

## Author Q&A: Clifford J. Green and Michael P. DeJonge

### *The Bonhoeffer Reader*

edited by Clifford J. Green and Michael P. DeJonge

NEW RELEASE NOVEMBER 2013

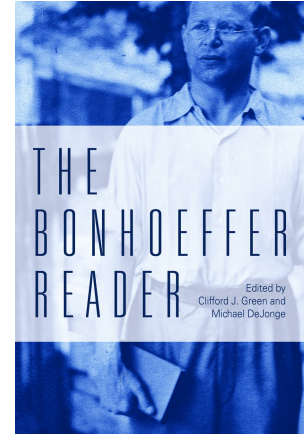
**Publisher:** Fortress Press **Format:** Paperback **List Price:** \$39.00

**ISBN:** 978-0-8006-9945-1 **eISBN:** 978-1-4514-3092-9 **Page Count:** 832

**Rights:** World English **Subjects:** Theology

**SSG:** Fortress Press recently completed the 16-volume Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works English Edition (DBWE) making available virtually all of Bonhoeffer's surviving works in English. As editors of *The Bonhoeffer Reader* you call this volume based on the DBWE a "theological" reader, and not a "biographical" or a "historical" reader. What are the differences?

**MPD:** 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 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 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 Bonhoeffer Reader* were about, say, Bonhoeffer the preacher, Bonhoeffer the person, or Bonhoeffer and the Church Struggle. As it is, this reader is about Bonhoeffer the theologian.



**SSG:** For what type of users have you designed *The Bonhoeffer Reader*?

**MPD:** Fortress Press's recently completed English scholarly edition of Bonhoeffer's works, DBWE, is a monumental achievement; decades in the making, it drew on the labor, expertise, dedication, and generosity of an international team of scholars, translators, publishers, and donors. It makes available to the English reader virtually all of Bonhoeffer's surviving writings. DBWE, and the German edition it is based on, 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 definitive resource for scholars might not suit the general reader interested in Bonhoeffer the theologian, the beginning student of Bonhoeffer, or readers of recent Bonhoeffer biographies who might want to go deeper. *The Bonhoeffer Reader* is designed for such an audience. It collects a significant and representative range of Bonhoeffer's theological writings in one convenient and affordable volume.

(Q&A continued on back)

**Clifford J. Green** is the Executive Director of the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works English Edition and edited several of its volumes. Author of *Bonhoeffer: A Theology of Sociality* and other Bonhoeffer studies, he is professor of theology emeritus at Hartford Seminary, Connecticut.

**Michael P. DeJonge** is associate professor and graduate director in the Religious Studies department at the University of South Florida and the author of *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation*.

**Concerning Interviews, Contact:** Emily Varner, Somersault Group  
Phone: 330-461-9277; email: [evarner@somersaultgroup.com](mailto:evarner@somersaultgroup.com)

(editor Q&A, *The Bonhoeffer Reader*, continued)

**SSG:** What features of the book are most notable?

**CJG:** In one volume, Bonhoeffer's essential theological writings are collected together. The concise editorial introductions to each of the selections are invaluable, setting each selection into Bonhoeffer's life and providing historical context for his writing and its theological significance. Also, the selection of writings in *The Bonhoeffer Reader* represents the *whole* Bonhoeffer – his groundbreaking dissertations, his biblical interpretation (e.g. *Discipleship*), and his provocative *Ethics* and theological letters from prison.

But we did not want to overwhelm readers with scholarly details, so we pruned notes with technical information available in DBWE, and added some notes to further clarify the text. And for those who wanted to work on the German Church Struggle and the Resistance conspiracy, we provided an appendix of resources; there's also an extensive bibliography.

**MPD:** I would just add that *The Bonhoeffer Reader* is set up so that one can move easily between it and the more exhaustive and authoritative DBWE. This is good for the student who reads an excerpt as presented in the collection and decides to write a term paper on that text. That student can easily go to DBWE for more detailed study. Similarly, it's handy for the teachers. If they are Bonhoeffer scholars, they will be doing their own reading in DBWE. The readings they assign their students from *The Bonhoeffer Reader* will be in the same translation, and instructors can easily read the areas around the excerpted text, so to speak, for their own preparation.

**SSG:** What about Bonhoeffer's theology do you think is most surprising for people who first discover Bonhoeffer as a historical figure?

**CJG:** First, people may be surprised by Bonhoeffer's originality as a thinker, an intellectual, a man who believed in the power of Christian ideas, and the need to reformulate them for a new, emerging era. Second, his theology contains a refreshing and pertinent worldliness, which he asserted was thoroughly biblical.

**MPD:** The early, academic work (the first two sections of *The Bonhoeffer Reader*) will initially strike readers as pretty far removed in tone and subject matter from his later writings. And it might be hard to imagine how this man who became known as a spiritual writer, hero, or martyr could have written such technical and apparently abstract theology. So this early material raises an interesting puzzle for the reader to solve – what's the relationship between Bonhoeffer the academic theologian and the Bonhoeffer we know as hero, martyr, pastor, etc.?

**SSG:** What are your hopes for *The Bonhoeffer Reader*?

**MPD:** That it will become the 'go-to' resource for students of Bonhoeffer's theology in college, university, and seminary settings.

**SSG:** Why does *The Bonhoeffer Reader* matter?

**MPD:** The collection matters because Bonhoeffer matters, and—far and above any other available compilation of Bonhoeffer's theological writing—it presents Bonhoeffer in a more authentic, accessible, and reliable manner than ever before.

