

PREFACE

Fortress Press's recently completed *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works English Edition* (*DBWE*), published in sixteen volumes plus an index, makes available to English readers virtually all of Bonhoeffer's surviving writings. Both *DBWE* and the German critical edition it translates (*Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke*, or *DBW*, published by Gütersloher Verlagshaus) are monumental achievements; decades in the making, they draw on the labor, expertise, dedication, and generosity of an international team of scholars, translators, publishers, and donors. They are maximally inclusive, incorporating not only those works of Bonhoeffer that were published during or soon after his lifetime but also previously unpublished works in a variety of genres, such as letters, diary entries, lecture notes, and reports. As such, these editions are the definitive resources for scholars from a number of disciplines who have reason to be interested in Bonhoeffer.

Of course, the very things that make *DBWE* the resource par excellence for scholars might not suit the general reader or beginning student of Bonhoeffer. *The Bonhoeffer Reader* is designed for such an audience. It collects in one place a significant and representative range of Bonhoeffer's theological writings. The *Reader* has considerable advantages over previously published collections of his works, since it draws on the numerous and significant advances in scholarship represented by *DBW* and *DBWE* while also conveniently directing the interested reader, through notes and other guides, to the resources of *DBWE*.¹

Bonhoeffer's writings are interesting for many reasons, biographical, historical, and otherwise. This *Reader* is self-consciously a *theological* reader, however, in that it includes, above all, the writings that are of theological

1. In the *Reader*, marginal numbers indicate a given text's location in *DBWE*. (Furthermore, *DBWE* leads the student who wishes to consult the original German to the corresponding page in *DBW*.) The *Reader* takes as its source the electronic edition of *DBWE*. There are a few minor discrepancies (e.g., the numbering of footnotes, the correction of errata) between this electronic edition and the printed hardcover or paperback editions.

interest. This is not to say, of course, that Bonhoeffer's theology admits of neat abstraction from either his life or historical circumstances; indeed, the editorial introductions that precede the selections attempt, among other things, to set his writings in biographical and historical context. But it remains the case that a different range of texts would have been included if the *Reader* were about, say, Bonhoeffer the preacher, Bonhoeffer the person, or Bonhoeffer and the Church Struggle.² As it is, this *Reader* is about Bonhoeffer the theologian.

The main principle for selecting texts for inclusion in this *Reader*, then, has already been mentioned. But in addition to the criterion of theological interest, the editors strove for a selection of writings that represent the range of Bonhoeffer's career—from those written as a young student to those written in the weeks before his death—and a range of genres—from those academic monographs published during his lifetime to those fragmentary texts published soon after his death to the lecture notes and short pieces that, until *DBW* and *DBWE*, had not been widely available. Within the focus area of Bonhoeffer's theological writings, therefore, this *Reader* is quite exhaustive, including excerpts from every major text and every phase of Bonhoeffer's career. This *Reader* attempts to provide a picture of the whole of Bonhoeffer's theological work.

The wide range of texts protects this *Reader* to some degree from being unduly slanted by the interpretive interests of the editors. But it is also certainly the case that these interests informed their judgments regarding which of the minor texts and which sections of the major texts to include. The editors are comforted by the fact that the whole corpus stands available in *DBWE* for the enterprising reader.

The number of footnotes in the *Reader* is drastically reduced in comparison with *DBWE*, both for reasons of space and because of the different intended audience. In selecting which of the *DBWE* footnotes are reproduced here, the editors have generally observed the following guidelines. First, for footnotes that originated with Bonhoeffer himself, the *Reader*

2. For those interested in Bonhoeffer the preacher, *The Collected Sermons of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (edited by Isabel Best) offers a selection of those sermons printed in *DBWE*. For those interested in Bonhoeffer's biography and the history during his lifetime, the most exhaustive resource remains *DB-ER*; a recent well-commended biography is Ferdinand Schlingensiefen's *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*. Many shorter biographies are available. For those interested in Bonhoeffer and the Church Struggle and resistance conspiracy, an appendix to this *Reader* lists the relevant Bonhoeffer works as well as recommended secondary sources.

retains references to “major” figures (such as Luther and Barth) but drops references to “minor” figures as well as footnotes that are not central to the given text’s argument but could be characterized as learned asides. Bonhoeffer’s own footnotes appear in the reader without any brackets and in standard font. Second, *DBWE*’s editorial notes appear in the *Reader* when those notes are judged to be helpful for the intended audience’s comprehension of the text in question or if they provide cross-references to other Bonhoeffer works. This means that footnotes which, for example, offer alternative readings of a passage or provide the manuscript history of a text have been omitted except when their omission would impede the reader’s comprehension. *DBWE* editorial notes are indicated in the *Reader* by square brackets and the standard academic conventions for quoted material (quotation marks, ellipses for omitted material, and references to the original location). In some cases (e.g., formatting of citations, updating references from *DBW* to *DBWE*), the editors have made minor changes to these notes for the sake of consistency and for the reader’s convenience in locating cited materials. Beyond Bonhoeffer’s own notes and *DBWE* editorial notes, the editors of the *Reader* have on occasion contributed their own footnotes to aid comprehension and to provide cross-references. These notes are marked by square brackets and italics. The *Reader* editors have also provided in-text translations of foreign terms that either remained untranslated in *DBWE* or were translated there in footnotes. These are marked by square brackets and italics.

As indicated earlier, this *Reader* relies heavily on *DBW* and *DBWE*. The editors therefore gratefully acknowledge the various editors, translators, and others who worked on them. We also thank Victoria Barnett for suggesting the contents of the appendix. Thanks also to Christopher King for kindly helping with formatting the manuscript.