

boundaries, became increasingly diverse as it moved into the seventeenth century” (284).

*Germantown, TN*

DONALD K. MCKIM

ECUMENICAL, ACADEMIC, AND PASTORAL WORK, 1931–1932. By Dietrich Bonhoeffer. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 11*. Edited by Victoria J. Barnett, Mark S. Brocker, and Michael B. Lukens. Translated from the German by Anne Schmidt-Lange et al. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012. Pp. xxii + 612. \$60.

THE COLLECTED SERMONS OF DIETRICH BONHOEFFER. By Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Edited and introduced by Isabel Best. Translated from the German by Douglas W. Stott et al. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012. Pp. xxvi + 214. \$29.95.

These newest volumes of the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works in English offer an intimate portrait of the young theologian coming of age as a scholar, pastor, and ecumenist. Volume 11 of the Works is a remarkable collection of letters, lectures, ecumenical addresses, and sermons that detail the intricate relationship between B.’s work as a theologian and his pastoral and ecumenical work as a churchman. An illuminating introduction by the English editors and a rich afterword by the German editor, Christoph Strohm, frame the collection. This array of documents shows how B. advances the themes of his early dissertations—on the sociality of the church and the concreteness of revelation—toward his life-long concern for ethics, which he defines here as “the principle of concretion of the general call to obedience” (244).

The letters in this volume once again show B. as “an artist in offering unqualified friendship” (Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologian, Christian, Contemporary* [1970] 113). His correspondence with close friends Paul Lehman and Edward Sutz from his Union Theological Seminary (New York) days reflects growing concerns about the state of theology, the ecumenical movement, and the dangerous conditions of late Weimar Germany. He writes to family members about his ecumenical travels abroad and his challenging work with confirmands from poor, working class families in north Berlin (74–75, 109–10). He admits being “speechless” about how such poverty has not ruined these boys (77, 97–98), and he devotes extended time and expense to teaching, writing a catechism (included here 258–66), and building a cabin in the countryside for their retreats. His letters to church superiors cover his work as an assistant pastor, his less-than-inspiring chaplaincy at a technical college, and his position as a youth secretary for an international church alliance for peace (57–60, 64–65, 68–69, 95–96).

In his official ecumenical reports (65–76), B. stresses the movement's importance in building international solidarity among the churches and their youth, especially in the face of Germany's isolation and the rising specter of National Socialism. Yet he is critical of the ecumenical movement, because it is dominated by an "Anglo-Saxon foundation" that is preoccupied with "the problem of action," devoid of theological content (167–68).

The letters also indicate B.'s unhappy assessment of theology on both sides of the Atlantic. He reaffirms the importance of ecumenical cooperation despite the "inexplicable divisions" between the English-speaking and German theological worlds (54–55), including the "hollow" nature of American missions. He admits how parochial German theology looks abroad, and likens its "thoroughbred" schools of thought to American racism (36–37).

He does find promise among the dialectical theologians, however, but not without reservation. He delights in meeting Karl Barth in July 1931 and immediately taking to his openness, "humor," and tenacious "concentration" on the cross and resurrection, despite his admitted lack of clarity "about many important ethical problems" (37, 42). B. acknowledges some "very good formulations" in a lecture on ethics by Friedrich Gogarten, but is put off by his unapproachable style (49). He deeply appreciates meeting Emile Brunner in Zurich, but is disappointed by his recent *Divine Imperative* as "hastily" written and revealing a "gap" in its unfocused treatment of the concreteness of the divine command (121, 123). Even among such "Olympians," B. retains an independent edge (49).

B. began his career as a professor at the University of Berlin during this period; the volume contains lecture notes that indicate how indebted he is to Barth, while trying to advance his own thought. In a course on modern theology, B. wields Barth's "religion-critique" to unmask the cultural dependency of theology as "religion" in the hands of Schleiermacher, Troeltsch, Rudolph Otto, Harnack, William James, and others, and he subjects this false alliance to the radical critiques of Feuerbach, Nietzsche, and Engels—noting (with Tillich, but only here) its class-bound nature (220). The hopeful "turning point" lies in the dialectical return to a theology of revelation, but B. insists on pushing the dialectical project toward a combination of divine-command ethics with the sociality of "the church-community [that] lives in freely given continuity" (242). His lectures on the "Nature of the Church" develop this concept of the church-community further by identifying Christ not only as "community" but also as "brother" who binds each disciple to the other and as "Lord" over against the church—in a way that Catholic ecclesiology cannot envision (302–5).

The final section of this volume contains B.'s sermons from this period, and when coupled with another volume *The Collected Sermons of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (under review here), we find evidence of the dialectical theologian at work, first and foremost from the pulpit. His preaching in Berlin was seminal, so much so that six of these sermons were chosen by Isabel Best for her outstanding collection that spans Bonhoeffer's career from Barcelona to Finkenwalde. In a sermon for his niece's baptism, B. relates 1 John's text "God is love" to God's breaking into Christians' lives and ethically links them to "the outstretched, begging hands of . . . others" (31). In his treatment of Lazarus and the rich man (Lk 16:19–20), B. warns that the church has "spiritualized the gospel . . . , lightened it up" by moralizing this parable instead of seeing the "frightening" message of mercy for the poor and judgment of the rich (35–37). At times, B. muses over how biblical promises about the resurrection go "hopelessly right over the heads" of hearers today (43). In another sermon, he brings a miracle like the stilling of the storm (Mt 8:23–24) alive through a narrative interpolation of lost seamen, for whom "Fear is in the boat!" until Christ then appears. Bonhoeffer tries to paint gateways of hope amid the backdrop of national despair, as in a Lenten sermon of 1933 (after Hitler seizes the government) that lifts up a reluctant Gideon (Jgs 6–8) as a call for the church "to save Israel" against superior forces.

Many of his sermons are deeply pastoral, especially those preached during his ministry to Germans in London, such as when he addresses despair after a national mining accident and brings hope to those grieving over the war dead: "Over the coffins of children and the elderly" the angels sing, "but they are at peace" (105). Occasionally, B.'s exegetical candor bursts forth, as in his treatment of Mary whose Magnificat shows a "passionate, carried away, proud, enthusiastic" woman in striking (proto-feminist?) contrast to the Mary meek and mild of our hymns (116). And from London to Finkenwalde, he preaches on the most challenging aspects of the Christian life: the unyielding call "to forgive (others) for everything, absolutely everything," (181) and the call to "love our enemies" as a witness to the cross, which requires the difficult sacrifice "to let go of our revenge" (198). The sermons combine careful exegesis, narrative imagination, and theological force as they lay claims of the external Word on human lives.

These two volumes add immensely to our understanding of B.'s formative theological thought, pastoral identity, and ecumenical engagement, and how deeply interwoven they were. They demonstrate a theologian who takes preaching and church practice very seriously, thereby recommending themselves to the libraries of pastors and scholars.