

shelves of many a preacher, including my own. He is a preacher's scholar, a person able to push through the minutiae to the heart of issues. He sees in the text of the Hebrew Bible words that speak not only to an earlier day, but to our day as well.

My opportunity to enter into conversation with Dr. Brueggemann came at a preacher's conference. I led a panel that engaged our presenter in conversation about his book *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination* (Fortress, 2012). The presentations that led up to that conversation had roiled the emotions and the imaginations of many in the room. You see this was a more conservative gathering, and Brueggemann offered challenging, indeed prophetic, statements about the current state of affairs in our world. It was my responsibility to help soothe the nerves so that the people gathered could hear the voice of this master of biblical but also political interpretation. We did okay. Nerves were settled, but imaginations were set afire.

In *Living Countertestimony*, the reader is drawn into a series of conversations with Dr. Brueggemann. These conversations occur over a period of four years, beginning with a conversation at an SBL dinner between colleagues in 2008 and ends with a dialog with Brueggemann's long time friend and colleague in the study of the Old Testament Terence Fretheim. Included in this collection is a sermon preached by Brueggemann at Trinity Church, Copley Square, in Boston on March 20, 2011. A majority of the conversations run between Brueggemann and Carolyn Sharp, Professor of Hebrew Scriptures at Yale Divinity School.

In the course of these conversations we come to see how well-respected Brueggemann is among his colleagues, but also the humility and sense of inadequacy of Brueggemann himself. Although considered among the leading scholars of the Old Testament alive today, he confesses to having considerable struggles with the biblical languages. They didn't come easily for him, and he doesn't feel as competent in them as he would like. We who read his works would not expect such feelings, but here they are confessed. What is true of his adeptness with language, he confesses a certain feeling of inadequacy in his academic preparation. He holds a Th.D. from Union Theological Seminary. As holder of a Ph.D. from a seminary, I have a sense of what he might feel. There is a certain hierarchy of graduate programs in America, and a Th.D. from Union, while it might be an excellent education will rank below a Ph.D. from Harvard, Yale, or Chicago – in the eyes of many. It's this sense of inadequacy that led him later in life to earn a Ph.D. in education. He also confesses that this sense of not measuring up may have spurred on some of his prodigious writing efforts. And to know how prodigious he has been (and he's not finished yet), one need only look at the bibliography at the end of this book, covering thirty-four pages.

There are the scholarly aspects of the conversation, but there are also the spiritual and the human dimensions. As one who struggles with prayer myself, it was helpful to hear this writer of beautiful prayers confess his own struggle with sustaining a disciplined practice of daily prayer.

As you read the transcripts of these conversations you come to know this scholar, teacher, preacher, human being, in a new way. He may still sit high on your shelves, but he becomes more human, more accessible. You discover that he believes that the biblical text has value for the modern Christian, and that we need to pay attention to its theology. He confesses frustration with some progressive co-religionists who walk away from the text, or at least begin and end with the historical critical dimensions rather than struggle with its meaning and implications.

If you wish to know the heart of a scholar committed not only to the welfare of the church but of the creation itself, then this is a book worth considering. If you're a preacher and you have benefited from Walter Brueggemann's many works, you'll want to spend some time with this book so you can know the heart of the man. Many thanks go to Carolyn Sharp for drawing together these conversations so that we might enjoy their fruit.

*Robert D. Cornwall, APC
Central Woodward Christian Church
Troy, MI*

THE COLLECTED SERMONS OF DIETRICH BONHOEFFER. Edited and Introduced by Isabel Best. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012. Xxvi +214 pages.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer is one of the most enigmatic figures in modern Christianity. His continuing influence over both the theological imagination and the way Christians live in the world is an impressive testament both to his prodigious efforts as a scholar/writer and the way he lived his life. Because he died at such a young age, with his theology still in development and flux, he has produced a bevy of admirers from across the theological landscape, from conservative evangelicals (they tend to like his Discipleship) to "Death of God" theologians (they like his Letters and Papers from Prison). Pacifists embrace him as do folks who want to justify anti-government actions. His execution at the age of thirty-nine in a Nazi prison camp, because of his involvement in the coup/assassination plot against Hitler, has led to his being lionized by many. Indeed, he's considered a modern Protestant saint by many, but if one reads his works and the better of the biographies, you discover that Bonhoeffer was a complicated person.

This collection of sermons, edited and introduced by Isabel Best, one of the translators of the *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (also published by Fortress Press), brings together in one convenient place a spectrum of his sermons. Besides the convenience of having a volume of this smaller size, by reading through the collection, one gets a good sense of Bonhoeffer's deep faith in Christ. They can also serve as a good entry point for the novice reader of Bonhoeffer. In addition, the book offers a brief but very helpful biographical introduction to Bonhoeffer's life.

What is immediately clear from a quick skimming of the book is that these sermons, with few exceptions, were preached before Bonhoeffer turned thirty years old. These are, therefore, the sermonic musings of a young man. Brilliant, yes, but still quite young. Most of the sermons in the collection were preached in the early 1930s, either in Berlin as a substitute preacher or during his lone pastorate in London, among German expatriates. In addition to these sermons, a few others were preached at the various underground seminaries in the second half of the 1930s. Each sermon is introduced by Isabel Best, giving context of the sermon.

Reading sermons, especially in translation, doesn't give you a true feel for the dynamics of the sermons. What did Bonhoeffer sound like? Was he dynamic? All reports are that he was. Did he engage his congregation bodily? What was the tone of voice? Although we can't find answers to these questions, we do have before us the written evidence of his biblical understandings, his spirituality, and his faith commitments. Although he rarely makes explicit reference to the political dynamics of the day, his emphasis on Jesus and on discipleship is representative of his deep concern for the church and its witness. We know that he was influenced by Barth and by others both pietistic and liberal, and this shows itself at times.

It's clear that God and the cross of Jesus stand in the center of his attention. We see this in a sermon preached in 1932 on National Memorial Day, during a time of deep political unrest. There Bonhoeffer declares that one can only find final consolation in the knowledge of God, and in a life of discipleship, declaring: "God's way in the world leads to the cross and through the cross to life. For this reason do not be alarmed, do not be afraid – be faithful!" (p. 20).

Then there's a series of four sermons on 1 Corinthians 13 preached in London in the fall of 1934. He gives three reasons why he was moved to offer this series: first, this church, like the Corinthian Church needs to hear it, since it might not be self-evident that the community is to love; second, the churches were in the midst of a struggle for the soul of the church that could have untoward effects on the believer; third, as important as the Protestant declaration that faith is the means of salvation, greater still is love. The question isn't whether others have love, but whether we have love. Ultimately, he asks the question, who is love, and answers with Christ – "what better symbol could there be, standing over this entire passage, than the cross?" (p. 153).

As you read these sermons you can understand why evangelicals would be attracted to him. The more radical views that we find expressed in the *Letters and Papers* that emerged in the course of his confinement aren't as present here. There are challenging words here, especially when read in context, but we might miss the deeper message. Consider a sermon preached at Finkenwalde in 1934 on forgiveness. With the Confessing Church on the run and Hitler in full control, he asks whether forgiveness is possible in that moment. We could read it in a very individualistic and pietistic manner, but there's something more here. In "The Betrayer," preached at Finkenwalde in 1937 he takes Judas as the focus, and while he

doesn't make a direct link, you get the feeling that he's dealing with deep emotions stirred by the events of the day. Will they join Judas or cling to Jesus?

The final sermon in the collection is dated Nov. 26, 1939. The war had begun; Bonhoeffer was by now leading his group of students on a farm in Tychow, in the far northeastern region of Germany, and the focus was Remembrance Sunday. The text is 1 Corinthians 15:55 – "Death is swallowed up in victory." You can see in this sermon the deep faith that sustains Bonhoeffer over the course of the next six years of struggle, imprisonment, and death. Preached as a homily before communion, he suggests that the meal itself is a celebration of victory over death in Christ. It is the symbols of bread and wine that serve to sustain one on this journey through death into life. That would be his future.

This is a nicely edited collection of sermons that draws from the most recent translations of Bonhoeffer's Works. It should prove useful for preachers and others who embrace Bonhoeffer's Christocentric vision of the church. The brief biography and the introductions to each sermon also make for a valued resource for understanding Bonhoeffer's founding vision.

Robert D. Cornwall
Central Woodward Christian Church
Troy MI

WORD AND WORSHIP DESK CALENDAR 2013.

Don Brophy, ed. New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press 2012. 126 pages, spiral

While designed for Roman Catholics, this annual 13-month calendar can be a useful companion for Christian workers of any tradition who use the common lectionary. This edition is Year C-1. With a spiral binding, the diary lies flat for easy everyday referral week by week. Seven by nine inch pages provide one-inch daily space for appointments on the right with lectionary readings (including the four-week psalm cycle for the Divine Office) and liturgical colors for the day directly across on the left. It has reference calendars for 2012 and 2014 along with the full church year calendar beginning December 2, 2012. Another useful reference is the outline for future years (2014 A-2, 2015 B-1, 2016 C-2, 2017 A-1, 2018 B-2, 2019 C-1, 2020 A-2) with dates for Advent 1, Ash Wednesday, Easter Sunday, Ascension Thursday and Pentecost Sunday. I have found an added bonus in retaining calendars as a personal archival record.

WHAT MARY MEANS TO CHRISTIANS: An Ancient Tradition Explained. By Peter M. J. Stravinskis. New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press 2012. v+102 pages.

This book by a popular Roman Catholic theologian provides credible background for understanding Mary's life and place in Christian tradition. The concise paperback enables those with increasing interest in the Mother of Jesus, no matter where