



Letters and Papers from Prison

By Dietrich Bonhoeffer

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One of the great classics of prison literature, *Letters and Papers from Prison* effectively serves as the last will and testament of the Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a young German pastor who was executed by the Nazis in 1945 for his part in the “officers’ plot” to assassinate Adolf Hitler.

This expanded version of *Letters and Papers from Prison* shifts the emphasis of earlier editions of Bonhoeffer’s theological reflections to the private sphere of his life. His letters appear in greater detail and show his daily concerns. Letters from Bonhoeffer’s parents, siblings, and other relatives have also been added, in addition to previously inaccessible letters and legal papers referring to his trial.

Acute and subtle, warm and perceptive, yet also profoundly moving, the documents collectively tell a very human story of loss, of courage, and of hope. Bonhoeffer’s story seems as vitally relevant, as politically prophetic, and as theologically significant today, as it did yesterday.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Letters and Papers from Prison is a collection of notes and correspondence covering the period from Dietrich Bonhoeffer's arrest in 1943 to his execution by the Gestapo in 1945. The book is probably most famous, and most important, for its idea of "religionless Christianity"--an idea Bonhoeffer did not live long enough fully to develop, but whose timeliness only increases as the lines between secular and ecclesial life blur. Bonhoeffer's first mention of "religionless Christianity" came in a letter in 1944:

What is bothering me incessantly is the question what Christianity really is, or indeed who Christ really is, for us today. The time when people could be told everything by means of words, whether theological or pious, is over, and so is the time of inwardness and conscience--and that means the time of religion in general. We are moving towards a completely religionless time; people as they are now simply cannot be religious any more. Even those who honestly describe themselves as "religious" do not in the least act up to it, and so they presumably mean something quite different by "religious."

The pleasures of *Letters and Papers from Prison*, however are not all so profound. Occasionally, Bonhoeffer's letters burst into song--sometimes with actual musical notations, other times with unforgettable phrases. Looking forward to seeing his best friend, Bonhoeffer writes, "To meet again is a God." --Michael Joseph Gross

Review

'With regard to composition there is hardly blemish of any kind: the grammar, the rhymes, the lucidity of expression, the consistency of style, the adaptation to various metres, the use of repetition are all well-nigh perfectly formed...Very good value indeed!' Methodist Recorder, February 2007

Language Notes

Text: English, German (translation)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Paul Birch:

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