

### BONHOEFFER'S WORKS

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, Volume 11, *Ecumenical, Academic and Pastoral Work: 1931-1932* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012. £40.99. pp. xxii + 612. ISBN: 978-0-8006-9838-6).

This newest volume of the *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* affords English language readers wonderful insights into the formative theological existence of the energetic young pastor and scholar during the years immediately preceding the Nazi seizure of power and ensuing Church Struggle. Collected correspondence, academic lectures and writings, and sermons and meditations are set out in turn accompanied by a substantive scholarly apparatus which provides enriching details and direction. Both the afterword of the German editors and the English editors' introduction represent substantive interpretive essays in their own right.

While no lecture manuscripts from this time survive, collated copies of students' notes display the themes and arguments that preoccupied the twenty-five year old theologian in his first ventures into the university classroom. The most full and instructive of these is his critical survey of developments in Christian theology since 1900 (p. 177f.) in which Bonhoeffer positions himself in the landscape of recent European theology. The culminating question—'Who will show us Luther?!' (p. 244)—expresses Bonhoeffer's own abiding anxiety to see dogmatics and ethics integrated concretely. His public assessment of Karl Barth here—'In all of recent literature no one is seriously the equal of Barth' (p. 241)—sits alongside several accounts written to friends of Bonhoeffer's first compelling personal encounters with the Swiss theologian in Bonn in 1931: 'This is really someone from whom one could learn something ... I have never seen anything like it nor thought it possible' (pp. 37-38). Evidence of Bonhoeffer's energetic pastoral work with rowdy confirmands and technical college students in Berlin during these years appears throughout, most materially in the fourteen sermons collected here and the catechism jointly written with his friend Franz Hildebrandt (p. 258f.).

Bonhoeffer's growing involvement in the ecumenical movement is a particularly important

aspect of this volume. His interventions in various ecumenical meetings always push to confront what he called 'the most basic presuppositions of ecumenical thought' (p. 345) and to demand that the fundamental question of *truth* be grasped (p. 369). A lively debate of the validity of the concept of 'orders of creation' in theological accounts of the relation of the churches to nations and states (p. 345f.) represents a sharp and prescient instance of this. But it is the speech in Czechoslovakia on 'The Theological Foundation of the Work of the World Alliance' which undoubtedly provides the most astonishing example of Bonhoeffer's ecumenical radicalism, with its frank criticisms of the movement, vigorous Christocentric method, drive to a *concrete* discernment of the present divine command for the churches, and bold conclusion that 'today's war, the next war, must be *condemned* by the church' (p. 356f.).

The darkening political horizon is registered in the summer of 1932 when Bonhoeffer writes to his American friend, Paul Lehmann, of the results of the German national elections, 'We're happy the Nazis did not get a majority. But it is still bad ...' (p. 132).

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### THE MYSTERY OF GOD

Steven D. Boyer & Christopher A. Hall, *The Mystery of God: Theology for Knowing the Unknowable* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2012. \$19.99. pp. xix + 244. ISBN: 978-0-8010-2773-4).

This book examines divine mystery, which the authors convincingly argue should always be a topic for theological reflection. The authors divide their work into two parts. The first part investigates mystery from different perspectives and attempts to show how it is accommodated as a central feature of the divine reality. The authors offer a logical breakdown of the meaning of mystery (chapter 1), the necessity of mystery (chapter 2), the history of mystery (chapter 3), and the knowledge of mystery (chapter 4). In providing this breakdown the authors clearly differentiate