

distinguishes between “idols” and “icons” of faith and employs that heuristic to demonstrate the ways Kierkegaard uses vivid aesthetic imagery as icons to point beyond the images themselves toward the divine realities they signify, but cannot contain.

The first three chapters function as a prolegomenon to the extensive final two chapters, which focus on the substance of Kierkegaard’s spirituality. Drawing from his discussion of the aesthetic “icons” of Kierkegaard’s authorship in chapter 3, Barnett divides his substantive exposition of Kierkegaard’s spirituality into two “icons” of faith: (1) the natural world and (2) the Bible, or biblical figures and illustrations. In these chapters Barnett traces out in detail the kinds of images in nature and the Bible that Kierkegaard employs to map out features of the spiritual life and move his reader toward the ideal fulfillment of “transparent rest in God” (128).

Kierkegaard has often been read as a writer who puts spiritual or existential insight to the service of philosophical questions. Barnett suggests this process is backward. He argues that Kierkegaard is a writer who uses philosophical insight in the service of spiritual or existential aims. The goal of reason, for Kierkegaard, is to lead us toward greater personal and corporate unity with God. This core thesis comes out especially in the way Barnett demonstrates how Kierkegaard’s writings methodically employ images and ideas as icons of faith, pointing the readers beyond themselves as “a means toward religious and, with it, existential fulfillment” (81).

Barnett does an admirable job backing up his reading of Kierkegaard with numerous quotations from Kierkegaard’s works although the quotations are so numerous they sometimes hinder the clarity of the prose. A more substantive hindrance to the book’s accessibility is its need for a stronger organizational structure. Barnett’s analysis of natural and biblical icons presents Kierkegaard’s spirituality in pieces. A linear presentation of Kierkegaard’s spirituality would provide a clearer perspective. The book would also benefit from more sustained attention to Kierkegaard’s place in Christian spirituality. Barnett’s sparse comparison of Kierkegaard to two prominent figures, Bernard of Clairvaux and Meister Eckhart, in the first chapter and the brief connections to other spiritual writers made elsewhere work less to make any substantive point and more to leave the reader wondering what real connections Kierkegaard has to the history of Christian spirituality.

This book provides an excellent and innovative entry point into Kierkegaard’s spirituality. Barnett’s Kierkegaard emerges as a spiritual writer at once in debt to the various traditions of Christian spirituality in the West and yet original in the way he adopts unique categories to provide a complex and compelling narrative of the self’s journey to God.

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*The Collected Sermons of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. by ISABEL BEST. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012. 214 pp. \$29.95.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer has captured a great deal of attention in recent years, partly because of the attentive work of Fortress to publish Bonhoeffer’s corpus of work in English. Of course, the foundation is a seventeen-volume translation of the critical

German series published in the 1990s. However, several other books have emerged that are proving to be useful for various readers. One such title is *Collected Sermons*. The editor, Isabel Best, part of the team of translators for the multi-volume series, shows care and thoughtfulness in her introduction to Bonhoeffer's life at the beginning of the volume. Though many biographical sources for Bonhoeffer exist, Best's brief narrative serves its purposes well.

Perhaps more importantly, Best provides an introduction to each sermon. Those introductory paragraphs accomplish two significant things. First, the value of each introduction becomes quite clear as one reads sequentially through the book. Best presents Bonhoeffer's sermons in a chronological order. Her brief introductions create the space for each sermon to be "heard" amid the world events in which Bonhoeffer worked. Via the introduction each sermon becomes a window into the cultural milieu of Bonhoeffer's Christian community and to the world that community inhabits.

Contemporary readers of Bonhoeffer's sermons also need a contextual framework. Best's introductions gradually immerse readers into the events of Europe that led up to WWII. Indeed, as Best notes early on, "A sermon is an event that takes place in real time, in the actual presence of people." Readers of this volume will not have to work hard to be in Bonhoeffer's presence for these sermons.

These introductions and each accompanying sermon become a commentary on Bonhoeffer's own life. Readers get a glimpse at the young Bonhoeffer as a minister to youth. His sermon on the eve of Hitler's rise to power offers new insight to the political and ministerial challenges that Bonhoeffer and others faced. Certainly most readers know the general trajectory of Bonhoeffer's story, and attentive readers will observe the growing soberness of the times with each sermon. *Collected Sermons* serves well as a companion to persons interested in Bonhoeffer, especially to those who wish to understand him as he works out Christian faith in context.

The sermons themselves hold great historical value, but can be varied in their theological quality and contemporary relevance. For example, in 1934 he preached a series on 1 Cor 13. Those sermons may seem a little slim for today's readers. However, such impressions are rare in this collection. Assuming that many readers may well be preachers themselves, I delight in pointing out his first sermon to a pair of churches in London that he would serve for eighteen months. He articulates a powerful vision of ministry and of the value of preaching. For Bonhoeffer, "[W]hen a preacher opens the Bible and interprets the word of God, a mystery takes place, a miracle: the grace of God, who comes down from heaven into our midst and speaks to us . . . and makes us joyful again and free and sure."

Best's work creates an immediacy for hearing Bonhoeffer preached today. I commend *Collected Sermons* to preachers and students and to those who want to explore the connection between Bonhoeffer the theologian and Bonhoeffer the believer.