3] The Gestapo’s own estimation, according to

[1.] Although Jäger was forced to resign in late 1934 following the uproar over the house arrest of Lutheran pastors, the state continued to pressure the churches through the Ministry for Church Affairs, headed by Hanns Kerrl. See Helmreich, *German Churches under Hitler*, 169–72 and 193–94.

[2.] One of those imprisoned was Werner Koch, a former Finkenwalde seminarian who was sent to Sachsenhausen for several months. This volume includes a note of solidarity sent to his fiancée (1/16) as well as a mention of him on the prayer list (1/21) and a telegram upon his release in December 1938 (1/39). See also Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 81–85, for descriptions of both incidents.

[3.] See Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 57. The entire chapter (pp. 47–74) deals with this period and the divisions within the Confessing Church.

a 1935 report, was that the church disputes were primarily internal and that even the Confessing Church was not opposed to the state—although the potential for such opposition remained because for Confessing Christians “the church [was] more important than the state.”^[4]

The push for political opposition and resistance against Nazism came only from isolated individuals, who found little support from the Confessing leadership.^[5] In general, the Confessing Church between 1935 and 1939 remained focused on internal matters, particular the legalization issue for seminarians, which would become the focus of Bonhoeffer's own activism in early 1938 and is a dominant topic in this volume. A few of these issues, such as the loyalty oath controversy and the peace liturgy controversy that followed the Sudeten crisis, touched on larger political issues.^[6] But the Confessing Church remained largely quiescent about the growing persecution of the German Jews, including the November 1938 pogrom—and as readers of the present volume will discover, Bonhoeffer, too, not only remained largely silent about what was happening to the Jews but even warned his seminarians in early 1939 against subverting the state-required “Aryan certificate” process after seminarian Gerhard Vibrans suggested issuing such certificates to anyone who asked.^[7] While Bonhoeffer showed considerable fervor and resolve when it came to the education of his seminarians and the related battles within the Confessing Church about legalization, he did not speak out during this period on any of the major political issues mentioned in the first paragraph, including the violent events of *Kristallnacht*. There is only a passing and oblique reference to it in his letter of November 20 to his seminarians: “In the last few days I have thought much about Ps. 74, Zech. 2:8, Rom. 9:4–5, and 11:11–15. That leads deeply into prayer.”^[8] Compared to Elisabeth Schmitz's letter to Helmut Gollwitzer urging the church to speak out^[9] or the outspoken and courageous sermons preached by Julius

[4.] *Ibid.*, 68.

[5.] One such individual whose history has only recently come to light is the laywoman Elisabeth Schmitz, who is now acknowledged as the author of the 1935 memorandum calling upon the Confessing Church to speak out on behalf of German Jews; she also urged the Confessing Church to speak out after *Kristallnacht*. See Gailus, *Elisabeth Schmitz und ihre Denkschrift gegen die Judenverfolgung*; her story is also the focus of a recent documentary film, *Elisabeth of Berlin*.

[6.] See Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 88–89 and 156–58.

[7.] See 1/59, esp. ed. note 3 and the reference to the related correspondence between Vibrans and Bonhoeffer in Andersen, *So ist es gewesen*.

[8.] See 1/36, p. 000, esp. ed. note 9.

[9.] The full text can be found in Gailus, *Elisabeth Schmitz*, 223–28.

von Jan and Otto Möricke^[10] in Württemberg, Bonhoeffer's reaction was a remarkably passive one to an event that caused horrific suffering among Germany's Jews and sent shock waves through German society.

The reasons for this reaction may well include the Gestapo's increased pressure on the Confessing Church seminarians and its surveillance of Bonhoeffer, who was now under police restrictions on publishing, public speaking, and travel (see below). Yet like so much of the material included in these volumes, the details of Bonhoeffer's words and deeds throughout this period serve as a corrective to any easy assumptions that Bonhoeffer was always at the forefront of resistance throughout the 1930s or that he loudly protested against the Nazi measures during that period. In many ways, the period between 1935 and 1939 is almost like the calm between two storms, beginning at the conclusion of the early Church Struggle and Bonhoeffer's outspoken role in London and concluding with his entry into the resistance circles.

The portrait of Bonhoeffer that emerges from the present volume shows a man focused almost exclusively on the task of mentoring his seminarians and then, as war loomed, wrestling with decisions about his own personal future. Bonhoeffer had returned from London in April 1935 to direct Finkenwalde, one of the five newly founded Confessing Church seminaries in the Prussian churches. By offering a different path to theological examination and ordination that avoided the official (and largely German Christian-controlled) committees, these seminaries were the direct outcome of the divisions within the church after the Dahlem synod. Under the German Christian-led church consistories, the official church viewed these seminaries as "illegal" and refused to admit their seminarians to the subsequent theological examination and ordination process. From 1935 to 1939, more than five hundred seminarians chose to attend the Confessing seminaries. From the beginning it was clear to them that they were placing their careers, and perhaps much more, at risk. Having abandoned the official church procedure toward ordination, they could not count on receiving a regular salary, a pension, and other forms of job security; given the political pressures within the Prussian churches, they knew they would be under additional surveillance. Confessing parishes supported their "illegal" clergy with independent collections and the generosity of some patrons.

For those who nonetheless chose the "illegal" path to ministry, the result was a different understanding of ministry, vocation, and community—one that Bonhoeffer himself articulated in his books *Discipleship* (DBWE 4;

[10.] See Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 142–43

written at Finkenwalde and published in 1937) and *Life Together* (DBWE 5; written in 1938). This period proved to be a remarkably fruitful and significant one in Bonhoeffer's brief life, one during which his two vocations—as pastor and as teacher—truly converged as he educated these young men for a ministry in an uncertain time.

At the end of August 1937, Heinrich Himmler, the head of the secret police, banned the Confessing seminaries, as well as related activities such as the taking up of church collections. The Gestapo closed Finkenwalde on September 28, and the first document in this volume—a report from Gestapo director Reinhard Heydrich to Minister of Church Affairs Hans Kerrl confirming the closure of Finkenwalde—sets the tone for this new period in the life of the Confessing Church and for Bonhoeffer's own career. In the weeks that followed, Gestapo surveillance of Confessing Church activities and its members increased. By November 1937, twenty-seven of Bonhoeffer's seminarians were in prison, and in January 1938 Bonhoeffer himself was banned from traveling to Berlin and the surrounding regions of Brandenburg. In February 1938, the trial of Martin Niemöller began, which would culminate with his imprisonment in Sachsenhausen and Dachau until 1945.

Theological Education Underground

Despite the closure of the Confessing Church seminaries, the training of illegal seminarians continued. From 1937 to 1939, sixty-seven seminarians completed their theological education with Bonhoeffer. Most of them were moved to Confessing parishes around the country, where their education continued in the form of apprenticeships to the pastors serving those churches. Two centers, in the districts of Köslin and Schlawe (at Groß-Schlönwitz, later called Sigurdshof), were founded in the Pomeranian countryside for “collective pastorates,” where seminarians came together for brief meetings and seminars. With the support of the respective church district superintendents (Friedrich Onnasch and Eduard Block), Bonhoeffer was able to travel and teach in these centers. But most communications took the form of circular letters that included reports on the work of the seminarians, meditations, and Bible studies.

Although most of Bonhoeffer's theological lecture and teaching notes from this period have been lost, part 2 includes several Bible studies, particularly a series on key New Testament concepts (2/2), and several sermons and meditations that were distributed to his seminarians through the circular letters. Yet in this volume it is mostly the circular letters and correspondence that give a rare portrayal of “theological education underground,”

depicting the impact of this turbulent period on the lives of these seminarians—at the same time giving a highly personal portrait of Bonhoeffer as teacher, pastor, and mentor. The anxieties of his seminarians about their decisions and their futures are the theme of many of the letters.^[11] The Confessing Church seemed to be falling apart, the threats on the churches growing, the regime tightening its hold on German society, and war was in the air. The circular letters include the names and numbers of those in prison and, after September 1, 1939, those who had died in the war. In their letters to Bonhoeffer, his seminarians wrote openly about depression, the struggles and pressures on them, and their worries about the future. Some were confident and tried to encourage Bonhoeffer; others were uncertain, torn, and anguished.

Bonhoeffer's commitment to them and his understanding of the challenges they face are expressed in the second letter in this volume, a circular letter sent to the Finkenwalde seminarians in December 1937, where in the aftermath of the seminary closure he wrote: "Particularly now, the great task is to ensure that those among us who are isolated are not left alone."^[12] Here, as throughout this period, Bonhoeffer emphasized the importance of the community members for one another—but the replies of his students illustrate his centrality as a mentor. "You are a spiritual father to me," wrote one of them.^[13] Another wrote, "It was so urgent for me to write this letter to you; perhaps you will gather from this that your work in Finkenwalde has not been for nothing. I could imagine that because of the events in Pomerania your spirits are low. If it would be possible for you to write me, I should be so very grateful. I have to struggle so much with myself; that is the hardest thing."^[14] Another student described the spirit of Finkenwalde:

Instead of coming into the stuffy air of theological bigotry, I entered a world that united many things that I love and need: accurate theological work on the common ground of fellowship, in which one's own inabilities were never noticed in a hurtful fashion, but rather which turned work into pleasure; true fellowship under the Word that united all "without respect to person"—and nonetheless with open-mindedness and love for everything that makes even this fallen creation still worthy of love: music, literature, sports, and the beauty of the earth; a generous style of life that favorably combined the culture

[11.] See, for example, 1/50, 1/60, and 1/66.

[12.] 1/2, p. 000.

[13.] 1/46, p. 000.

[14.] 1/60, p. 000.

of old homes with the uninhibited forms of a community of young men—last, not least, a man in charge whom one can indeed admire without reservation.^[15]

Such letters testify to the close bond that had developed between Bonhoeffer and his students during this period—which made the controversy over legalization and the defection of some of his seminarians all the more bitter.^[16] After the Confessing Church opened its illegal seminaries in 1935, the official church consistories offered a “legalization” process to the illegal seminarians, which cleared the path for formal ordination and ministry in the official church. Legalization, however, entailed taking the theological examinations from church committees that were dominated by German Christians—in effect, abandoning the Confessing Church. To Bonhoeffer, this was a betrayal of everything the Confessing Church had fought for—so much so that it was on this point he made his famous statement, “Whoever breaks from the Confessing Church separates himself from salvation.”^[17] Yet especially after the Gestapo closed the Confessing seminaries in autumn 1937, the temptations for the young “illegals” were understandable, particularly for those who were married and had started families. The Confessing path was becoming more risky and uncertain. DBWE 15 documents Bonhoeffer’s dogged and eloquent attempts to keep his seminarians on the Confessing side, beginning with 1/7, a lengthy circular letter to the seminarians in Pomerania that includes a point-by-point rebuttal of the arguments for legalization.^[18] But the volume also includes letters from students who disagree with his position, showing how deep the divisions were even within the close community of Bonhoeffer’s seminarians.^[19]

In 1938 the legalization controversy overlapped with another hot issue: the swearing of a loyalty oath to Hitler. In the spring of 1938, with nationalistic fervor running high after the Austrian Anschluss, the Prussian church

[15.] 1/66, p. 000.

[16.] For a general description of the controversy, including statements from some Finkenwalde seminarians who decided to break with Bonhoeffer, see Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 94–98.

[17.] Bonhoeffer said this in his 1936 lecture on church fellowship (*DBW* 14, 2/19, p. 676): “Whoever consciously parts with the Confessing Church in Germany parts from salvation.” See also *DBW* 14, 1/41, and pp. 992–94, as well as *DB-ER*, 607–20. See also Bonhoeffer’s lecture of October 26, 1938, in this volume, “Our Path according to the Testimony of Scripture” (2/5), which is a theological argument against legalization.

[18.] The issue is a running theme in the circular letters sent to the seminarians, including 1/21, 1/24, and 1/36.

[19.] Cf. 1/59, 1/74, 1/76, and 1/163.

authorities ordered all clergy to take the following oath on the occasion of Hitler's birthday: "I will be loyal and obedient to the Führer of the German Reich and nation, Adolf Hitler." There was an immediate uproar within the Confessing Church that just as quickly died down, as church leaders fretted about the possible repercussions of refusal. The Confessing Church leadership vacillated for several weeks, first suggesting that clergy take it and then advising them not to; by summer, a number of clergy had taken the oath—only to be humiliated after Hitler deputy Martin Bormann declared it an "internal church matter" not required by the state.^[20]

Bonhoeffer wrote his brother Karl-Friedrich in January 1939:

It has been at times very depressing in the last few weeks, when one must see how many people are seeking quiet and security at all costs and using all kinds of pretexts and reasons. . . . It is entirely certain to me that for the church it all depends upon whether we now hold on, even with great sacrifices. The greatest sacrifices are now small compared to what we would lose by wrongly giving in. I wouldn't know anything worth a full commitment today if not this. It matters not how many there are but rather only that there are still some who are steadfast.^[21]

Leaving Germany in the Face of Impending War

By early 1939, when Bonhoeffer wrote those words, it was clear that Germany was actively preparing for another war. On January 23, 1939 (1/56), his mother wrote him that men born in his birth year were being called to register for the military. (Bonhoeffer received his own summons in May 1939.) Bonhoeffer's focus turned increasingly to his own personal future. In March, shortly after the conclusion of the winter session for his seminarians, he took a short trip to London and met there with his old ecumenical friends George Bell, Willem Visser 't Hooft, and Reinhold Niebuhr, as well as with his brother-in-law Gerhard Leibholz, who had emigrated to London with Bonhoeffer's sister and their children in 1938. The conversations there, particularly those with Niebuhr, led to an invitation to Bonhoeffer from Henry Smith Leiper at the Federal Council of Churches in New York.^[22] Leiper began consulting with Henry Coffin at Union Theological Semi-

[20.] See Bonhoeffer's commentary on the oath in 1/22 and 1/24, as well as the letter of September 14, 1938, from Ruth von Kleist-Retzow to Eberhard Bethge (1/28).

[21.] 1/57, pp. 000–000.

[22.] See 1/87 and 1/90.

nary, Paul Lehmann, and others to put together a combination of teaching and lecturing possibilities for Bonhoeffer. As the ecumenical liaison to the European ecumenical movement, Leiper hoped that Bonhoeffer would take a post at the Federal Council of Churches helping European refugees.

It was not the first time that Bonhoeffer, uncertain about his own course and dismayed and frustrated by events within his church, had decided to go abroad. His decision in the fall of 1933 to accept a pastoral call to the German-speaking London congregations had also come at the end of a period of great turmoil within his church. Yet in 1939 he was torn from the beginning about the decision to go abroad, and during the few weeks he was in New York, he wrestled constantly with whether to stay or return to Germany.

The main difference between his circumstances then and his 1933 decision to go to London was what he had left behind: his seminarians and his ministry to them. The period of training seminarians, from 1935 to 1939, was a time during which Bonhoeffer's many abilities came most coherently together, years in which he truly seems to have found his vocation. It is a period in which we see his closest friendships develop, particularly with Eberhard Bethge, and in these documents we find perhaps the most personal side of Bonhoeffer anywhere in the DBWE series, with the exception of his later letters to Maria von Wedemeyer and some of his prison letters.^[23] Surely one of the most moving passages in this volume is Bonhoeffer's opening and concluding comments in his short directive of May 28, 1939, to his "successor" who will take up the task of directing collective pastorates: "To my successor: He will find . . . one of the most gratifying tasks in the CC. . . . Spend as much time as possible together with the brothers."^[24]

The Days in New York

Bonhoeffer arrived in New York on June 2, 1939, and departed for Germany on July 8. As Eberhard Bethge later wrote in the biography, Bonhoeffer's brief sojourn in New York was marked by "his own experience of existential insecurity."^[25] Bonhoeffer came to New York because of his uncertainty about what would happen to him in Germany and his fears of military conscription. From the moment he arrived, however, he was haunted by the sense that he had abandoned his students and fled to safety while they confronted a precarious future. His New York diary (1/137) is filled with

[23.] See DBWE 8 and Bismarck, *Love Letters from Cell 92*.

[24.] 1/98.2, p. 000.

[25.] DB-ER, 658.

passages of doubt and remorse. "Have I indeed evaded the place where God is?"^[26] he asked himself on June 9. On June 15, he wrote: "Since yesterday evening my thoughts cannot get away from Germany. I would not have thought it possible that one at my age after so many years abroad can become so agonizingly homesick. . . . I would have liked to take the next ship. This inactivity, or rather activity spent on trivialities, is simply no longer bearable for us, thinking of the brothers and the precious time. The full force of self-reproaches about a wrong decision comes back up and is almost suffocating. I was filled with despair."^[27] The days that followed were restless and unhappy, spent talking with friends, reading voraciously, writing, and searching Scripture for signs that might help his decision. On June 20 he finally made the decision to return to Germany, but he continued to wrestle with the forces pulling him in both directions. His New York colleagues at Union and the Federal Council of Churches were disappointed and uncomprehending. On June 21, he wrote:

Regarding my decision, the thoughts naturally continue. One might, of course, have justified it entirely differently: the fact is, one is here (perhaps the very misunderstanding was a guidance?); one is told that when I was announced it was as if prayers had been heard; they particularly want to have me; they don't understand why I am turning this down; it is upsetting all plans for the future; I have no news from home; perhaps everything is going just as well without me etc. Or one could ask: did I simply act out of yearning for Germany and the work there? And is this lingering homesickness, which is almost incomprehensible to me and till now remains almost completely unfamiliar, an accompanying sign from above, which should make the refusal easier? Or is it not irresponsible in light of so many other people, simply to say no to one's own future and that of many others? Will I regret it? I may not do so, that is for certain.^[28]

His closest American friends, particularly Paul Lehmann, were dismayed by his decision to return. Lehmann traveled all the way from Illinois to New York just to see him before his return to Germany; they met on July 7, the day before Bonhoeffer was to sail back. Yet by the time they met, Bonhoeffer had become clear. As he explained to Lehmann on June 30, 1939

[26.] P. 000.

[27.] P. 000.

[28.] P. 000.

(1/128): "The political situation is dreadful, and I must be with my brothers when things become serious. We will then often think of one another and be with one another in prayer, and we will leave it to God as to whether and when he will lead us back together again in a way we can see. In such 'final' times everyone should be found at the place where he belongs. May God grant us that we stand firm there."^[29]

After Bonhoeffer's departure, the Calvin scholar John McNeill moved into the room at Union where Bonhoeffer had stayed: "He was surprised by the amount of illegible sheets of paper left by his unknown predecessor, and at the quantities of cigarettes he had smoked. . . . Only later did he realize who had lived there before him and had made the most difficult of all his decisions in that room."^[30]

Despite the emotional turmoil of the New York weeks, Bonhoeffer also immersed himself in the study of U.S. church life, and his readings and reflections led him to write a remarkable essay, "Protestantism without Reformation," after his return to Europe. This volume includes the first publication of his reading notes for that essay (1/137a) as well as a new complete translation of the essay. Bonhoeffer's personal reflections enter into this essay as well. During his studies in New York (DBWE 10) in 1930–31, he had been quite critical of American theology, preaching, and church life. But by 1939, the course of the Church Struggle had left him profoundly disappointed in the failures of German church leadership, even in the Confessing Church, and his writings in the summer of 1939 show new insights and sometimes even appreciation for the American church differences. In his June 13, 1939, diary entry, Bonhoeffer noted his earlier differences with Henry Van Dusen, commenting on the changes he saw in American theology: "He was a poor and self-righteous theologian of the American mold. Here for the first time I realize graphically the great change in American theology in the last eight years. The cause for which we were engaged in 1930, apparently utterly hopelessly, has come to prevail in the course of the years."^[31] But had American theology really changed? Or had Bonhoeffer's own experiences with his church in Germany given him a new perspective on the relative merits of the U.S. churches and the failures of those in Germany?

This particularly emerges in "Protestantism without Reformation" in his reflections on the U.S. churches as the historical product of religious

[29.] P. 000.

[30.] *DB-ER*, 655.

[31.] P. 000.

refugees, for Bonhoeffer had arrived in New York well aware that he might indeed become a refugee. Yet his appreciation for the resulting tolerance and compassion of U.S. Christianity was ambivalent, and his reflections here read quite personally. He wrote that in fleeing, the refugee had abandoned the fight for the truth back home, and his words about this may well have been an admonition to himself that he needed to return to Germany: "For the Christian refugees, the renunciation of the fight to the end for the truth remains a most troubling and lifelong issue. Only the deep sincerity and unlimited scope of compassion and the right to asylum in his country of refuge can be convincing in Christian terms. His yearning to decide for the truth against its distortion remains unfulfilled and must remain so."^[32]

Bonhoeffer was changing his mind about many things in the United States, and his reading notes (1/137a) refer almost entirely to the series in *The Christian Century* titled "How My Mind Has Changed in This Decade."^[33] Appearing for the first time in 1929, this series invited prominent theologians, church leaders, and other leaders in the religious world to comment on how the decade that had passed had influenced their own theology. The 1939 series included thirty-four essays by a wide range of authors, including James Luther Adams, Karl Barth (Barth's two-part contribution appeared on September 13 and 20, 1939—too late for Bonhoeffer to have read it), Georgia Harkness (the only woman), and the prominent pacifist A. J. Muste.

In his reading notes Bonhoeffer cites eight essays from the 1939 series: the essays by Edward Ames, Walter Horton, E. Stanley Jones, Edwin Lewis, Reinhold Niebuhr, Willard Sperry, George C. Stewart, and Henry Wieman. At the conclusion there are also references to works by George Herbert Betts, Henry Sloane Coffin, Josiah Strong, and Thomas Huxley. It is unclear whether Bonhoeffer read other essays in the series (it is interesting that he doesn't comment on Muste's antiwar essay, "The True International," which appeared in the May 24 issue), but the common themes addressed in these eight essays include the tension between liberalism and orthodoxy, the theological and philosophical movements that were shaping the U.S. church scene, and the role of the church in the world. It would seem, then, that Bonhoeffer had his topic—an examination of the differences between

[32.] 2/6, p. 000.

[33.] Edited by a Disciples of Christ clergyman, Charles Clayton Morrison, *The Christian Century* was established in 1900 (it actually emerged from a previous weekly titled *The Christian Oracle*) as a nondenominational weekly paper. The following commentary on this essay and many of the editorial notes were first published in the *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Jahrbuch* 4:17–20.

the churches of the Reformation in Europe and the U.S. churches that had not undergone a Reformation—clearly in mind and selected his readings accordingly.

Bonhoeffer concluded “Protestantism without Reformation” with the sentence: “The decisive task today is the conversation between the Protestantism without Reformation and the churches of the Reformation.”^[34] The reading notes reveal Bonhoeffer’s brief but intensive attempt, in the summer of 1939, to carry on that conversation.

The Return to Germany and the Beginning of the War

Given the intensity of the final years of the Church Struggle and his days in New York, the months after his return seem almost anticlimactic. The crucial decision had been made, but what followed remained a transitional period. Bonhoeffer returned to his students and the collective pastorates, but with the onset of the war, that life changed completely. The first circular letter following the outbreak (1/160) included the announcement of the first death of one of his seminarians, Theodor Maaß. More than eighty of Bonhoeffer’s seminarians—over half of those who had studied with him—would die as soldiers in the war.

His letters to them, particularly to the families of those who were killed, were strictly pastoral,^[35] yet the circular letters in these early years of the war are striking in their careful distinction between God’s will and the desires and deeds of human beings. The first one (1/160), dated September 20, 1939, shows his attempt to ponder the significance of the war:

We are preachers of justification through grace alone. What [does] this mean today? Very simply it means that we no longer equate human ways and goals with divine ways and goals. God is beyond all human plans and deeds. Everything must be judged by God. . . . I do not know whether this time we will experience the outbreak of the theodicy question in as agonizing a fashion as in the previous war. It almost seems to me as though something here has changed. Christians today may know more of the biblical judgment on the world and history; thus they will perhaps be confirmed in their faith by the present events rather than afflicted. . . . Nonetheless under the force of these events the question will not be completely absent, and we will

[34.] 2/6, p. 000

[35.] See, for example, 1/164; there are also several such letters in *DBWE* 16.

like the author of Ps. 42 still often have to hear: "Where is your God?" [Ps. 42:3] Is it true, that God is silent? It is only true for those whose God is the God of their own ideals and thoughts.^[36]

The work of the collective pastorates would continue until they were finally closed by the Gestapo in March 1940; thereafter (during the period covered by DBWE 16), Bonhoeffer and Bethge traveled to visit the remaining seminarians until the summer of 1940. During these early war months, Bonhoeffer continued to seek alternatives to military service, including applying to the chaplaincy. The issue was finally resolved with the help of his brother-in-law Hans von Dohnanyi, who obtained a special classification for Bonhoeffer through which he was assigned to the Abwehr military intelligence office. His assignment there—in reality his move into the German resistance—began in October 1940.

In the clarity of that step, it is easy to lose sight of the aspects of Bonhoeffer we find in the pages of this volume, particularly his uncertainty as he confronted the momentous decisions about his future. In his New York diary entry of June 20, 1939, Bonhoeffer himself noted: "It is strange that in all my decisions I am never completely clear about my motives. Is that a sign of lack of clarity, inner dishonesty, or is it a sign that we are led beyond that which we can discern, or is it both?"^[37] Yet the lack of clarity was gone by the time he wrote Eberhard Bethge from his prison cell, on December 22, 1943: "You should know, by the way, that not for a single moment have I regretted my return in 1939, nor anything of what has then followed. That took place in full clarity and with the best conscience."^[38] He repeated this in another letter, adding that he felt his life "had gone in a straight line, uninterrupted, at least with regard to how [he had] led it."^[39]

This Volume

The general editor's introduction to the DBWE series at the beginning of this volume gives a history and overview of this series and general editorial policies. This volume is divided into three sections, each organized chronologically: Correspondence (part 1); Exercises, Lectures, and Essays (part 2); and Sermons and Meditations (part 3). As a complete translation of the German DBW volume 15, it includes the contents of that volume, the edito-

[36.] Pp. 000–000.

[37.] P. 000.

[38.] *DBWE* 8:236.

[39.] Letter of April 11, 1944, to Eberhard Bethge (*DBWE* 8:352).

rial notes, a translation of the afterword by German editor, Dirk Schulz, as well as the appendices—including a chronology for the period and a list of Bonhoeffer's seminarians during this time—bibliography, and a biographical index of all persons mentioned in the text and the notes. The volume, however, does not reproduce all documents from this period in Bonhoeffer's literary estate; the unpublished material is listed in appendix 3.

DBWE 15 also includes several new documents that were discovered after the publication of DBW 15. Most of these are letters (23a; 32a.; 113a; 129a; 142a); the other two new documents are the reading notes attached to the New York diary (137a) and recently discovered student notes of Bonhoeffer's lectures on pastoral counseling (2/1a).

Whenever citations document other volumes in this series, the reference is to the English translation (DBWE) or to the German edition (DBW). For other bibliographical citations in the notes, English editions are cited when available.

Throughout DBW the use of vertical lines in text (|) indicates either a new page or new line on Bonhoeffer's handwritten notes. While the usual DBWE practice is to delete those lines, we have in some instances retained them here in the biblical studies in part 2/1–3, for improved readability.

The DBWE series has been blessed with a team of skillful translators, each of whom brings particular expertise to his or her work. Several translators worked on this volume. As he has done for most of the DBWE volumes, Douglas W. Stott translated the German editor's afterword and chronology. I translated the letters. Peter Frick, the series expert on Greek and Hebrew, translated the theological and biblical studies in part 2. Claudia Bergmann and Scott Moore brought their unique pastoral gifts and understanding of the ministry to the translation of the meditations and sermons in part 3. In agreement with the German DBW editorial team, each of these volumes has a German reader who reviews the translation and makes suggestions. For this volume the reader was Ilse Tödt, who in addition to remarkable language skills has a comprehensive knowledge of the German DBW series. I am indebted to her not only for her careful review of the translation but for providing numerous cross-references to related passages elsewhere in the series. My German DBW colleagues Christiane Tietz and Hans Pfeifer were generous with their time and suggestions for particularly difficult passages. The German editor of this volume, Dirk Schulz, was extremely gracious in all correspondence.

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Finally, I would like to express gratitude to the German Lutheran Church of Washington, D.C., whose congregation made an early financial contribution to the work of this particular volume. It is fitting that this congregation—a German *Auslandsgemeinde*, just like the ones Bonhoeffer served in London—has supported the work of DBWE 15, since among other things it tells the story of how, at a crucial turning point in his life, Bonhoeffer came once more to the United States and discovered new ways in which the church heritage of Germany and of this country enriched each other.

Victoria J. Barnett
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