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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

“The summer of 1935 was, I believe, the most fulfilling period in my entire life thus far both professionally and personally.”^[1] So said Dietrich Bonhoeffer, after just one session of directing the underground seminary at Finkenwalde. Given the extreme circumstances that led Bonhoeffer to this place and to a ministry far different from what he had intended when he announced that he wanted to be a theologian as a child, this statement reveals how close the Finkenwalde community had become to his own personal identity as well as his vocation. In the midst of these extreme circumstances, Bonhoeffer was clear about his calling. Being director of Finkenwalde matched his skills and was a platform for his theological concerns. Instead of moving him to the fringes of the Church Struggle, Finkenwalde served to place him at the center of the struggle and positioned him to lay the foundation for the renewal of the church, both during and after the war. This volume, which contains materials from his years leading the underground seminary at Finkenwalde, gives us a new look at this important aspect of Bonhoeffer's life and career.

Finkenwalde has become a symbol of the witness of the Confessing Church under National Socialism; it will be forever associated with Christian classics like *Discipleship* and *Life Together*, two of Bonhoeffer's most

[1.] See 1/38, p. 000.

widely read and influential writings. It is that to be sure, but at the same time it is much more. Finkenwalde was a remote village near Germany's northeast Baltic coast, which made it an ideal location for the work that Bonhoeffer was engaged in, far removed as it was from the centers of Nazi power in Berlin. In the context of the 1930s Church Struggle, its location was its strength. It was here that an experiment in communal living developed and flourished for a short time; its witness now spans the world. Therefore, it is of no little account that the documents contained in this volume are important in providing us insights into daily life at Finkenwalde, the historical context of the Church Struggle, and the theological reflections and foundations that became the basis for Bonhoeffer's famous theological works and his life in the resistance.

That Finkenwalde became so important in Bonhoeffer's life is all the more remarkable given his earlier attitude toward the Protestant seminaries of that era. Like many other university students of the time, Bonhoeffer viewed the requirement of attending one of the church's seminaries, which were designed to provide practical instruction preparing students for the second examination necessary for ordination, as a waste of time.^[2] Students such as Bonhoeffer, who had been engaged in the rigorous academic work demanded by the universities, did not think that much to be gained from this requirement. However, by the mid-1930s his attitude had changed dramatically; the changed circumstances in which the church found itself made the underground seminaries of the Confessing Church a necessity. So it is, according to Eberhard Bethge, that with the founding of the Confessing Church in 1934, "a fundamental change had occurred, and the step-child became the darling of the church. The severe crises with the university faculties and the regional churches forced the Confessing church to set up new preachers' seminaries."^[3]

The Historical Context

One of the remarkable aspects of Hitler's power was the rapidity with which he and his Nazi government tightened their grip not only on their control

[2.] In the German editor's introduction to this volume, Otto Dudzus notes: "Preachers' seminaries involving obligatory attendance were a relatively recent institution in the Evangelical Church of Germany. They were created to provide a balance to the rather one-sided nature of the purely academic or scholarly theological training of the university with respect to practical and pastoral work in the church-community. In Prussia such attendance at a preachers' seminary did not become mandatory until 1928" (*DBW* 14:2).

[3.] Bethge, *DB-ER*, 420.

of the government but on all aspects of German life. All of this happened so fast that many Germans did not grasp the magnitude of the dangers they faced. Historian Fritz Stern believes that at the beginning the vast majority of German citizens believed that Hitler would provide some conservative stability and because of their “decency” they “could not conceive the full inhumanity that lay ahead.”^[4] Within three months, however, laws were enacted that robbed citizens of their rights and transformed the nation; they laid the foundation for the restructuring of German society, and no one was immune.^[5] During this brief period, Hitler consolidated his power through the February 1933 Emergency Decree, which suspended the Weimar constitution, giving Hitler unchallenged dictatorial powers. In March of that year, passage of the Malicious Practices Act gave the government sweeping powers to prosecute anyone who criticized the Reich and its authority. Then, the April 7, 1933, law for the “Restoration of the Professional Civil Service,” containing the so-called Aryan paragraph, barred all Jews from civil service professions. Similar actions restricted the freedoms and rights of others within the Reich.^[6]

[4.] Stern, *Five Germanys I Have Known*, 90. See also Kershaw, *Hitler*, 1:432, for a description of the optimistic reception that many in the Protestant churches gave Hitler because they believed he would bring about a national renewal with an “inner, moral revitalization.” Many church leaders were behind Hitler because of his opposition to communism. See also Schlingensiepen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 121.

[5.] According to Kershaw, the rapidity of the transformation was accomplished between January 1933, when Hitler took power, and August 1934, when Hindenburg died. This transformation “was brought about by a combination of pseudo-legal measures, terror, manipulation—and willing collaboration. Within a month, civil liberties—as protected under the Weimar Constitution—had been extinguished. Within two months, with most active political opponents either imprisoned or fleeing the country, the Reichstag surrendered its power to Hitler, giving Hitler control of the legislature. Within four months the once powerful trade unions were dissolved. In less than six months, all opposition parties had been suppressed or gone into voluntary liquidation, leaving the NSDAP as the only remaining party. In January 1934, the sovereignty of *Länder*—already in reality smashed the previous March—was formally abolished. Then in the summer, the growing threat from within Hitler’s own movement was ruthlessly eliminated in the ‘Night of Long Knives’ on 30 June 1934. By this time, almost all organizations, institutions, professional and representative bodies, clubs, and societies had long since rushed to align themselves with the new regime” (*Hitler*, 1:435).

[6.] Stern, *Five Germanys I Have Known*, 92–93. It should be noted that this was not an attitude within Germany alone but was reflected in the international community as well. For example, Erik Larson’s book *In the Garden of Beasts*, which views the early years of Hitler’s rule from the perspective of William Dodd, U.S. ambassador to Germany, shows that much of the larger world found it all too hard to imagine what was taking place within Germany. Given this situation, it is easy to see why it became so important for someone like Bonhoeffer to inform the ecumenical world about the situation in Germany and

In this context, many members of the professions, including university professors and clergy, were enthusiastic supporters of the new regime.^[7] Protestant church leaders, who tended to be conservative in their political views, warmly welcomed Hitler because of his anticommunist rhetoric and his promises of bringing moral renewal to the nation and a return to traditional values. There were others who were either uncritical or supportive of National Socialism. According to Heinz Eduard Tödt, “a large majority believed that they could stand for the cause of the church, and yet remain unpolitical but affirmative of the state. They lived in an enormous delusion as to the true character of National Socialism, because they did not want to interfere in politics and did not look for realistic information. Bonhoeffer the theologian did not give in to such delusions.”^[8]

An example of early church support for the new Nazi state came from Bavarian Lutheran bishop Hans Meiser, who prepared a proclamation to be read from pulpits on Easter Sunday 1933, in which he praised the new government and the future prospects for the renewal of society and the church.

A state which brings into being again government according to God's Laws should, in doing so, be assured not only of the applause but also of the glad and active co-operation of the Church. With gratitude and joy the Church takes note that the new state bans blasphemy, assails immorality, establishes discipline and order, with a strong hand, while at the same time calling upon man to fear God, espousing the sanctity of marriage and Christian training for the young, bringing into honor again the deeds of our fathers and kindling in thousands of hearts, in place of disparagement, an ardent love of *Volk* and Fatherland.^[9]

enlist its support for the Confessing Church. Klemens von Klemperer notes that in 1933 “the leadership of the Ecumenical Movement was by no means of one mind concerning the attitude to take towards the Nazi regime and its potential threat to the Churches” with many of them, like Visser 't Hooft, favoring “a policy of caution” (*German Resistance against Hitler*, 265–66.).

[7.] See Ericksen, *Complicity in the Holocaust: Churches and Universities in Nazi Germany*.

[8.] Tödt, *Authentic Faith*, 8.

[9.] Quoted in Hockenos, *Church Divided*, 17. See chap. 1 for a description of the various positions taken by church leaders. See also Schlingensiefen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 193–94.

Hitler did not merely want to rule Germany politically; rather, he wanted to control the hearts and souls of its citizens.^[10] At a very fundamental level, therefore, this was as much a religious battle as it was a political struggle. Again, according to Kershaw, Hitler wasn't interested in

power for its own sake, devoid of content or meaning. Hitler was not just a propagandist, a manipulator, a mobilizer. He was all those. But he was also an ideologue of unshakeable convictions—the most radical of the radicals as exponent of an internally coherent (however repellent to us) “world-view,” acquiring its thrust and potency from its combination of a very few basic ideas—integrated by the notion of human history as the history of racial struggle. His “world-view” gave him a rounded explanation of the ills of Germany and of the world, and how to remedy them. He held to his “world-view” unwaveringly from the early 1920s down to his death in the bunker. It amounted to a utopian vision of national redemption, not a set of middle-range policies.^[11]

To accomplish his goal, he and his regime “began the systematic *Gleichschaltung* (literally, ‘switching into the same gear’) of German society.” As Victoria Barnett describes it, “The *Gleichschaltung* of the German nation encompassed every level of society. Each citizen was affected, step by step, by a series of laws regulating everything from mandatory party membership for the practice of many professions to the requirement that civil servants replace the traditional German greeting, *Guten Tag*, with *Heil Hitler*. . . . The ultimate goal of *Gleichschaltung* was to capture the souls and minds of the German people. Hitler demanded not only obedience but a kind of faith.”^[12]

[10.] See Schlingensiepen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 115: Hitler's plans, for example, had been clearly laid out years earlier in *Mein Kampf*. The problem was that people either had not read it or did not take what it said seriously.

[11.] Kershaw, *Hitler*, 1:xxviii. Cf. Schlingensiepen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 115, where he quotes one of Hitler's judges: “We National Socialists [Nazis] and Christianity resemble each other in only one respect: we claim the whole man.” Because of this stance, the churches posed a threat.

[12.] Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 30, 32. According to Richard J. Evans, the Nazi takeover of Germany in January 1933 was a “cultural revolution, in which alien cultural influences—notably the Jews but also modernist culture more generally—were eliminated and the German spirit reborn” (*Third Reich in Power*, 16), a revolution that “envisaged the deepening and strengthening of the Nazis' conquest of political power through the conversion of the whole German people to their way of thinking.” It was, as

Gleichschaltung confronted the Protestant church with an immediate crisis. In the early 1930s a nationalist group called the German Christians (*Deutsche Christen*) had emerged within the Protestant church.^[13] The German Christians incorporated the ethnicized nationalism and anti-Semitism of the Nazi Party into their theology, and after Hitler came to power, they quickly began to push for the nazification of the Protestant church—the creation of a “Reich Church.”^[14] The Confessing Church—the church of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his Finkenwalde seminarians—arose in opposition to the German Christians. Bonhoeffer and other Confessing Christians saw the danger ahead for the church that made any compromise with Hitler and the Nazi state. They saw the German Christians’ goal of “integrat[ing] Christianity and National Socialism in a racially pure ‘people’s church’ as a direct challenge not only to the autonomy of the regional churches but to Lutheran and Reformed doctrinal principles as well.”^[15]

The Church Struggle (*Kirchenkampf*) was the battle between these two worldviews for the theological and institutional control of the German Protestant Church, yet it should be noted that the majority of Protestant bishops, pastors, and laypeople were neither Confessing Christians nor German Christians. The main characteristic of these “neutral” parties was their desire to stay out of politics, prevent a church schism, and avoid confrontations with the Nazi state. Yet the developments of 1933, particularly the outcome of the July 1933 national church elections, made this difficult. Carried by the wave of popular enthusiasm for the new Reich, the German Christians won key leadership posts in every regional church except Westphalia, and they controlled most Protestant theological faculties (and with that, the examination and ordination process).^[16] Thus the leadership of every regional church confronted a fractious and divided church; nowhere

defined by Joseph Goebbels, a “total” revolution that “encompassed every area of public life and fundamentally restructured them all. It has completely changed and reshaped people’s relationship to each other, to the state, and questions of existence.” As such, it was a “spiritual mobilization” (120–21).

[13.] For a study of this group, see Bergen, *Twisted Cross*.

[14.] The German Christians, in an April 3–4, 1933, conference in Berlin, hoped to bring the churches in line by pushing for the adoption of both the “Führer principle” and the Aryan paragraph. See Schlingensiepen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 124.

[15.] See the foreword to the German edition of this volume, 1–6. See also Schlingensiepen’s description of the first synod of the Confessing Church at Ulm in March 1934, where “the provincial and local churches of Germany which remained faithful to the confession declared themselves to be the rightful church” (*Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 161).

[16.] See Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, esp. 177.

was the Church Struggle more bitterly divisive than in the Church of the Old Prussian Union, which included Bonhoeffer's home church of Berlin.

Born out of resistance to such an encroachment into the life and theology of the church, the Church Struggle was in some respects an ecclesiastical and political struggle, but, at the same time, it was at heart a theological battle.^[17] It was not, however, a uniform movement, always speaking with a singular voice. It had many dimensions and divisions, both theologically and politically. In reality, the Church Struggle can be characterized as being multidimensional, involving the "neutrals" and the German Christians, as well as the struggle between the Confessing Church and the Nazis over state encroachment into the church's governance. However, one must also acknowledge the conflict within the Confessing Church between conservative and radical wings over the nature of the church's opposition to the German Christians and the Nazis.

The conflict within the Confessing Church was based on the differences between the radicals and the moderates in their attitudes and responses to the German Christians and to the official church leadership that sought to steer a middle course. The radicals, such as Bonhoeffer, wanted a clear confessional identity that repudiated the ideology of the German Christians. The moderates, the majority of the Lutherans, on the other hand, wanted a confessional position that did not exclude anyone. Thus while the radicals wanted a confession that clearly stated that there was no room for Nazi ideology in the church, the moderates were looking for common ground that would somehow serve to bring the "misguided" German Christians back into the fold.^[18]

Those in the Confessing Church believed that the German Christians had compromised and, in some cases, even altered the biblical message as a result of accommodating themselves to the political winds of the day. In response to the developments affecting the churches, moves were made by some church leaders to formulate confessional statements to counter what were perceived to be the false claims of the German Christians. This call came on August 2, 1933, during a meeting of the Young Reformation from Berlin pastor Martin Niemöller, when he said that now was the time for doing "away with this lack of clarity, by means of a confession of faith for [their] time."^[19] What initially emerged from this call for renewal was the

[17.] Portions of the following discussion were published in an edited form in Barker, "Bonhoeffer and the Church Struggle."

[18.] See Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 54–55.

[19.] Cited in Schlingensiepen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 134.

Pastors Emergency League. At its founding, it claimed a fourfold purpose: a commitment to Scripture and the confessions; to resist violation of these; to give financial aid to those clergy affected by the Nazi racial laws; and to reject the “Aryan paragraph” in the church by which the German Christians sought to bar “non-Aryans” from the ministry, Christian education, and theological faculties.^[20]

The Pastors' Emergency League was the precursor of the Confessing Church, which emerged from two national synods that convened church leaders from throughout Germany—Barmen in May 1934 and Dahlem in October 1934. The Barmen synod established theological clarity through the Barmen Declaration, which repudiated the heresies of the German Christians. The Dahlem synod went one step further and established institutional clarity for the more radical members of the Confessing Church (who gained the nickname “Dahlemites”), and it led directly to the establishment of the five independent Confessing seminaries, including Finkenwalde.

The institutional clarity established at Dahlem was an attempt not only to break with the German Christians and the so-called neutral church leaders who were willing to compromise with them but also to establish independent forms of governance, including the Councils of Brethren. Not surprisingly, the legitimacy of these bodies was not recognized by the official Reich Church, and in the Old Prussian Union member churches, a state minister of church affairs, Hanns Kerrl, was appointed to strengthen the hand of the official church authorities.

These developments served to limit the church's voice, but they also sowed the seeds “that would ultimately bring about the destruction, internally and

[20.] See Schlingensiepen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 137–38. Cf. *DBWE* 13, which reveals that while still in London, Bonhoeffer recognized where the battle lines were to be drawn. When many in the Confessing Church movement were willing to make compromises with the state, Bonhoeffer's position was firm, too firm for many. In a December 15, 1933, letter to Martin Niemöller, Bonhoeffer wrote: “Now is the time when we must be radical on all points, including the *Aryan paragraph*, without fear of the possible disagreeable consequences for ourselves. If we are untrue to ourselves in any way at this point, we shall *discredit* the entire struggle of last summer” (*DBWE* 13, 1/26, p. 56). A January 2, 1934, letter to Henry Louis Henriad reveals a theological basis for his position. “It is very satisfactory to me to see that the aims of the opposition become more and more radical and to the point. Müller must be done away with and with him all his bishops, and what seems most important almost of all—the new court-theologians . . . must all undergo a ‘Irrlehreverfahren,’ ‘Lehrzuchtverfahren’; for they are the real source from which the poison goes out. As long as they are allowed to speak out their heretical christianity as approved teachers of the church, we shall never get rid of the german christian ideology” (*DBWE* 13, 1/40, p. 70, in Bonhoeffer's original English).

externally, of the newly created Confessing Church.”^[21] On December 2, 1935, Kerrl issued a decree (the “Fifth Implementation Decree”), which “declared all governing and administrative institutions of the Confessing Church null and void. Specific prohibitions affected the ability to occupy pastoral positions, to examine and ordain candidates, to make pulpit proclamations, and to announce and carry out collections.”^[22]

The issue of “legality” had broader theological implications because it was based on conflicting claims of truth and untruth. In the minds of the members of the Confessing Church, they might have been declared “illegal” by the Reich Church, but they were the people speaking the truth. On the other hand, the Reich Church might have been legal, but it was untruthful in its proclamation of the gospel.^[23]

Because of these competing claims of truth, for members of the Confessing Church, the struggle was always more than a political battle. At its heart, the Church Struggle was a theological struggle with the battle lines drawn between the “German Christians,” for whom “the confession of faith in the triune God was rather glibly connected, even mixed in, with the confessional commitment to the German people and its special history, to its authoritarian form of state, its Führer, and its German race,” and the Barmen Confession and its insistence that the church “did not stand on two pillars, partially on the Word of God and partially on another ‘reality,’ but rather it stood *only* on the one rock, the Word of God.”^[24] Given the

[21.] *DB-ER*, 421. As Bethge notes, legislation passed in 1935 hastened the destruction of the Confessing Church. He notes three laws in particular: (1) in March the Prussian state government set up “finance departments” that were promoted as a means of protecting the properties and ministries, which in essence made it illegal for Confessing Church congregations to collect financial support; (2) in June a “legislative authority” gave the state more power over church law; and (3) in July the “Ministry of Church Affairs” was established; through its various laws it “led to the disintegration of the Confessing church by creating irreparable schisms within its ranks.”

[22.] See the editor’s introduction to the German edition of this volume, p. 5. In reference to the last item, in March 1935, Prussia passed the “Law regarding the Administration of Assets in the Protestant Regional Churches,” which set up financial departments “to ensure that financial resources were withheld from the Confessing Church” (*DBWE* 16, 2/16, p. 576, ed. note 1). See also the German editor’s afterword to this volume, p. 000, for additional information on the issue of illegality.

[23.] See afterword to this volume, p. 000, where Henkys defines the legitimate church as the one “that is based on word and confession, namely, the Confessing Church, not the church of the ecclesiastical government of the Reich Church, which had been corrupted by tolerance of false doctrine and the violation of law by the state itself.”

[24.] Eberhard Busch, *Barmen Theses Then and Now*, 2, 3–4. See the afterword to this volume, p. 000, for additional background.

context, what was demanded of the church was a clear confession of faith, which is what the Barmen Declaration provided.

Bonhoeffer was involved in this struggle from the beginning. Even before Hitler came to power, he, together with members of his family who were suspicious of Hitler's intentions and feared what he would bring, spoke out against the dangers of National Socialism.^[25] For Bonhoeffer it was a theological struggle, because Nazi ideology threatened the core of the church's confession.^[26] He saw the Nazi confession of "blood, race, and soil" threatening the church's very life. In his theology, Bonhoeffer was fighting for the soul of the church; it was a cause that he believed would have ramifications for the future of Christianity in Germany and Europe. And beyond the question of the church's survival was the concern for the survival of culture as well. So there was a great deal at stake.

From 1933 onward, Bonhoeffer was engaged with clarifying the developments going on within Germany, identifying the threats to the church and its witness, and drawing distinctions between the "true church" and what he perceived that the Protestant church of Germany had become: a "false church." As a result, 1933 was an extremely busy year, finding him fighting on many fronts, a pattern that set the course for the remaining twelve years of Hitler's reign and Bonhoeffer's life.^[27] Even before Bonhoeffer departed for London in September 1933, he was using his ecumenical contacts to inform those outside Germany about the developments taking place there. He had also spoken out on behalf of the Jews, continued his university teaching, worked on a new confessional statement (the Bethel Confession), and become a vocal opponent of the German Christian plans to nationalize the church and a strong proponent of the church opposition groups to this (the Young Reformers and the Pastors' Emergency League).^[28]

[25.] See *DBWE* 11, particularly Bonhoeffer's comments at the 1932 ecumenical conference in Ciernohorské Kúpele (2/14, 2/15, 2/16).

[26.] Two sermons on Old Testament texts preached in early 1933, the first coming within the first month after Hitler came to power, demonstrate the extent to which his theological convictions shaped his political positions. See *DBWE* 12, 3/5 and 3/7. In the latter sermon, Bonhoeffer insists that the conflict between Moses and Aaron played out at the foot of Mount Sinai is being repeated "in our church day after day, Sunday after Sunday. As the worldly church, which doesn't want to wait, which doesn't want to live by something unseen; as a church that makes its own gods, that wants to have a god that pleases it rather than asking whether it is itself pleasing to God" (*DBWE* 12, 3/7, p. 476). Bonhoeffer contends that this church will receive God's judgment.

[27.] See Schlingensiepen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 116.

[28.] Bonhoeffer's activities during the intense months of 1933 are documented in *DBWE* 12.

Before he left for London to serve two German-speaking congregations there, in response to Niemöller's call for a new confession, Bonhoeffer, along with Hermann Sasse and others, gathered at Bethel to work on a confessional statement that would address the new reality confronting the church. In an August 1932 letter to his grandmother written from Bethel, he defined the crisis before them: "It is becoming increasingly clear to me that what we are going to get is a big, *völkisch* national church that in its essence can no longer be reconciled with Christianity, and that we must make up our minds to take entirely new paths and follow where they lead. The issue is really Germanism or Christianity, and the sooner the conflict comes out in the open, the better. The greatest danger of all would be in trying to conceal this."^[29]

There was little doubt in Bonhoeffer's mind that the task before those who had gathered in Bethel was an urgent one. Because of the developments of the past year, which produced a new context that threatened the life of the church, there was no other alternative but to write a new confession of faith; a commitment to the Christian faith meant saying no to Hitler. In fact, the new political reality had created a *status confessionis*^[30] requiring the church to state as clearly as possible its beliefs in the face of heretical claims that would distort the church's message.^[31] That meant, ultimately,

[29.] Letter of August 20, 1933, *DBWE* 12, 1/86, 159.

[30.] In *A Time for Confessing*, Robert Bertram spells out the challenge to the church presented by Nazi Germany, creating a *status confessionis*: "It is a 'time for confessing,' the Formula of Concord calls it, whenever the church is in danger of abdicating its unique authority to an overreaching secular authority. The secular pretender may be the state or the people as a whole or the secular power of the ecclesiastical institution itself or, most likely, all of these together. Against these usurpers the church's confessors must testify, even when the state is immensely popular as under Hitler, even when the people are a defeated and voiceless nationality as the Germans were then, even when the church's own leadership sides with this yearning ethnic folk and their revolutionary government. Against these encroaching secular powers the confessing church must testify, not in order to nullify secular authority, but in order rather to restore the church to its own distinctive priorities, where the authority of Christ's gospel is supreme and where secular authority, even if that also is Christ's, is strictly subordinate" (65). According to Christine-Ruth Müller, *Bekennntnis und Bekennen*, 11, the "Jewish Question" created this situation for Bonhoeffer, and it was for that reason that he sought to clarify the theological foundation of the church's confession. Rather than being a purely political issue, the Aryan paragraph and the "Jewish question" represented a challenge to the theological heritage of the church. See Schlingensiepen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 137, where he describes Bonhoeffer's stance that "the Aryan paragraph as adopted by the church [was] blatantly false doctrine."

[31.] Of the work carried out at Bethel, Bethge says: "With theological conscientiousness, the group in Bethel tried to make its teachings relevant for the times. In an address to German pastors in Bradford, Yorkshire, Bonhoeffer described the nature of the work

drawing distinctions between what might be believed in general and what were the specific teachings, beliefs, and practices of the Christian community. This was not simply a matter of the church going its own way and not getting caught up in politics; here the political realm was threatening the very being of the church.

Bonhoeffer's move to London, rather than distancing him from the events gripping the church in Germany, gave him a perspective from abroad and an opportunity to develop relationships and speak out about what was taking place in Germany. Despite this new vantage point, his perceptions of the dangers facing his church and nation had not changed. Some examples from his correspondence illustrate the clarity of his position. In an April 7, 1934, letter to Henry Louis Henriad, general secretary of the World Alliance, he urged the ecumenical community to take a clear position vis-à-vis the Confessing Church and the Reich Church. He said, "To delay or fail to make decisions may be more sinful than to make wrong decisions out of faith and love. . . . For Germany today it is the confession, as it is the confession for the ecumenical movement today. Let us shake off our fear of this word—the cause of Christ is at stake; are we to be found sleeping?"^[32] Later that month in a letter to George Bell, his most supportive ecumenical contact, Bonhoeffer echoed the same theme: "I think the moment has come, that you should and could speak a final word to this conflict."^[33]

In a third letter written later that summer, this time to Danish bishop Ove Valdemar Ammundsen, about his participation in the Fanø ecumenical conference, Bonhoeffer was emphatic about the greater political implications of the Church Struggle: "It is precisely here, *in our attitude toward the state*, that we must speak out with absolute sincerity for the sake of Jesus Christ and of the ecumenical cause. It must be made quite clear—terrifying though it is—that we are immediately faced with the decision: National Socialist *or* Christian."^[34]

that had defined Confessing statements from trinitarian doctrine to eschatology. They had made a number of reformulations: in the doctrine of justification, to unmask Ludwig Müller's trite reduction of Christianity to trust in God and being good fellows; in the doctrine of the cross, so as to pillory the reinterpretation of the cross as a symbol of the Nazi slogan 'public interest before self-interest' by Friedrich Wieneke, the German Christian chaplain to the Prussian court; and finally, in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, from a christological standpoint, with renewed emphasis on the *filioque*, so as to guard against the dangerous emphasis that Hirsch, Althaus, and Fezer put on the revelation in the creation, and to refute its consequences in Stapel's independent notion of the law of race" (*DB-ER*, 302).

[32.] *DBWE* 13, 1/87, p. 127.

[33.] *DBWE* 13, 1/92, pp. 132–33.

[34.] *DBWE* 13, 1/134, p. 192.

Finally, in a letter to his friend Erwin Sutz, written in April 1934, he stated unequivocally, "What is going on in the church in Germany you probably know as well as I do. Nat. Socialism has brought about the end of the church in Germany and has pursued it single-mindedly."^[35] But he also realized that the struggle was not over; in fact it would only intensify: "And while I'm working with the church opposition with all my might, it's perfectly clear to me that *this* opposition is only a very temporary transitional phase on the way to an opposition of a very different kind, and that very few of those involved in this preliminary skirmish are going to be there for that second struggle. . . . The real struggle that perhaps lies ahead must be one of simply suffering through in faith."^[36]

The foundation of Bonhoeffer's theological response to the Church Struggle can be found in some of his writings before 1933. This is evident, for example, in an essay published in 1932, "Concerning the Christian Idea of God," which laid some of the theological foundation for Bonhoeffer's subsequent critique of German Christian theology.^[37] Here he drew on Luther's distinctions between true and false theology to make the distinction between a theology based on human ideas and one based on God's own revelation. In the former, Christ becomes a "teacher of mankind, the example of religious and moral life," a "symbol of God's love," a "bearer of eternal values and ideas."^[38] The problem with such an approach is that "man always will be able to learn a new idea and to fit it into his system of ideas."^[39] But this is impossible with a true theology based on God's revelation. "That is the reason why God reveals himself in history: only so is the freedom of his personality guarded. The revelation in history means revelation in hiddenness."^[40] Concluding that all human attempts to understand and know God are futile, Bonhoeffer asks, "How can I know anything at all about God?"^[41] It comes only through God's own self-revelation; "In my faith God reveals himself through Christ in me."^[42]

Before Hitler came to power, however, Bonhoeffer perceived an inherent weakness in the church, and therefore, even before the Church Struggle

[35.] *DBWE* 13, 1/93, p. 135.

[36.] *Ibid.*

[37.] *DBWE* 10, 2/16. The essay was based on a paper that Bonhoeffer wrote at Union Seminary in 1930–31; see *DBWE* 10, p. 451, ed. note 1, regarding the genesis of the published essay.

[38.] *DBWE* 10, 2/16, pp. 456, 457.

[39.] *Ibid.*, 457.

[40.] *Ibid.*

[41.] *Ibid.*, 458.

[42.] *Ibid.*, 459.

began, he called for a new Reformation. In a Reformation Sunday sermon preached at Dreifältigkeitskirche in Berlin four months before Hitler became Führer, Bonhoeffer proclaimed: "That we are in the eleventh hour of the life of our Protestant church, that we do not have much more time until it is decided whether our church is finished, or a new day is beginning for it—this should have become clear to us by now."^[43] He went on to compare the Reformation celebrations to what was going on in Germany at the time, and it becomes apparent that he viewed this as a critical time in which the word of God must be clearly spoken. While the Reformation was being celebrated with great fanfare, the church of Luther had lost sight of the principles of the Reformation and had failed to hear God's word. It was not enough for the church to barricade itself behind Luther's words, "Here I stand," and insist that it "can do no other," for the church can and should do something other, Bonhoeffer argued. "It must have resounded from pulpits thousands of times today: 'I cannot do otherwise; here I stand.' God, however, says, 'But I have this against you . . .'"^[44] While the church sings, "A mighty fortress is our God," and says, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" "God says, 'But I have this against you . . .'"^[45] While the church of the Reformation had come to pride itself on its protest against all that was wrong in the world, it had failed to hear God's clear word to it, collectively and individually. "Let us stop celebrating the Reformation that way! Let us lay the dead Luther to rest at long last, and instead listen to the gospel, reading his Bible, hearing God's own word in it. At the last judgment God is certainly going to ask us not, 'Have you celebrated Reformation Day properly?' but rather, 'Have you heard my word and kept it?'"^[46]

The true church of the Reformation is the church that hears the call of God, which was Luther's call as well, to repent. Rather than placing its trust in such outward celebrations, "Our church stands on God's Word alone, and it is that Word alone that makes those who stand facing in the right direction. The church that stands in repentance, the church that lets God be God, is the church of the apostles and of Luther."^[47]

This sermon is an early indication that Bonhoeffer was fighting for the genuine or true church in the Germany of the 1930s. Coming as it did six months after the German Christians had declared that they embodied

[43.] *DBWE* 12, 3/1, p. 439.

[44.] *Ibid.*, 441.

[45.] *Ibid.*, 440.

[46.] *Ibid.*, 442.

[47.] *Ibid.*, 444.

“the German spirit of Luther and with heroic piety,”^[48] which carried the attending implication that there was a direct line from Luther to Hitler, Bonhoeffer’s sermon was a critique of such thinking and drew a clear line between the true church of Luther and any false claims made by the German Christians. But at the same time, Bonhoeffer was not simply advocating a return to Luther; as he would do several times over the next few years, he acknowledged that there was a real difference between Luther’s time and contemporary Germany. Therefore, what was being called for was not a mere repetition of Luther’s words but a reformulation of Luther’s ideas. The “here I stand” language of Luther had become “cheap.” What was needed was something more costly; instead of saying, “As Luther says,” the word now needs to be “other than Luther: We can do something other . . .”^[49]

Bonhoeffer’s theological convictions enabled him to see the inherent weaknesses in the church; because of the changes in the society in which that church lived and bore witness, Bonhoeffer saw the impending dangers that were emerging from within and outside the church. There could be little question in Bonhoeffer’s mind that this was a battle for the heart and soul of the church; therefore, it was a *status confessionis*, a “time for confessing,” a time to renew and preserve the church. What Bonhoeffer was doing from 1933 onward was to live out that confession. For him, Finkenwalde was a way to preserve the church for the future, to implement that confession.^[50] He believed that one did that most effectively by forming disciples,

[48.] The German Christian guidelines were issued in May 1932. Quoted from Rohls, *Reformed Confessions*, 295.

[49.] Gremmels, “Rechtfertigung und Nachfolge,” 83–86. See also the editors’ introduction to *DBWE 4 (Discipleship)* by Geoffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey, who see this sermon as an expression of Bonhoeffer’s belief that the church had twisted Luther’s heritage and could no longer be trusted. By giving glowing support to the growing nationalistic sentiments in Germany, the church, under the banner of Luther and his heritage, “had turned from the light of Jesus Christ toward a new, glowing light of the nation. The church had come perilously close to transforming itself into a national church that honored the Teutonic gods of blood, soil, and conquest, all under the banner of Martin Luther in the ‘mighty fortress’ of Nazi Germany. This prompted Bonhoeffer . . . to decry Germany’s revival of triumphalist nationalism, which he viewed as part of a lethal illness and as evidence of the church’s slow death as an effective voice in German society. That sermon expresses clearly Bonhoeffer’s way of setting straight the theological record on what Luther really thought about Christian ‘works’ and the present, attractive ‘work’ of building a new earthly kingdom in tandem with the growing glorification of the Nazi nation” (*DBWE 4*:9–10).

[50.] See the essay in this volume “On the Question of Church Communion” (2/19, p. 000).

first and foremost through the formation of their faith and, second, by providing the future leaders of the church with the tools necessary to lead the church.

Because he believed that theological questions would ultimately shape the future of the church, Bonhoeffer willingly returned to Germany in the spring of 1935 after eighteen months in London to take up leadership of one of the newly formed underground seminaries of the Confessing Church, at Finkenwalde. As he revealed in a letter of September 19, 1936, to Karl Barth, the first since his return from London (in fact, the first after Barth's questioning his leaving Germany in 1933),^[51] he outlined the main concerns and needs of the time for the theological education of Confessing pastors. When the church was wrestling with political issues, with which Bonhoeffer was quite familiar, his focus was on the theological health and well-being of the church at large as well as its future leaders. The tone is evident in Bonhoeffer's recollection of one of Barth's stated concerns:

I am strongly persuaded that both with regard to what they bring with them in the way of university experience and with regard to the kind of independent work being asked of them in congregations—especially here in the east—these young theologians need a completely different kind of training, training that absolutely should include such communal seminary experiences. One simply cannot imagine how empty and indeed utterly burned out most of the brothers come to the seminary. Empty both with regard to theological knowledge and certainly with regard to familiarity with the Bible, as well as with regard to their personal lives. . . . The questions young theologians are seriously asking us today are: How can I learn to pray? How can I learn to read Scripture? If we do not help them with these questions, we are not helping them at all.^[52]

In this letter Bonhoeffer cites the nineteenth-century theologian Tholuck: "How are things with your soul?" Unless Christians could answer that question honestly and faithfully, Bonhoeffer believed, the heart and the soul of the church would be lost.

In response to this problem, Bonhoeffer designed a curriculum and structured a community life that would form the faith of the future pastors of the Confessing Church as well as build up a community of service to oth-

[51.] See *DBWE* 13, 1/16.

[52.] See letter 1/119, pp. 000–000.

ers. According to Otto Dudzus, one of Bonhoeffer's Finkenwalde students, "The training of these young theologians in Finkenwalde focused on heeding the call that would ultimately extricate them from false ties and then guide them into the community of the body of Jesus Christ, namely, the church."^[53] This is what Finkenwalde was set up to accomplish; this is what it was to become.

What Was Finkenwalde?

Although the final outcome of Hitler's madness could not yet be foreseen, the impulses that would determine that outcome were already in place. Thus the factors governing Bonhoeffer's life during this period were quite different from the those that he and his family could have imagined a few short years earlier. A rupture had taken place, one that altered the moral landscape of Germany and its citizens.

Yet for all these disruptions and difficulties, it was during this time that Bonhoeffer's life purpose was displayed, his theological insights that eventually led him to participate in the resistance were honed, and the voice that would come to inspire millions into the next century was quietly but decisively at work, not for the sake of posterity but working to preserve the church as well as the foundations of European culture and society.

Bonhoeffer returned to Germany from London in May 1935 to engage in the battle for the "true" church against the "false" claims of the Reich Church, by training future leaders of the church in a community centered on prayer and Scripture and shaped by a curriculum focused on the core of the gospel. As the various texts in this volume reveal, the issues that he had been raising and which had occupied him for some time were now refocused to lay the foundations for the renewal of the church in Germany.

Bonhoeffer's motivation for returning to Germany was revealed in a letter of September 11, 1934, to Erwin Sutz. Bonhoeffer had first met Sutz at Union Theological Seminary, and Sutz was a friend to whom he could express his most heartfelt thoughts. To him Bonhoeffer confessed:

Now I am back again in our congregation, tormenting myself with trying to decide whether to go back to Germany as director of a preachers' seminary that is soon to be opened there, stay here, or go to India. I no longer believe in the university; in fact I never really have believed in it—to your chagrin! The next generation of pastors, these

[53.] Editor's introduction to the German edition of this volume (*DBW*14:1).

days, ought to be trained entirely in church-monastic schools, where the pure doctrine, the Sermon on the Mount, and worship are taken seriously—which for all three of these things is simply not the case at the university and under the present circumstances is impossible. It is also time for a final break with our theologically grounded reserve about whatever is being done by the state—which really only comes down to fear. “Speak out for those who cannot speak”—who in the church today still remembers that this is the very least the Bible asks of us in such times as these?^[54]

Bonhoeffer's words reveal two things critical for the development of Finkenwalde. The first concerned the renewal of the church and the training of future leaders for the church. Bonhoeffer saw that the task set before him was about more than providing theological expertise; he was to be engaged in the faith formation of future church leaders, and in addition to academic theological study, this involved prayer, worship, and direct encounter with God's word.^[55] The second task involved the church's witness, which was centered on and grew out of God's word as well.

This dual purpose was expressed again during the Finkenwalde period. There are many rich texts within this volume, but some correspondence from 1936 illustrates what is shaping Bonhoeffer's thinking at the time and gets at the core of what provided the dynamic for the Finkenwalde community.

The first is a January 1936 letter to Elizabeth Zinn, which captures the heart and soul of Bonhoeffer's efforts during this pivotal time. Once again outlining the journey that had brought him to this decision, he told her: “It became clear to me that the life of a servant of Jesus Christ must belong

[54.] *DBWE* 13, 1/147, p. 217. In commenting on this letter, Dudzus points to the significance of Bonhoeffer's Finkenwalde lectures: “The Finkenwalde lectures acquired significance and an explosive nature because here something different could be taught than was the case in departments of theology at state institutions.” In order to preserve and prepare for the future of the church's witness, one must encounter both God's word and the world. Dudzus continues, “One cannot engage in pure doctrine and a pure interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount isolated from the world in which one lives and to whose history one is, after all, bound. . . . What appears to be his rather narrow theological focus during these years was in fact nothing other than a resolute concentration on the central truths of the gospel, concentration that was necessary for the urgently needed renewal of the church itself” (editor's introduction to the German edition of this volume, *DBW* 14:22–23). See also Bonhoeffer's January 1935 letter to his brother Karl-Friedrich (*DBWE* 13, 1/193), in which he expresses similar sentiments.

[55.] See the German editor's afterword to this volume, p. 000.

to the church, and step-by-step it became clearer to me how far it must go. Then came the crisis of 1933. This strengthened me in it. I also met others who shared the same goal. For me everything now depended on a renewal of the church and of the pastoral station.”^[56]

In the second example, in this case a report from the House of Brethren^[57] to friends and supporters of the seminary, Finkenwalde is defined as an alternative community that would stand as a bastion against heresy: “The *state* departments of theology are currently propagating almost exclusively the German Christian heresy or a position of indecision. The next theological generation is thus in danger of not coming into contact with any resolutely confessional theology at all. The preachers’ seminaries of the Confessing Church are currently almost the only places where the Confessing Church can with complete independence guide theologians toward a clear, confessionally measured position with regard to both doctrine and life.”^[58]

Finkenwalde was also organized according to Bonhoeffer’s vision for a Christian community. It was a concept he had been developing for several years, due in part to the visits that he had made to cloisters and religious communities in England.^[59] It was not to be a seminary in the traditional sense—although the candidates followed a rigorous course of studies, taught by Bonhoeffer himself. Indeed, it was an experiment in communal living. Because Bonhoeffer had charge of the seminary, his emphases reflect his own priorities. Therefore, the themes raised and the subjects addressed reflect Bonhoeffer’s commitments, both theologically and in terms of forming pastors to serve in the Confessing Church. According to Bonhoeffer’s own definition, Finkenwalde was never meant to be an experiment that turned its back on the world but rather was a place of preparation

[56.] 1/47, pp. 000–000.

[57.] The seminary and its curriculum were designed to provide the final preparations for those candidates seeking ordination. In general, that meant that candidates attended course sessions lasting between four and five months. However, in order to provide continuity and build a welcoming community for each new set of candidates, Bonhoeffer proposed a House of Brethren, composed of former students (see 1/24). This core group of candidates became an important aspect of life at Finkenwalde that extended well beyond the walls of the seminary. Over the course of time, members of the House of Brethren served the larger community by leading worship services and conducting Bible studies in the various parishes of the region. They were also key to the success of the evangelization efforts (see appendix 5 for an overview of their work).

[58.] 1/100, p. 000.

[59.] See *DB-ER*, 411ff., and Schlingensiepen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 175ff.

to serve the world; “the goal [was] not monastic isolation but rather the most intensive concentration for ministry to the world.”^[60]

The task of setting up the seminary was one into which Bonhoeffer poured his heart. From the beginning he worked to create a community centered on faithful discipleship to Jesus Christ. Not only did he design the curriculum, oversee the structure of daily life, and raise money to support the seminary;^[61] he also contributed many of his own personal possessions to furnish the seminary. Perhaps the most important contribution made by Bonhoeffer was the donation of his personal library.

The creation of a working library out of nothing proved more difficult. Its foundation was Bonhoeffer's fine collection of reference books, commentaries, and histories of dogma from Berlin. He also placed the Erlangen edition of Luther, which he had inherited from his great-grandfather von Hase, in the library. His generosity with his most valuable possessions for the benefit of all was a tremendous inspiration. When the police dissolved the seminary two and a half years later, Bonhoeffer's collection of books was scattered; he was never again able to reassemble them all in one place.^[62]

From the moment of its founding to its eventual closure, Finkenwalde existed under a cloud of illegality, first in the eyes of the Reich Church,^[63] but from December 2, 1935, onward, it was also illegal in terms of Prussian

[60.] 1/24, p. 000. This notion of “ministry to the world” was energetically implemented from the very outset. It included caring for the Confessing Church community in Finkenwalde, for whom worship services were set up in the seminary building itself, as well as providing regular worship services and Bible studies for the entire municipal area of Stettin and, beginning in the summer of 1936, also regular engagement in evangelistic missions in Pomerania and beyond; see *DB-ER*, 542–45. Bonhoeffer's “Report of the Pomeranian Members of the Preachers' Seminary” (1/19) provides a description of these responsibilities.

[61.] See 1/4, a poem written by Winfried Maechler, one of the Finkenwalde seminarians, appealing to local congregations for assistance. As Schlingensiepen notes, the appeals were successful, if even a bit humorous: “A telephone call came one day: ‘This is the railroad freight yard. A live pig has just arrived for Pastor Bonhoeffer’” (*Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 178).

[62.] *DB-ER*, 427–28. See the afterword to the present volume, pp. 000–000, for an overview of the effects that the various laws had on the Finkenwalde community.

[63.] Otto Dudzus, in the editors' foreword to the German edition of this volume, describes the situation in which “anything undertaken after 1934 for the sake of training theologians following the precepts articulated in the Barmen Declaration and in the synodal resolutions of Dahlem regarding the installation of an emergency church government” was illegal (*DBW*14:1).

state law. The Fifth Implementation Decree, which declared that “no powers of ecclesiastical government or administration [were] to be vested in associations or groups within the church,” placed the Confessing Church at odds with the Prussian state government.^[64] Now “not only were the filling of positions and church proclamations, and the raising of funds through collections and subscriptions, prohibited, but the decree explicitly forbade all examinations and ordinations as well.”^[65] Bonhoeffer recognized the meaning of these developments, which he expressed in a letter the following week: “Everything we do here is now illegal and contrary to the law of the state. . . . The church committees^[66] are merely a screen to mask the destruction of the church.”^[67]

Yet this did not deter the candidates or dampen their spirit; instead, it seemed to only strengthen their resolve. Shortly after their move to Finkenwalde, the September 24, 1935, “Law to Restore Order to the German Evangelical Church,” had been issued.

In response the Finkenwalde community issued a manifesto:

It was with faith and obedience alone that the church took up its prescribed battle. It took its guidance solely from the word. It was glad to give up all the worries, security, and friendship of the world for its Lord. Our path also led through tribulation. But the Lord bound us such that we did not deviate from that path. And today we want to deviate from it in exchange for the friendship of the world? We want to sell our promise in exchange for the lentil stew of a secure future?! We are robbing our church's message of credibility through our own

[64.] It should be noted that although this decree and others from the Prussian Ministry of Church Affairs declared Confessing Church activities “illegal,” this illegality was still handled primarily as an internal church matter—in fact, the Ministry of Church Affairs had been set up not only to strengthen the official Reich Church leadership but also to give the Nazi regime some distance from what it viewed as a problematic internal church situation. (See Helmreich, *German Churches under Hitler*, pp. 169–91.) Nonetheless, a great deal was left up to the discretion of local police and party leaders, and Confessing Church seminarians and pastors could be arrested and imprisoned, as the documentation in this volume attests.

[65.] *DB-ER*, 496.

[66.] These included a national Reich Church committee and regional church governing committees; they consisted of church leaders from all points of the spectrum; Minister of Church Affairs Hanns Kerrl established them as a transitional governing measure to ease Reich bishop Ludwig Müller out of office. The more radical Confessing Christians, like Bonhoeffer, refused to cooperate with them. See Helmreich, *German Churches under Hitler*, 189–94.

[67.] *DB-ER*, 497.

actions! The greatest danger threatening us, however, is that the Lord may remove his lamp stand and render our own sermons powerless in our mouths. "Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?" "If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh."

Let us not become weary!^[68]

The Locales: Zingst and Finkenwalde

In order to understand the nature of the Finkenwalde community, one needs a sense of the physical locale itself. Otto Dudzus, who was a candidate in Finkenwalde's fifth session in 1937, provides a moving description of what greeted the first candidates upon their arrival in rural Pomerania:

One could not have found a better place than Zingst on the Baltic to begin work in the newly established seminary. . . . Although it lacked all domestic comforts and all necessary accoutrements and aids, for example, a library, it was right on the beach, which offered a standing invitation to enjoy the dunes and the initially—till the end of April—ice-cold water, something the students certainly took advantage of. It was an ideal opportunity for pastoral candidates to shed all excess formality and get to know one another in a relaxed setting. And what a teacher! Except for those candidates who had taken Bonhoeffer's courses in Berlin, most had not even heard his name. And yet many were introduced here to completely new theological worlds. Study at the university had not offered many of these candidates the opportunity to become acquainted with the unique way Bonhoeffer was able to pass along his understanding of theology. . . .

Once again a stroke of luck turned up a spacious empty house in the small rural town of Finkenwalde near Stettin. Originally a manor house of the von Katte family, it later served—expanded by the addition of a gymnasium—as a private pedagogical institution. Like all private schools, however, it was dissolved at the beginning of the Third Reich. The advance party of the seminary found the house in extremely poor condition.^[69]

[68.] 1/86, pp. 000–000.

[69.] In their introduction, the German editors provide the following note (*DBW*14:7, ed. note 16): "The candidate Gerhard Vibrans provides a description in a family letter of June 24, 1935: 'Part of the manor was empty; a repugnant woman lived in the other

For the seminary itself, however, renovating the locale of their future work themselves from such primitive beginnings proved to be a plus. Letters of request were sent out in order to acquire the necessary furnishings. . . . It was here that various communities, districts, and provinces of the church, besides many, in part wealthy, individuals, began to look upon the work and fate of the Finkenwalde seminary as their own concern, a situation that certainly shaped both the history and the spirit of the seminary itself.

Finkenwalde was also a good choice with respect to its natural setting. A beech grove began just in front of the house itself, comprising several hills, all of which were covered by dense beech trees. A broad expanse stretched out on the other side with various branches of the Oder River. The seminarians took ample advantage of both possibilities by hiking and engaging in various water sports. The large Stettin lagoon was also not far away.^[70]

The Candidates

The significance of the seminary exceeded its physical location, however. It was ultimately the nature of the community formed there that was important. The central figure was Bonhoeffer himself. But the candidates also contributed to making Finkenwalde the important place it was to become.

These were seminarians who did not want to continue their education or take their ordination examinations under the auspices of theological faculties and examination committees that were controlled by the German Christians. Thus they were not accepted as candidates for the ministry by the official Reich Church consistories.^[71] Among the many tasks of the Councils of Brethren was the need to find a means of training, supporting,

part who is completely dispossessed, legally incapacitated, and who knows what else. She was engaged in all sorts of murky endeavors here and had set up a kind of brothel.”

[70.] From the editors' foreword to the German edition, *DBW* 14:6–8. See also 1/19 for a description of the early days at Zingst. In addition to describing the conditions in which they lived, we also see how the students worked together with Bonhoeffer to shape the curriculum and the nature of their course work.

[71.] According to Dudzus, when Reich bishop (and head of the German Christians) Ludwig Müller ordered the “temporary” closing of the preachers' seminaries on March 14, 1934, he did it so that “in the future, young theologians were to ‘come into contact with all classes of the population. Service in the S[turm] A[bteilung] and participation in work camps [were] to become a universally obligatory form of education for them as well.” As a result of such actions, those who because of conscience could not obey the church government placed “themselves under the spiritual guidance of the Councils of Brethren, which in their own turn provided the assurance that they would take care of the candidates' further training” (German editors' foreword, *DBW* 14:3).

and ordaining future pastors for the Confessing Church. To achieve this purpose, the Confessing Church founded five preachers' seminaries.^[72] Bonhoeffer was asked to form and direct the seminary for the church of Pomerania, in northeast Germany. Bonhoeffer's seminary was opened in the summer of 1935, with twenty-three students (many from Berlin) in the first session. A few had been Bonhoeffer's students at the university and already knew him. Others, like Eberhard Bethge, were from the rural areas; in fact, Bethge, Gerhard Vibrans, and several other seminarians were there because they had been expelled from the seminary in Wittenberg, Saxony, after they declared their allegiance to the Confessing Church.^[73] None of them really knew what to expect.

Again, Dudzus provides a moving description of the candidates and what was at stake:

Those who came to Finkenwalde as candidates had already made a far-reaching decision. Attendance at one of the preachers' seminaries of the Confessing Church meant having to do without a public ministry with its guaranteed monthly salary, its parsonage, and all its accompanying privileges for an unforeseeable period of time. This decision not only clashed with the candidate's own concern for security but often enough also encountered the incomprehension and opposition of the candidate's own family, which had certainly imagined the candidate's vocational future to be something quite different. During their assistantships, almost every candidate had experienced surveillance in worship services, Bible study classes, and confirmation instruction, as well as denunciations and police interrogations. Some had also been in prison for a longer or shorter period or had been removed by force from the work assigned them by the Council of Brethren. Their expectations upon entering the seminary were thus correspondingly high. That the candidates viewed this training institution as their own most personal concern ultimately proved to be a tremendous plus. . . .

In Finkenwalde, students became colleagues. Bonhoeffer understood not only how to engage candidates' willingness to shoulder part of the responsibility but also how to elicit such willingness

[72.] See *DB-ER*, 419–24. See also afterword to this volume, pp. 000–000.

[73.] See de Gruchy, *Daring, Trusting, Spirit*, pp. 12–13.

even if it were not initially present. Such transformations began with the smaller, daily routines in the house itself and then expanded to broader services.^[74]

Life Together

Finkenwalde was much more than a seminary in the traditional sense, with its focus on classes and lectures; it was also a community of like-minded individuals who shared common vocational goals, shaped by their decision to take the path of the Confessing Church rather than that of the Reich Church. Thus the nature of their life together must be addressed. A description of this community life has been provided by Bonhoeffer himself in his book *Life Together*.^[75] Even though it was written after the closing of Finkenwalde, it can serve both as a summary of the ideas that informed that community and as a mature expression of the Finkenwalde experiment.

“A community living together gathers for praise and thanksgiving, Scripture reading and prayer.”^[76] This was Bonhoeffer’s definition of community, and it serves as an apt description of life at Finkenwalde. At its heart, it was a community, spiritually and physically, that had its identity and unity in Christ. This basic fact, more than any other, shaped life there. Yes, it was a seminary where future pastors were being trained for service in the Confessing Church. As a seminary, it was marked by a rigorous schedule of lectures, study, and worship. Above all, however, it was a community marked by a life lived in common, where things were shared. The spirit for this communal life was set by Bonhoeffer himself, whose vision and leadership provided the structure for Finkenwalde.

A later passage from *Life Together* identifies the essence of the Finkenwalde community. In the chapter “The Day Alone,” Bonhoeffer says,

Every day brings the Christian many hours of being alone in an unchristian environment.^[77] These are times of testing. This is the proving ground of a genuine time of meditation and genuine Christian community. Has the community served to make individuals free,

[74.] From the editors’ foreword to the German edition, *DBW*14:11.

[75.] See *DBWE* 5.

[76.] *Ibid.*, 51.

[77.] Given the context, it cannot be hard to imagine that this is a specific reference to Nazi Germany.

strong, and mature, or has it made them insecure and dependent? Has it taken them by the hand for a while so that they would learn again to walk by themselves, or has it made them anxious and unsure? This is one of the toughest and most serious questions that can be put to any form of everyday Christian life in community.^[78]

Such a statement indicates the real meaning and purpose of Christian community, but for Bonhoeffer the test of true community was whether the members of the community have found a means of escaping the real world, “or whether it has led them into the real world of God from which they enter into the day’s activities strengthened and purified. Has it transported them for a few short moments into a spiritual ecstasy that vanishes when everyday life returns, or has it planted the Word of God so soberly and so deeply in their heart that it holds and strengthens them all day long, leading them to active love, to obedience, to good works?”^[79]

Taken together, these statements once again underscore that Bonhoeffer was seeking to establish not a community closed off from the world but rather one that prepared people (pastors) to live in a world hostile to the Christian faith.

Otto Dudzus, who was a member of that community, sheds important light on the nature of life in this community, which was intentional but also shaped by the spirit of God:

There were several rules in Finkenwalde to which Bonhoeffer insisted the candidates adhere. First, one was not to speak about someone else in the latter’s absence nor offer any judgments concerning that person, not even judgments cloaked in the guise of well-meaning criticism. Anything one person wanted to say to another should be said to that person directly. Bonhoeffer took this precept so seriously that he viewed its violation as grounds for an apology and possibly even personal confession. Second, during the session every member of the community was to take at least one long walk with every other member. Whenever time permitted, Bonhoeffer himself was particularly fond of taking advantage of this wonderful opportunity. Third, Sundays were to be spent together, in the morning naturally in the worship service, then in the afternoon with communal walks or social games in the garden and house or, for the sake of addressing potential gaps in

[78.] *DBWE* 5:92–93.

[79.] *Ibid.*, 93.

one's literary education, with readings from—to take one example—Annette von Droste-Hülshoff's *Judenbuche* (The Jewish beech tree) or from the novels of Gottfried Keller and Adalbert Stifter.

What was the secret of this Finkenwalde community that developed so effortlessly and, as it were, on its own initiative? Certainly one factor was Bonhoeffer's own fascinating personality, his openness to every individual and his sense of play and for good jokes. . . . The most decisive factor affecting communal life in Finkenwalde, however, was the dominance of the gospel in everything that took place there: in teaching, in daily activities, in the morning and evening devotionals with long readings from both the Old and the New Testaments, praying the psalms, and hymns—all of which the candidates initially found quite alien before acknowledging and appreciating it as the appropriate form for a theological community. It was especially in the seminar on homiletics that the gospel provided the vital central focus. Nothing seemed stale; the candidates seemed to be hearing everything anew, as if for the first time. Perhaps the most remarkable discovery was the realization that no one had previously understood the true nature of prayer, which the candidates now saw was anything but a wish list addressed to God. Bonhoeffer was able to teach the candidates how to pray, through his own manner of listening to God's assurances and promises and in how in these assurances he could perceive the real needs and real concerns of the individual and the community, and then articulate all this as a prayer before God. This dominance of the gospel also shaped the way in which members reacted to and dealt with difficult situations in daily life with one another.^[80]

The Curriculum^[81]

The centerpiece of Bonhoeffer's syllabus at Finkenwalde had its roots and foundation planted long before the underground seminary came into existence. From the very beginning of the Church Struggle, if not before, Bonhoeffer was consistent in both his perspective and his message: the church is shaped by and proclaims the gospel and the gospel alone. If the church

[80.] From the editors' introduction to the German edition of this volume; *DBW* 14:17–18.

[81.] See *DB-ER*, 441–49, for a detailed description of the curriculum. See also the afterword to this volume, pp. 000–000.

and its message consist of anything else, it then ceases to be the church but instead is worshipping a God of its own choosing. Bonhoeffer's topics are indicative of his concerns at the time. Ranging from dogmatics and biblical interpretation to pastoral care, the writings in part 2 of this volume reflect the curriculum that Bonhoeffer developed in an effort to focus on the core of the church's faith and witness.

The most recognizable text from the Finkenwalde period is Bonhoeffer's enduring book *Discipleship*. The material that now makes up this book had its origins in the classroom at Finkenwalde.^[82] Lectures covering the themes of *Discipleship* began in the first session and continued throughout the life of the seminary.^[83]

Yet there was more to Finkenwalde than the lectures on discipleship. The curriculum covered a wide range of topics, but all of them were focused with an eye toward the ministry of the church. Because Bonhoeffer was both aware of and prepared for a different world in which the church must live, he was intent on bearing witness to the truth of the gospel. He provided his students with theological insights that got at the heart of the Church Struggle. By focusing on both biblical texts and themes and on the confessional teachings of the church, he was providing the foundation for the future ministry needs of the church.

This was theology for the church. The courses were preparing leaders for positions in the church. Even as the lectures move from historical, theological, and doctrinal topics to more contemporary and practical matters, in each case Bonhoeffer displays a clear theological point of view reflecting the church's long history.

At the same time, because Bonhoeffer had envisioned the true church to be an alternative community that could counter the false claims of a national church infused with Nazi ideology, the courses at Finkenwalde were designed to provide students with practical tools for parish ministry.^[84] As such, his course materials were filled with insights and guidelines for day-to-day ministry. His students were taught everything from preparing

[82.] Bonhoeffer regularly lectured on the New Testament throughout the Finkenwalde period. These lectures (2/8, 2/15, 2/22, and 2/28) were unified by an "underlying theme of . . . ecclesiology and Christology from the perspective of Christian actions, that is, ethics" (from the editors' foreword to the German edition of this volume; *DBW*14:27).

[83.] See in this volume esp. appendix 3, which identifies the lectures that subsequently were incorporated into *Discipleship*.

[84.] As Henkys notes in the afterword to this volume (pp. 000–000), all lectures were oriented toward practical theology.

confirmation instruction lessons^[85] (which included a lengthy discussion on the psychological development of children) to visiting parishioners. For example, with regard to visiting the sick, he provided his students with specific guidelines, telling them that visitations among the sick should be conducted regularly and that announced visits are better than surprise visits, so that parishioners have an opportunity to prepare for the visit.^[86]

The centerpiece, however, remained the proclamation of the gospel, so in both lectures on homiletics and his own sermon outlines, Bonhoeffer emphasized the presence of Christ, a recurring theme in his theology from *Sanctorum Communio* onward. Proper preparation for preaching involved being theologically informed; therefore, Bonhoeffer gave considerable time to preparing his students for this important task.^[87]

Throughout, the Church Struggle was never far away, both engendering the Finkenwalde community and intruding into Bonhoeffer's course materials. This is demonstrated in a number of lectures. In his lectures on "Church Communion," for example, presented in April 1936 and later published in the journal *Evangelische Theologie* in June 1936,^[88] he argued that the Confessing Church should take the claims of the Barmen and Dahlem synods seriously. After outlining how the church had been defined in the early church and Reformation periods, he moved into discussion of the question about the "true church," which in turn was used to explicate the meaning of the church's actions at Barmen and Dahlem. Bonhoeffer writes:

The Confessing Synod in Barmen rejected the key points of the doctrine of the German Christians as false teaching. This rejection means that this false teaching has no place in the church of Jesus Christ. The Confessing Synod in Dahlem assumed responsibility by declaring that

[85.] See 2/11. See also the afterword, pp. 000–000, where Henkys notes that Bonhoeffer gave more attention to catechesis than any of the other Confessing Church seminaries.

[86.] See 2/12, p. 000. In this same lecture, Bonhoeffer addresses the question of "the indifferent," those who for whatever reason no longer have room for God in their lives (p. 000); similar themes emerged later in *Letters and Papers from Prison* (DBWE 8), in the discussion of the "world come of age" and the "nonreligious interpretation" of Christianity. See the introduction to DBWE 8, esp. 23–26. See also the afterword to this volume, pp. 000–000, for a description of Bonhoeffer's understanding of and approach to questions of pastoral care.

[87.] For example, lectures on homiletics, which were a prime example of the pastoral emphasis (see the afterword to this volume, p. 000) were offered in all five sessions. See 2/10.

[88.] 2/19.

through word and deed the Reich Church government [Reichskirchenregierung] has separated itself from the Christian church. Rather than excluding someone from the church, this synod instead merely confirmed an action that had already taken place. At the same time, it formed its own church administration and made the claim that it represented the true church of Jesus Christ in Germany.^[89]

With this as background, Bonhoeffer was attempting to define the true church in his time. If the above-stated conclusions were true, could the German Christians be considered a part of the church? Or had the Reich Church cut itself off from the true church? Such questions indicate that “a definitive boundary has been recognized and confirmed between the Reich Church government and the true church of Christ. The Reich Church government is heretical.”^[90]

Similarly, in his August 1935 lecture “Contemporizing New Testament Texts,” he made the point that when interpretation and substance are confused, “the danger is very real.”^[91] Nevertheless, even if the church’s message is “quite out of sync with the times,” if its message is substantive biblically, it will proclaim the truth.^[92] For that reason, the German Christians with their Germanized theology threatened to distort the truth of the gospel message.^[93] In words clearly meant to counter German Christian claims, Bonhoeffer writes, “The New Testament is the *witness* of the promise of the Old Testament as fulfilled in Christ. It is not a book containing eternal truths, teachings, norms, or myths, but the sole *witness* of the God-human Jesus Christ. As a whole and in all its parts, it is nothing other than this witness of Christ, Christ’s life, death, and resurrection.”^[94]

Consider also Bonhoeffer’s 1935 lecture “The Visible Church in the New Testament.”^[95] Here he wrestled with the question of the church’s place in

[89.] Ibid., p. 000.

[90.] Ibid., p. 000.

[91.] 2/7, p. 000.

[92.] Ibid., p. 000.

[93.] This point emphasizes Bonhoeffer’s position that this was a *status confessionis*, therefore making it important to distinguish between true and false belief. Even though the Confessing Church was illegal in the eyes of the state, it spoke the truth in the eyes of God.

[94.] 2/7, p. 000.

[95.] 2/8. See also the afterword to this volume, p. 000, where Henkys stresses the importance of these New Testament lectures: “The most characteristic feature of Bonhoeffer’s teaching in Finkenwalde is his exegesis of the New Testament in session after session.”

the world and the origin of its legitimacy. He began: "One can formulate the present situation of church and theology with the following question: Does the church of God's word have a place in the world, and if so, what is the nature of that space? This question is basically the same one that is at issue in the entire theological dispute with the state."^[96] Bonhoeffer observed that pastors of the Confessing Church saw the battle more clearly than university professors of theology: "The Church Struggle was borne by the pastors and church-communities, not by university theology. The reason: the pastors and church-communities, but not the faculties of theology, were aware of the question of the place of the church. The theology and question of the church develops from within the church's own empirical experiences and encounters. It receives blows and realizes: the body of the church must take this or that particular path."^[97] Here Bonhoeffer is clear about what the church is and the source of its authority. It is a community that comes from God alone. Therefore, it does not receive its authority or legitimacy from worldly authorities but only from God; it owes its obedience to God alone. Both the constituency of the church and its organization are not arbitrary; they are determined by none other than God.

The organization of the body is established with the body itself and indeed is established by God. It is not some arbitrary church constitution, nor some willful search for an appropriate form for this particular content; instead, the form is immediately posited with that content. Indeed, such distinction between content and form is basically impossible precisely *because it is a whole that has been posited by God*. It is equally impossible to differentiate between essence and appearance; this particular appearance is the essence, just as the incarnation of Jesus Christ is not the appearance of his divine essence but rather is itself even God. Hence this whole, structured, visible body is the present Christ. Wherever one differentiates between this structuring and the body itself, one surrenders faith in Christ, the one who became flesh."^[98]

When it came to the more theologically oriented lectures, the Lutheran confessions took center stage after the summer of 1935. Bonhoeffer presented a series of lectures on the Smalcald Articles, the Augsburg Confession and its Apology, and finally, the Formula of Concord, for which he had

[96.] 2/8, p. 000.

[97.] Ibid., p. 000.

[98.] 2/8.6, pp. 000–000.

developed a particular affinity.^[99] For good reason! The Formula of Concord was written during a time of conflict and therefore sought consensus or “concord,” so it spoke directly to Bonhoeffer’s struggle in the 1930s to both define and defend the church. The Formula of Concord clearly stated that the true church is based on the gospel and called into question any theology based on “the gospel and . . .” Whenever that happens, the result is a different gospel, a different Christ, a different church.^[100]

The House of Brethren and Evangelization

That Finkenwalde was never intended to be a community closed off from the world was demonstrated by the ministry that its students carried out on behalf of the congregations and communities in that region. Central to this ministry was the House of Brethren, formed after the first session to provide continuity within the community at Finkenwalde and to serve the church at large.^[101] So it was that during the first session, with Bonhoeffer’s urging, six candidates^[102] made themselves available for this service.

In the earliest sessions, candidates helped strengthen the Confessing Church community in and around Finkenwalde by making regular visits to local parishes. Regular course work on Friday afternoons was cancelled so that this work could be done. These visits were opportunities for the candidates to offer Bible studies, bring reports, and hold discussions on the current church situation. “During such visits, candidates also gathered additional names, and in this way not only did the number of those attend-

[99.] See 2/1 and 2/2. Bethge, who attended these lectures, describes how their content reveals Bonhoeffer’s intent. He says, “Each dogmatic article was removed from its context of past controversies and became a contemporary existential argument against the German Christian solutions of ecclesiological problems. . . . Thus during the 1935 summer term Bonhoeffer began by considering a few of the general problems that were central to the controversy of that time, going on to demonstrate that the decisions against the German Christians and their neutral henchmen were grounded in the confessional writings” (*DB-ER*, 444).

[100.] This emphasis is similar to the themes of responsibility and the “church for others” that begin to appear in Bonhoeffer’s *Ethics*. The goal, in both cases, was to create and promote communities of resistance against the distortion and abuse of the gospel and values of civil society.

[101.] See the description of the House of Brethren in the application submitted to the Council of the Evangelical Church of the Old Prussian Union (1/24) and a letter (1/100) to friends and supporters of the seminary, which describes the work the community of Finkenwalde had been doing in the region.

[102.] Eberhard Bethge, Joachim Kanitz, Horsts Lekszas, Winfried Maechler, Fritz Onnasch, and Albrecht Schönherr. For a complete list of candidates, see appendix 2.

ing Sunday services grow, but a regular and well-attended children's worship service also emerged."^[103]

The work of the candidates expanded when they began making evangelization missions in the region.^[104] According to Dudzus, "the specific nature of the Finkenwalde evangelization mission was to concentrate on making the gospel itself known in an even more concentrated form than was customary or even possible in regular Sunday worship and without cloyingly currying the favor of the zeitgeist and its alleged demands. Both the form and the content of this mission served that end."^[105] The evangelization missions were organized and carried out in the following manner:

Groups of four spent a week in the same congregation. In worship services on four evenings during that week, each had ten minutes to preach on a certain scriptural passage, and, through careful coordination, the whole did indeed end up constituting a unity. The point, after all, was to win over those who had been alienated and strengthen those who had become uncertain, and to this end appropriate hymn verses were sung between the sermons, as well as a hymn and short prayer at the beginning of the service and, at the end, an intercession addressing misfortunes of the individual and of the church itself, and finally a congregational recitation of the Lord's Prayer. This particular form received widespread approval, and everyone was quite pleased with the visible and audible accord and community.^[106]

The House of Brethren was also instrumental in two other aspects of Finkenwalde life. To maintain a sense of community that went beyond each session, it had the task of sending out monthly circular newsletters to keep the alumni apprised of the work going on at Finkenwalde, update them on important developments in the Church Struggle, and share news of fellow members, even after the onset of the war when many of them were called up for military service.^[107] As another means to develop and maintain community, a retreat was held at the conclusion of each session, to which former candidates would be invited to return. This time was used to share experiences, communicate developments or changes, and offer mutual support to

[103.] From the editors' introduction to the German volume; *DBW*14:13.

[104.] See the overview in appendix 5.

[105.] From the editors' introduction to the German volume; *DBW*14:14.

[106.] *Ibid.*

[107.] See, for example, *DBWE* 16, 1/47.

one another. These were also occasions to again listen to and learn from Bonhoeffer himself.^[108]

Finkenwalde: A Detour in Bonhoeffer's Theology?

Without the proper context, it would be easy to draw the conclusion that Finkenwalde represented Bonhoeffer turning his back on the world and embracing a form of pietistic sectarianism instead. But, in fact, the opposite was true; it was an act of both preservation and preparation. Finkenwalde was envisioned as an alternative community prepared to withstand the temptations of Nazi ideology. It was a deliberate act to preserve the church and its proclamation. Because the Reich Church had falsified the gospel and given itself over to other powers, it was necessary to develop an alternative church for the future. So the Finkenwalde period was not a turning away from the world but rather an effort to prepare the church for the world.

The idea that Finkenwalde was a detour in Bonhoeffer's overall theological journey resulted in part from Karl Barth's evaluation of what Bonhoeffer was doing there. According to notes made by Barth's assistant, Charlotte von Kirschbaum, in her calendar following a visit by Wilhelm Rott on August 21, 1935, Barth viewed Finkenwalde cautiously: "Afternoon Mr. Wilhelm *Rott* here—former student—, spoke about the reform efforts being undertaken at the preacher's seminary Finkenwalde under Bonhoeffer with monastic tendencies. Karl *warns*. It seems to be more an effort to flee."^[109] But when viewed in the larger context of what was taking place in both the church and the world, it can be argued that this was not a detour but rather a necessary preparation for the church's credible witness in a world where its very being and message were either compromised or threatened. In light of the larger controversy taking place with the German Christians, Bonhoeffer's intent was to build a strong foundation for the church's witness.

[108.] From the editors' foreword to the German edition of this volume, *DBW* 14:2: "At the retreat of the first session in April 1936, Bonhoeffer conducted a Bible study 'The Reconstruction of Jerusalem according to Ezra and Nehemiah' (3/13), delivered what later became the famous lecture 'On Church Communion' (2/19), provided sermon drafts on Isaiah 53 (2/3.6), Acts 1:1–11 (2/17.1), and Exod. 20:2–3 (2/17.2), spoke on justification and sanctification in the New Testament, and discussed the guide to daily meditation. The offerings at the retreats of later courses were similarly opulent." Cf. appendix 4 for a record of the retreats.

[109.] See 1/124, p. 000, ed. note 3.

This fits with Bethge's assessment. Responding to those who interpreted *Discipleship* as a "detour," he says: "It would be a mistake to interpret this as Bonhoeffer's attempt to escape from the world. The ghetto of *Discipleship* is not the peaceful backwater of the pietists, nor is it the otherworldliness of the visionaries, neither of whom are particularly loyal to the world. *Discipleship* is a call to battle, it is concentration and hence restriction, so that the entire earth may be reconquered by the infinite message."^[110] Therefore, rather than finding a break in Bonhoeffer's theological development, *Discipleship* "showed an intrinsic consistency and continuity."^[111] While Bethge is speaking of *Discipleship* directly, this same judgment can be applied to the whole of the Finkenwalde period. In fact, what we gain from the documents included in this volume is a fuller presentation of the ideas that form the center of *Discipleship*.

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. Bonhoeffer wanted to give the church a confident voice with which to confront the world. What better place to begin that task than by training its future leaders to listen to the word of God?

After the seminary was closed by the Gestapo in the fall of 1937, the work of Finkenwalde continued, albeit in a different form. In a sense, Bonhoeffer and his students went further underground, dividing up and finding shelter in the various churches and communities open to their work. They created "collective pastorates," where the students lived together "almost as they had lived in Finkenwalde, only in smaller numbers and under more primitive conditions," and served as "apprentice vicars." Through this system, they built a network of supportive congregations; Bonhoeffer worked through them to continue his work of training the future pastors of the Confessing Church. This lasted until March 1940, when the Gestapo closed the final collective pastorate in Sigurdshof as well.^[112]

In June 1939, in the midst of this final period of underground seminary education, Bonhoeffer left for the United States, in part because of the clearly impending war and his desire to avoid military service. However, after only a brief stay in New York, he decided to return to Germany

[110.] *DB-ER*, 459.

[111.] *Ibid.*, 460.

[112.] See *DB-ER*, 589. This period is covered in *DBWE* 15.

both because of his concern for the future, in which he might have a role, and because he felt that he had abandoned his seminarians.^[113] Prior to his return, he made the following entry in his diary for June 28, 1939: "I cannot think that it is God's will that if war comes I should remain here without a particular assignment. I must leave at the first possible date."^[114] Shortly before the fateful decision to return to Germany, Bonhoeffer wrote in his diary of "unceasingly" thinking "of the brothers over there and their work. . . . It would have almost seemed to me to be disloyalty if I am not with all my thoughts over there."^[115] His words indicate that for Bonhoeffer, Finkenwalde was not a detour from his stated course but rather a critical step that shaped that course, including his ultimate return to Germany and involvement in the resistance.

Additional evidence for this can be found in his *Ethics*, written after his return to Germany and during his involvement in the resistance. Here we find the same themes that were important during the Finkenwalde period being echoed again. He says, "Christ draws the boundaries of who and what belongs to him more generously than his disciples wish to do and actually do themselves."^[116] He continues:

We are talking about the time when, under the pressure of anti-Christian powers, small confessing congregations gathered and had to seek a clear decision for or against Christ through strict discipline of doctrine and life. In their struggle these confessing congregations were forced to recognize that the very neutrality of many Christians was the gravest danger that would lead to the disintegration and dissolution of the church, indeed, that it was essentially hostility toward Christ. When the exclusive demand for an unequivocal confession of Christ caused the band of confessing Christians to become smaller and smaller, then the saying "whoever is not for me is against me," became a concrete experience for the Christian community. Thus it gained, precisely through this concentration on what is essential, an inner freedom and openness that protected it from all anxious efforts to erect boundaries.^[117]

[113.] See *DBWE* 15, esp. 1/128, p. 209.

[114.] *DBWE* 15, 1/137, p. 233; see also *DB-ER*, 557–60.

[115.] *DBWE* 15, 1/137, p. 225.

[116.] *DBWE* 6:342.

[117.] *Ibid.*, 343.

Conclusion

At heart, Finkenwalde was Bonhoeffer's attempt to preserve and renew the church and its witness in a world that had grown hostile to the gospel. More than a concern with politics, within the church or between the church and the state, Bonhoeffer's concern (and contribution) was theological at heart. And far from ending when Finkenwalde was closed by the Gestapo, it continued until the end of his life (and beyond, since the ideas at the heart of *Letters and Papers from Prison*^[118] have been and remain a source of inspiration for church renewal even in the twenty-first century).

Bonhoeffer's stated concerns for Finkenwalde at the outset were for the future, and those concerns did not disappear with its closing.^[119] Some of his final actions prior to his arrest in April 1943, actions that were central to his role in the resistance, involved laying plans for the future of Germany after Hitler. As his May 1942 meeting with George Bell at Sigtuna, Sweden, indicates, Bonhoeffer was concerned with gaining the support of leaders of other nations to stand with and behind those who got rid of Hitler. Part of the plan, which did not stop with the overthrow of Hitler and the Nazis, was rebuilding Germany after the war.^[120]

Bonhoeffer's role in this opposition was both practical (meeting with various individuals and groups) and visionary, through his contributions on behalf of the Confessing Church. In his "Draft Proposal for a Reorganization of the Church after the 'End of the Church Struggle'"^[121] for example, a document prepared in 1942 in anticipation of the overthrow

[118.] Published as *DBWE* 8. Some of the ideas and language we have come to associate with this work, language such as "world come of age," began to appear during the Finkenwalde period. For example, in 1/127 of this volume, the annual report for the year ending 1936, Bonhoeffer writes, "We have still not come of age [unmündig] in our knowledge of Holy Scripture." Language about the cross and the suffering God can be found in his sermon lectures; see, for example, 2/3.7: "Here is the only place where God can be found in this glory-addicted world" (p. 000) and 2/3.8: "God himself grants the right. Not remaining at a distance but rather such that even he suffers. The suffering God understands us completely. That one is called Jesus Christ; this suffering God became a human being, our priest. We have God the way we wanted" (p. 000).

[119.] See his July 10, 1936, letter to Helmut Goes (1/93), in which he once again comments that he finds the work at the seminary "extremely gratifying," particularly because it contributes to "work on the future."

[120.] See Dramm, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Resistance*, 180: The resistance's goal was to "eliminate Hitler and set up a new government, devoid of National Socialist ideas, which would be prepared for negotiations, the withdrawal of troops, and indemnification."

[121.] See *DBWE* 16, 2/16.

of Hitler, Bonhoeffer made the following points, which laid the foundation for what the church should be and look like. Bonhoeffer began: "The Church Struggle arose when the National Socialist state attempted to bring the Protestant church into line. The Church Struggle was therefore not fundamentally directed against National Socialism but against every encroachment of the state into the life of the church. It will last until these encroachments completely cease."^[122] Because the Confessing Church had remained faithful to the historical confessions of the church (as opposed to the "official German Church," which was "anticonfessional" in its actions), it was necessarily the foundation of any postwar church: "A solution that is intended truly to place the relationship of church and state on new ground must have recourse to the young generation of pastors and laypersons who were tested in the Church Struggle."^[123] All this is so because the church's ultimate authority comes from Christ. Therefore, only the church "guided by the church confessions" shall be empowered to rebuild.

In some of the most prescient words in "Outline for a Book," written in August 1944 after the failed assassination attempt against Hitler, Bonhoeffer for the final time sketched the outlines for his vision for the future. While he noted the failings of the Confessing Church ("Jesus' disappears from view"; "Church defending itself. No risk taking for others"), he did not turn his back on the church but rather sought its redemption, and the starting place was its own confession. And his hope: to "be of some service for the future of the church."^[124]

As we conclude, it is important to return once again to the question of truth and untruth and the issue of legitimacy. Bonhoeffer was convinced, and argued accordingly, that the truth was found in Scripture and that the Confessing Church, by proclaiming that truth, was the legitimate church, even if it had been determined to be illegal. In his notes for his statement "From Barmen to Oeynhausen," he spelled out the measurement of truth, saying, "German Christians *want to do with the church what they think is best*, conforming to the times, but the church *does not belong to us*—it is bound—and so this *undermines* the church. That is the point behind thwarting *false teaching*—truth is not simply 'teaching,' but rather that we remain: *the church of God!*"^[125] Contrary to the pressures of the day, Bonhoeffer concluded

[122.] *DBWE* 16, 2/16, p. 574.

[123.] *Ibid.*, p. 577.

[124.] *DBWE* 8, 4/187, pp. 500 and 504.

[125.] 2/14, p. 000.

that “legitimacy does not depend on state recognition” but rests solely on proclaiming the truth found in scripture alone.^[126]

This was the position Bonhoeffer had held from the beginning, and therefore, it represents how his faith set the course that he pursued at Finkenwalde. In an April 1936 letter to his brother-in-law Rüdiger Schleicher, Bonhoeffer made a statement that may well serve as a summary of the Church Struggle as he perceived it. As if confessing his faith, he says:

Now, I know about the God for whom I am searching either out of my own experiences and understanding, from my own interpretation of history or nature, that is, from within myself—or I know about that God on the basis of his revelation of his own word. Either I determine the place where I want to find God, or I let him determine the place where he wants to be found. If it is I who says where God is to be found, then I will always find a God there who in some manner corresponds to me, is pleasing to me, who is commensurate with my own nature. But if it is God who says where he is to be found, then it will probably be a place that is not at all commensurate with my own nature and that does not please me at all. This place, however, is the cross of Jesus. And those who want to find God there must live beneath that cross just as the Sermon on the Mount demands. Doing so, however, is wholly incommensurate with our nature, indeed, is wholly contrary to it. Precisely this, however, is the message of the Bible, not only in the New but also in the Old Testament (Isa. 53!). In any event, both Jesus and Paul intended it thus: the cross of Jesus fulfills Scripture, that is, the Old Testament. Hence the entire Bible claims to be this word in which God wants us to find him. It is not at all a place that we find pleasant or that might be clear a priori, but a place alien to us in every way, a place utterly repugnant to us. But that is the very place where God chose to encounter us.^[127]

Organization of This Volume

Aside from *Discipleship* and *Life Together*, both of which have their origin in this period,^[128] his time at Finkenwalde is a relatively unknown chapter in

[126.] *Ibid.*, p. 000.

[127.] 1/71, pp. 000–000.

[128.] As Dudzus points out in the editors' introduction to the German edition of this volume, “the most important event right at the beginning of the first session was Bonhoeffer's lecture on discipleship. The Sermon on the Mount, which had already become

Bonhoeffer's life. We are fortunate, therefore, to have the documents from this volume, which fill in much of the context that produced two of Bonhoeffer's most famous works. But also the material presented here, much of which is published in English for the first time, provides us with important information that links Bonhoeffer's early academic work with his resistance activity.^[129]

Given the social and political developments of the day and Bonhoeffer's response to them, these documents deserve a closer examination. The development of Bonhoeffer's thought during the Finkenwalde period was a crucial step toward his move into the resistance. Thus for both the historical dimension as well as Bonhoeffer's own theological development, the material in this volume is worthy of further study.

Like the other *DBWE* volumes containing documentation of Bonhoeffer's life and work, this volume is divided into three separate sections, each organized chronologically to correspond with the five sessions of Finkenwalde, from April 1935 to September 1937. Part 1 contains correspondence and other communications with Bonhoeffer, including material from other members of the Finkenwalde community, leading ecumenical figures, leaders of the Confessing Church, and officials of the Reich Church and the German government. These documents link Finkenwalde to the larger world, including the Confessing Church communities in the region surrounding Finkenwalde.^[130] Bonhoeffer's letters to family and friends also provide us with a view of his ongoing work in the Confessing Church, which informed life at Finkenwalde; the correspondence also sheds light on his relationships during this period with ecumenical figures such as George Bell, Leonard Hodgson, Ove Valdemar Ammundsen, and Erling Eidem.

Included among the other documents in the section are official correspondence with the Council of Brethren, as well as governmental and church documents, such as the statement rescinding Bonhoeffer's teaching

the most important object of Bonhoeffer's own reflection and proclamation during his 1933–35 London pastorate, now demonstrated its inherent power in the Germany of 1935 under the National Socialist regime, with its dominion over bodies and souls and with its simultaneous imperialist expansion of power on land, on water, and in the air. The candidates sensed from the first moment that the issue here involved the very foundations of theology, of Christian life, and of the church's own self-understanding" (*DBW* 14:24).

[129.] See the afterword to this volume, pp. 000–000 and 000–000.

[130.] See the afterword, pp. 000–000, for a detailed description.

credentials.^[131] Other documents, for example, the minutes of the Ecumenical Advisory Council,^[132] show Bonhoeffer's engagement with the ecumenical movement and confirm his position as a staunch supporter of the Confessing Church as the legitimate church in Germany. All of these documents allow us to see the changed circumstances and potential dangers that lie ahead.

This volume also contains material discovered since the publication of the original German edition. This includes correspondence with Heinrich Lebrecht, a "non-Aryan" pastor who was seeking Bonhoeffer's assistance in relocating to England, as well as nine letters that Bonhoeffer sent to Ernst Cromwell and his parents during his first year at Finkenwalde. Cromwell had been confirmed by Bonhoeffer in 1935 while Bonhoeffer was serving in London.^[133]

Part 2, which constitutes the bulk of the volume, is comprised of Bonhoeffer's lectures and materials prepared for his courses at Finkenwalde (in most cases these have been derived from notes taken by the Finkenwalde seminarians), additional lectures he was asked to deliver as a representative of the Confessing Church, and some additional academic presentations.^[134] Since Bonhoeffer himself determined the content of these lectures, they reflect his theological concerns and commitments; as such, they provide us with clear examples of his contributions to the Church Struggle.^[135]

One such example was his presentation on behalf of the Confessing Church for the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Delivered to an overflowing crowd in Berlin on August 5, 1936, Bonhoeffer addressed the subject "The Inner Life of the German Evangelical Church."^[136] Historically, he asserted, when Christians were confronted with persecutions and possible martyrdom, they turned to singing as a means of confessing their life. Singing was a means of expressing a childlike faith. Calling his audience to a renewal of faith, he said the time had come to return once again to such a faith: "The forces threatening the church are enormous. Here we must learn again: It

[131.] 1/37.

[132.] 1/77.

[133.] See 1/4a, ed. note 1.

[134.] To distinguish between *Vorlesungen*, lectures or lecture courses usually given in an institutionalized academic setting, and *Vorträge*, lectures in nonacademic settings and rarely part of an ongoing "course" in the sense above, we have translated *Vorlesungen* as "academic lectures" and *Vorträge* as "other lectures" in the section titles.

[135.] See the afterword, pp. 000–000.

[136.] 2/21.

is prayer that accomplishes things, including the prayer of children. That is why the Confessing Church has learned to pray again.”^[137]

Part 3 is a collection of sermons and Bible studies prepared for a variety of settings. Most significant among these is the funeral sermon he delivered for his grandmother, Julie Bonhoeffer, in January 1936.^[138] Based on Psalm 90, it provides testimony to the depth of a life lived in faith, which, even at its darkest moments, is one marked by hope because of the presence of God. Another is the “Guide to Spiritual Meditation,”^[139] written with Eberhard Bethge and included in the eighth Finkenwalde circular letter of May 22, 1936. Along with *Life Together*, this guide outlines the practice of meditation that was so central to Bonhoeffer’s vision for life at Finkenwalde. But more importantly, it lays out the practice of approaching and reading the Bible as a source of faith. The discipline here is one that not only draws readers into the word of God but also connects them to the community of faith and to the world.

The material in this volume is significant in that it reveals how Bonhoeffer went about preparing leaders for the church. At a deeply troubling time, when the future of the church was at stake, he turned to the basics of faith. He believed that if the church was going to be a church of discipleship rather than one led astray and following a false messiah, it needed to be guided by the basics, and that is what we see Bonhoeffer doing here. If the church was going to remain true to its calling, it needed leaders who both knew and were committed to the Christian tradition. Bonhoeffer drew heavily on the classic Protestant understanding of the church and its ministry to provide a foundation for his students, the future leaders of the church in Germany. Indeed, by turning to the riches of the Protestant Christian tradition, he was preparing future pastors for ministry in a new world.

Issues of Translation and Style

The true significance of this volume is to be found in the material that is appearing in English for the first time, including the many contributions that Bonhoeffer made to the Church Struggle through the lectures and course materials in part 2. These documents, constructed primarily from student notes, contribute to our understanding of this period and its significance in the Bonhoeffer corpus. These student notes, for example, allow a

[137.] 2/21, p. 000.

[138.] 3/11.

[139.] 3/14.

view into the thought that becomes *Discipleship*, as it unfolds from session to session.^[140] This, in turn, enables us to see the foundation being laid for the works that follow. Their appearance in English, therefore, will benefit all who seek to understand the core of Bonhoeffer's theology at the time.

It should be noted that if it were not for these students, we would have no record of what Bonhoeffer said in these lectures. Essentially all of Bonhoeffer's manuscripts from this period have been lost.^[141] Most of the material in part 2 consists of Bonhoeffer's lectures as reconstructed from the notes of several students.^[142]

As a result, the lectures as presented here reflect the fragmentary nature of the notes as we have them. Since they are reconstructed from the notes of several students, the language will not always be the same. These discrepancies in style have been retained, as is the form of the notes found in the students' notebooks. Explanations and clarifications have been provided in the editorial footnotes. Because the lectures in this volume have been reconstructed from the notes of several students, the format and organization of these lectures as published here differs from previously published English-language versions. Also, several of the documents included in this volume were originally written in English and are reproduced as is, including misspellings and other errors, consistent with the *DBWE* editorial policy for all volumes in the series.

All translation presents challenges, but translating the theological nuances of Bonhoeffer's German into English is a particular challenge. Editorial notes throughout the volume elaborate on the translation decisions

[140.] See the afterword, p. 000.

[141.] According to Dudzus in the foreword to the German edition of this volume, "after the Finkenwalde seminary was closed in September 1937 he stored his books and manuscripts in a house in Altdamm near Stettin, whence in October 1940 he had 'several cartons with books' sent by freight to Berlin. Most of the manuscripts were never recovered" (*DBW* 14:27–28).

[142.] *Ibid.*: "For every session, however, we do have adequate and sometimes even excellent lecture notes from students such as notebooks from Joachim Kanitz as well as typewritten notes (rendered from shorthand) by Wolfgang Schrader from the lecture on basic biblical concepts and from Bonhoeffer's sermon drafts. The most thorough notes come from the hand of Eberhard Bethge, whose notebooks from the very outset seem like anticipatory gratitude for the pedagogical activity of his future friend. One particularly valuable feature is that Bethge wrote down the date of every class, as did Friedrich Trentepohl in the second session. A comparison between several of Bonhoeffer's own manuscript fragments and these shorthand notes reveals a high degree of concurrence. From the third session, we have extensive lectures notes by Wolf-Dieter Zimmermann as well as shorthand transcriptions from Gerhard Riemer, who seems, however, to have been interested only in Bonhoeffer's sermon drafts. From the fourth session, we have notes by Johannes Mickley and the excellent shorthand notes of Erich Klapproth."

for terms that posed particular difficulties or have seminal significance in Bonhoeffer's theology.

Acknowledgments

From the beginning, both the *DBW* and the *DBWE* projects have been a group enterprise. Thus, as with any project involving many individuals, it is necessary to conclude with words of thanks to the many who contributed to the production of this volume. First, a heartfelt word of thanks to the translator, Douglas W. Stott, whose mastery of the German language and knowledge of the Bonhoeffer corpus have created an English-language text with which it has been a joy to work. His contribution goes beyond putting the German into readable English, however; he has also provided insights and notes that have both enriched and clarified the language of the text. Peter Frick has been called upon throughout the series to translate Hebrew, Greek, and Latin terms; his expertise has been invaluable in reviewing the Hebrew and Greek in this volume.

To I wish to thank those who shared the editing tasks for this volume, Victoria Barnett and Mark Brocker, who edited part 3 (the sermons) of this volume. Vicki's role as the general editor of the *DBWE* series, her attention to both the historical and the textual details, as well as her overall sensitivities to this period, have contributed to making this volume more historically accurate and more readable. I am grateful to the editors of the German edition of *DBW* 14, Otto Dudzus and Jürgen Henkys, who created a wonderful model for us to follow, and especially to Jürgen Henkys, who, over the years, has graciously fielded our questions, offered helpful suggestions, and contributed insights that aided our understanding. And last but not least, a thank you is owed to Hans Pfeifer, who was the liaison between the German and the English editorial boards. But he was much more than that. He became a friend and contributor to all who work on this project, and he consulted with Mark Brocker on the translation of the sermons in this volume. Because of his untimely death in November 2011, he was unable to see this project to completion; nevertheless, his hand is everywhere present, and for that we are thankful.

Additional thanks to Brian Muller for tracking down English versions of German hymns, Cosima Wagner for translation assistance, and Timothy Wengert, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, for help in locating English translations of Luther's sermons. An immeasurable debt is owed to all of you.

Finally, thanks to my wife, Carla, who patiently read various versions of the translated texts and assisted with the indexes, and to my sons, Chris

and Paul, who were enlisted early on with the initial drafts of the bibliographies and the biographical information. They did not know what they were getting into but helped anyway. Their involvement in producing this text makes it all the more meaningful.

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December 5, 2012