



The Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works English Edition

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In October of 2013 the final volume¹ of the *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works English Edition* (DBWE) was released by Fortress Press, the culmination of over two decades of translating, editing, and publishing the German *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke* (DBW). This seventeen-volume treasure (an effort costing one and a half million dollars), was orchestrated by an executive director, three general editors, thirteen volume editors, and twenty-three translators; it now takes its place on library shelves next to *Luther's Works* and Barth's *Church Dogmatics*. At long last, virtually all the extant literary legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer is available in English.²

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ITS INCEPTION AND PRODUCTION

Most of Bonhoeffer's published work has been available in English since the 1950s and 1960s, albeit in separate and noncritical editions. As early as 1954, *Life Together* was available in English, and in 1959 *The Cost of Discipleship* appeared. Bonhoeffer's second dissertation (*Habilitation*), *Act and Being*, which qualified

¹H. Gaylon Barker and Mark S. Brocker, eds., *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theological Education at Finkenwalde: 1935–1937*, vol. 14 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013).

²An ongoing series, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Jahrbuch* (Munich: Gütersloher Verlagshaus), will continue to include primary materials unknown at the time of each volume's publication.

The Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works English Edition is now complete. Here John Matthews supplies a very helpful introduction to and history of the project. He also includes some intriguing "appetizers" to the contents of volume 14, the final volume to be published.

him in July of 1930 to teach at the Kaiser Wilhelm University in Berlin, was published in 1962, and his doctoral dissertation, *The Communion of Saints*, completed in 1927, was then printed in 1963. *Ethics* was published in 1964, and in 1967 *Letters and Papers from Prison*. His lesser-known *Fiction from Prison: Gathering up the Past* appeared in 1981. Edwin H. Robinson edited a variety of Bonhoeffer's lectures and occasional articles in three volumes: *No Rusty Swords* (1965), *The Way to Freedom* (1966), and *True Patriotism* (1967). Eberhard Bethge, Dietrich Bonhoeffer's closest friend and later biographer, completed a definitive biography in 1967 (in German); the English translation, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Man of Vision, Man of Courage*, was first published by Harper & Row in 1970 and later expanded, edited, and republished by Fortress Press in 2000. This masterpiece offered the English-speaking world the first complete—and still definitive—picture of Bonhoeffer's life and legacy.

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Between 1958 and 1974, Bethge edited and published a six-volume *Gesammelte Schriften*, assembling in German most of Bonhoeffer's lectures and letters that had not been published earlier. Yet, with new discoveries of primary material continuing to surface, and a need to organize—and desire to publish—all of Bonhoeffer's literary corpus, a German editorial board was created out of the German Section of the International Bonhoeffer Society. Joining Eberhard Bethge†, the designated chair, were Ernst Feil†, Christian Gremmels, Wolfgang Huber, Hans Pfeifer†, Albrecht Schönherr†, Heinz Eduard Tödt†, and Ilse Tödt. Their efforts over two decades resulted in the monumental *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke* (DBW), 1986–1999.

The first volume of the DBW appeared at the February 1986 observance of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's eightieth birthday in Berlin. Eberhard Bethge convened a meeting with Manfred Weber, the then director of Christian Kaiser Verlag (Munich), and three members of the English Language Section of the International Bonhoeffer Society—Clifford J. Green, J. Patrick Kelley, and Michael B. Lukens—to discuss plans for a comprehensive edition of Bonhoeffer's collected works in English. One month later, at an official board meeting of the Bonhoeffer Society at Princeton, a formal resolution was approved to create a Bonhoeffer Works Translation Committee, empowering them to oversee the administration of the project and seek the necessary funding. Robin Lovin was chosen as chair and Michael Lukens as administrative secretary. This resolution was forwarded to the fall 1986 meeting of the Society in Atlanta, at which time a full board was selected and Mark Brouckman chosen as Robin Lovin's assistant. By the fall of 1987, translators and editors were selected for the first four volumes to be produced. Several major publishers were considered for the DBWE; Fortress Press of Minneapolis was finally

selected. A sizeable grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1989 provided the foundation for securing the project. While a formal agreement was then signed with the *Herausgeberkreis* (editorial circle) of the DBW in the fall of 1990, significant effort was still required to negotiate terms with English publishers holding copyrights for existing translations of Bonhoeffer's works.

The torch of leadership was passed in 1992 when Robin Lovin and Mark Brocker stepped down and Wayne W. Floyd was selected as the general editor with Clifford J. Green as executive director. The official home of the project became the Krauth Memorial Library at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. Floyd saw the publication of volumes 1–7 and 9 before his resignation, at which time (2004) Victoria J. Barnett, director of church relations at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, and Barbara J. Wojhoski became the general editors of the remaining volumes (8 and 10–17). Although the final meeting of the DBWE Editorial Board was held at the Baltimore meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) on November 23, 2013, a proleptic gathering was held November 13–15, 2011, at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, in conjunction with the Fifteenth Annual Bonhoeffer Lectures in Public Ethics, to celebrate the completion of the project. Guests of that celebration included scholars from the German editorial board who had offered invaluable assistance throughout the project, including Dr. Hans Pfeifer, the liaison between the German editorial board and the English editorial board.

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The following Bonhoeffer scholars served on the editorial board between 1986 and 2013: H. Gaylon Barker, Victoria J. Barnett, Mark S. Brocker, James H. Burtness†, Keith Clements, Wayne W. Floyd, Peter Frick, Barbara Green, Clifford J. Green, John W. de Gruchy, Barry Harvey, J. Patrick Kelley, Geoffrey B. Kelly, Reinhard Krause, Robin Lovin, Michael B. Lukens, Nancy Lukens, Paul D. Matheny, Mary Nebelsick, F. Burton Nelson†, Larry L. Rasmussen, and Barbara Wojhoski. The Editorial Board met annually for twenty-seven years, usually in conjunction with the gathering of the Bonhoeffer Society at the fall meeting of the AAR. Each year, reports were given on the progress of particular volumes, and issues of translation, editing, publishing, and funding were addressed. No small amount of effort was required to underwrite the cost of this project, and fundraising was a significant priority for the board, spearheaded by the executive director. In addition to individuals, congregations, synods, seminaries, universities, and families, the following donors provided major grants to make the DBWE possible: the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Lilly Endowment, Inc., Aid Association for Lutherans, Thrivent Financial for Lutherans Foundation, the *Stiftung*

Bonhoeffer Lehrstuhl, the Bowen H. and Janice Arthur McCoy Charitable Foundation, and the Dr. John and Cleo Young Trust.

In keeping with the order of the German edition, the DBWE is organized in two series. Series A (volumes 1–8) includes mostly Bonhoeffer’s own writings: *Sanctorum Communio* (vol. 1) ed. Clifford J. Green; *Act and Being* (vol. 2) ed. Wayne W. Floyd; *Creation and Fall* (vol. 3) ed. John W. de Gruchy; *Discipleship* (vol. 4) ed. Geoffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey; *Life Together* and *The Prayerbook of the Bible* (vol. 5) ed. Geoffrey B. Kelly; *Ethics* (vol. 6) ed. Clifford J. Green; *Fiction from Prison* (vol. 7) ed. Clifford J. Green; and *Letters and Papers from Prison* (vol. 8) ed. John W. de Gruchy. Series B (volumes 9–16) includes collected writings from designated periods, with additional documents and correspondence from others: *The Young Bonhoeffer: 1918–1927* (vol. 9) ed. Paul D. Matheny; *Barcelona, Berlin, New York: 1928–1931* (vol. 10) ed. Clifford J. Green; *Ecumenical, Academic and Pastoral Work: 1931–1932* (vol. 11) ed. Michael B. Lukens, Victoria J. Barnett, and Mark Brocker; *Berlin: 1932–1933* (vol. 12) ed. Larry L. Rasmussen; *London: 1933–1935* (vol. 13) ed. Keith Clements; *Theological Education at Finkenwalde: 1935–1937* (vol. 14) ed. H. Gaylon Barker and Mark S. Brocker; *Theological Education Underground: 1937–1940* (vol. 15) ed. Victoria J. Barnett; and *Conspiracy and Imprisonment: 1943–1945* (vol. 16) ed. Mark S. Brocker. Yet to be completed for this English Edition is the seventeenth volume, *Index*, which will be an online translation of *Register und Ergänzungen* (ed. Herbert Anzinger and Hans Pfeifer, 1999), which was published by Gütersloher Verlagshaus (Munich). “Volumes 1–7 of the English edition, which contain only Bonhoeffer’s own writings, retain his original organization of the material, either as chapters or as sections or unnumbered manuscripts. Volumes 8–16 contain collected writings from a particular period of Bonhoeffer’s life, including correspondence from others and historical documents. With the exception of volume 8, these final volumes are divided into three sections, with the documents in each section arranged chronologically: (1) Letters, Journals, Documents; (2) Essays, Seminar Papers, Papers, Lectures, Compositions; (3) Sermons, Meditations, Catechetical Writings, Exegetical Writings.”³

It is important to understand that the DBWE, like its parent, the DBW, is a scholarly, coordinated, and comprehensive collection. Earlier translations/publications of Bonhoeffer’s monographs continue to be marketed (profitably!), and publishers holding those copyright privileges are understandably reticent to relinquish the rights to another version. However, what is now available in the DBWE is not simply another version, but an edition that includes significantly improved translation, all of Bonhoeffer’s footnotes, as well as very helpful German and English editorial comments (biographical, historical, and theological). The DBWE not only includes an “Editor’s Introduction to the English Edition” for each volume, but also for each volume an English translation of the “Editor’s Afterword to the German Edition,” so that the reader benefits from scholarly insights on several lev-

³Barker and Brocker, eds., *Theological Education at Finkenwalde*, xxii–xxiii.

els. Further, references, tables, timelines, and name and subject indexes offer the reader substantial direction for further research. The editors consistently point the reader to historical and theological materials used or referred to by Bonhoeffer, providing significant context and cross-reference. Because bits and pieces of Bonhoeffer's legacy continue to surface from around the world, a *Jahrbuch* series has been created (with five volumes in print); this ongoing supplement will make available everything known to date.

For any student who desires to do primary research behind/beyond the German DBW, one can view the original manuscripts that were not destroyed in the chaotic final years of World War II, which are permanently housed in the *Staatsbibliothek* in Berlin. Eberhard Bethge, who was the appointed custodian of Bonhoeffer's literary estate, gradually turned over original manuscripts for safe keeping as particular projects were completed. Because Dietrich Bonhoeffer studied at Union Theological Seminary during the 1930–1931 academic year, and visited again in the summer of 1939, there is a small collection of primary Bonhoeffer materials at their Burke Library. These original letters and documents will remain at Union because of their relationship to his American visits.

Given that purchasing and owning all sixteen volumes of Bonhoeffer's works will fall largely to libraries and serious students of his legacy, *The Bonhoeffer Reader* (Fortress Press, 2013) was created to provide a representative sample (860 pages) of what the DBWE offers in total. Editors Clifford Green and Michael DeJonge succeeded at bringing together selections from the first sixteen volumes, writing brief introductions for contextualization. *The Bonhoeffer Reader* provides a wonderful resource of carefully selected materials offered in the DBWE.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF VOLUME 14—*THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AT FINKENWALDE: 1935–1937*

Although the *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works English Edition* is organized chronologically,⁴ the timing of the release of each volume in the series was dependent on translating, editing, and publishing deadlines determined by the editorial board as the project unfolded. Based on those decisions, the “last” volume off the press was volume 14 (October 2013). However, its “last” place in the publication schedule should in no way suggest that it was less important, and I shall now proceed to discuss the significance of that volume, covering the period when Dietrich Bonhoeffer was training ordinands for ministry in the anti-Nazi Confessing Church.⁵

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⁴Series A, volumes 1–8, spans *Sanctorum Communio* (1927) to *Letters and Papers from Prison* (1943–1944); Series B, volumes 9–16, spans *The Young Bonhoeffer: 1918–1927* to *Conspiracy and Imprisonment: 1940–1945*.

⁵Specifically, volume 14 begins with a letter (dated May 22, 1935) from George Bell, Bishop of Chichester to Birger Forell, a friend of the Confessing Church who was active in ecumenical affairs, and ends with a sermon (July 11, 1937) by Bonhoeffer on Ps 58. Appendices for volume 14 include a chronology, a list of candidates and members of the House of Brethren, a survey of the Finkenwalde curriculum, retreats, evangelization trips, and miscellaneous unpublished materials from the Bonhoeffer *Nachlaß*, 1935–1937.

story. While *Sanctorum Communio* (*The Communion of Saints*) and *Act and Being* from his academic period lay significant theological foundations for understanding his entire legacy, and while *Ethics* and *Letters and Papers from Prison* represent perhaps his later, most creative reflections, *Discipleship* and *Life Together* will likely remain his most popular books because they were written in a less academic style and because they include topics the average Christian finds edifying: faith, prayer, community, worship, church, and Bible. Volume 14 provides substantial personal

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and historical material from this period (1935–1937) to complement his well-known *Discipleship* and *Life Together*; it is a significant volume in the DBWE series in spite of the fact that “his time at Finkenwalde is a relatively unknown chapter in Bonhoeffer’s life.”⁶ This time in Bonhoeffer’s life should be understood as an important bridge “that links Bonhoeffer’s early academic work with his resistance activity.”⁷ Many of Bonhoeffer’s seminal ideas from his earlier education, internship, and first years of teaching were tested and tried during his administration of the Preachers’ Seminary at Finkenwalde bei Stettin in Pomerania. His mature theological and ethical wisdom, which made him an important asset for the conspiracy, can be seen as a product of his reflections with students during his time at Finkenwalde. To his seminarians from the first course at Finkenwalde he later wrote, “The summer of 1935 was, I believe, the most fulfilling period in my entire life thus far both professionally and personally.”⁸ In his editor’s introduction to volume 14, H. Gaylon Barker writes, “So the Finkenwalde period was not a turning away from the world but rather an effort to prepare the church for the world. . . . Therefore, Finkenwalde was neither a detour nor a lacuna, neither a rupture nor a caesura, but a straight trajectory that Bonhoeffer had followed clearly and without wavering throughout his career. Instead of being a detour, Finkenwalde existed for the purpose of construction, because of the need to build a firm foundation to preserve the church’s future.”⁹ Such arguments for continuity in Bonhoeffer’s life and theology are in response to criticism that his time at the Preachers’ Seminary was “pietistic sectarianism,” an otherworldly retreat. While Karl Barth thought at the time it was Bonhoeffer’s “effort to flee,”¹⁰ there is wide consensus today that Bonhoeffer’s time at Finkenwalde served a crucial role in solidifying his theological foundation, as well as bridging his early and later life.

⁶Barker and Brocker, eds., *Theological Education at Finkenwalde*, 39–40.

⁷*Ibid.*, 40.

⁸*Ibid.*, 119.

⁹*Ibid.*, 34–35.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 34.

APPETIZERS OF LETTERS, LECTURES, DOCUMENTS, AND SERMONS

It is my hope that, like any good appetizer, the following sampling of excerpts from volume 14 will serve to entice the reader to dig deeper into the inspiring legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In roughly chronological order, let us taste and see the richness of this twentieth-century martyr's witness and wisdom.

During the same month that Hitler created and began promulgating the 1935 Nuremberg Race Laws (*Reichsgesetzblatt*), in which Jewish persons were categorized by the number of Jewish parents or grandparents they had, Dietrich Bonhoeffer lectured to his candidates for ministry in the Confessing Church on Rom 9:1–11. In that exposition he distinguishes between a Jew “according to the flesh” and a Jew “according to promise.” Broaching this subject, even—or especially—in a German seminary in 1935 was extremely precarious. Like his February 1933 radio address on “The Younger Generation’s Changed View of the Concept of the Leader,” Bonhoeffer is flirting with consequences beyond his own field of vision.

As part of his second course at Finkenwalde (November 1935–March 1936), he lectured on catechesis, offering practical as well as theoretical/theological insights for parish ministry. A fascinating and extremely relevant section in that series relates to “psychological findings among children and adolescents.” Is he not speaking to us today when he offers reflections such as these?

Until they enter adolescence, children construct their own world without considering other people or their surrounding world. . . . They see only themselves and their world; their surroundings and other people are there to serve them. . . . The child is essentially a tyrant. The only boundaries this tyranny experiences is the uncompromising resistance of the absolute authority of an adult. . . . The adolescent is essentially a divided person. Something has been sundered since childhood because the adolescent has now entered the stage of reflection. . . . They feel isolated.¹¹

Bonhoeffer, like anyone involved in the faith formation of young people, labored hard to integrate theoretical/theological insights with practical/relevant ministry. In volume 14, there are many examples of his efforts at merging the theoretical and the practical. Bonhoeffer, like anyone involved in parish ministry, shifts from youth work in one hour to ministry with senior citizens in another to personal/family matters in another. On January 15, 1936, at the Halensee Cemetery Chapel in Berlin, Bonhoeffer delivered the funeral sermon for his grandmother, Julie (Tafel) Bonhoeffer, centering around Ps 90.

It is with enormous gratitude that we stand today at the grave of our dear deceased grandmother. God’s hand extended its beneficence to us by allowing her to live with us until today. . . . She belongs completely to us and will always belong completely to us. . . . She was still able to see her children, her grandchildren, and her great-grandchildren. . . . She lived for ninety-three years, mediating to us the inheritance of a different time. . . . The uncompromising na-

¹¹Ibid., 545–547.

ture of justice, the free word of the free person, the integrity of a person's word once given, clarity and sobriety of speech, sincerity and simplicity in private and public life—to these things she was committed with all her heart.¹²

What a tribute, what historical recollection, what wisdom these well-crafted words offer us preachers who labor hard, but are rarely satisfied, with words that we offer at funerals for consolation and hope. It is helpful—even fun—to oversee how Bonhoeffer addressed such a situation!

For any pastors/persons plagued with nagging questions about how well they have served Jesus Christ, or whether, in fact, Jesus Christ has more benefitted them, we hear Bonhoeffer honestly sharing his experience of maturing toward a more authentic life of discipleship. To Elisabeth (Bornkamm) Zinn he wrote,

I threw myself into my work in an extremely un-Christian and not at all humble fashion. A rather crazy element of ambition.... But then something different came, something that has changed and transformed my life to this very day. For the first time, I came to the Bible.... I had often preached, I had seen a great deal of the church, had spoken and written about it—and yet I was not yet a Christian but rather in an utterly wild and uncontrolled fashion my own master. I do know that at the time I turned the cause of Jesus Christ into an advantage for myself.... The Bible, especially the Sermon on the Mount, freed me from all this.... That was a great liberation.¹³

From the notes of one of his students, Friedrich Trentepohl, we have reconstructed lectures of Bonhoeffer on homiletics from 1935–1936. In addition to basic insights on the purpose of a sermon, textual considerations, possible gestures to use, and how proclamation relates to pastoral care, there is a marvelous section on what happens after the sermon. “After a sermon, the pastor himself is in need of pastoral care.... for pastoral conversation.... The congregation should be encouraged to go to the sacristy for this sort of conversation. The task of the pastor's wife is to perform this service.... Conversation with as much objectivity and love as possible.”¹⁴

What pastor has not struggled with the question of where pastoral care leaves off and psychotherapy begins (or vice-versa)? On February 3, 1936, Bonhoeffer lectured on “Law and Gospel in Pastoral Care.” “The pastoral counselor never approaches the other in a calculating or investigative fashion.... This is the difference between pastoral care and all psychotherapy, where everything depends on methodology. In pastoral care, ultimately nothing depends on it! The pastoral counselor who views this distress as a psychological problem is betraying his office. In the world of psychology, demons rule instead of the purity and simplicity of brotherly help.”¹⁵

What makes these letters, documents, lectures, practical exercises, essays, sermons, meditations, and Bible studies so powerful is the context of the National Socialist and Depression Era of post- and pre-war Germany in which they were

¹²Ibid., 909–910.

¹³Ibid., 134.

¹⁴Ibid., 508.

¹⁵Ibid., 567.

crafted. These are not ivory tower expositions from protected podiums nor pious rhetoric uttered from safe pulpits. Great cost was exacted in lives and ministries across Germany as these kinds of sermons were given and such prophetic lectures were delivered. Intriguing in many of these is the often subtle, coded, and hidden references to things political; Bonhoeffer knew that making explicit critical references would likely mean immediate imprisonment and possible reprisal. His words were authentic expressions of the gospel of the kingdom that were meeting head-on with the demonic powers of the world.

After two years and five months of “illegal” (that is, anti-Nazi) training of pastors for Christian ministry in the Confessing Church, the Gestapo closed Finkenwalde. The decree of Reinhard Heydrich of August 29, 1937, describes the order for closure of Bonhoeffer’s experiment in Christian “life together.”

The persistent actions of the bodies of the so-called Confessing Church in training and examining young theologians in their own organizations, in defiance of the institutions set up by the state, constitutes a deliberate violation of the Fifth Decree for the Implementation of the Law for the Protection of the German Evangelical Church of December 2, 1935 (Legal Code of the German Evangelical Church; page 130 [*Reich Legal Gazette* I, page 1370]) and is inclined to undermine both the authority and the welfare of the state. By agreement with the Reich and Prussian minister of science, training, and public education and with the Reich and Prussian minister of church affairs, I hereby direct: In accordance with § I of the decree of the Reich President for the Protection of the People and State of February 28, 1933 (*Reich Legal Gazette* I, page 83), the substitute seminaries, study communities, and offices of instruction, students, and examination established by the so-called Confessing Church are to be dissolved, and all theological courses and retreats conducted by them forbidden.¹⁶

Theological Education at Finkenwalde: 1935–1937 is a treasure chest of theological, historical, and devotional gems that will provoke meaningful reflection and consistent inspiration. While the investment of purchasing any or all of the seventeen volumes of the DBWE is significant, the reward and blessing will far outweigh the cost. Invest! ☩

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¹⁶Ibid., 314–315.