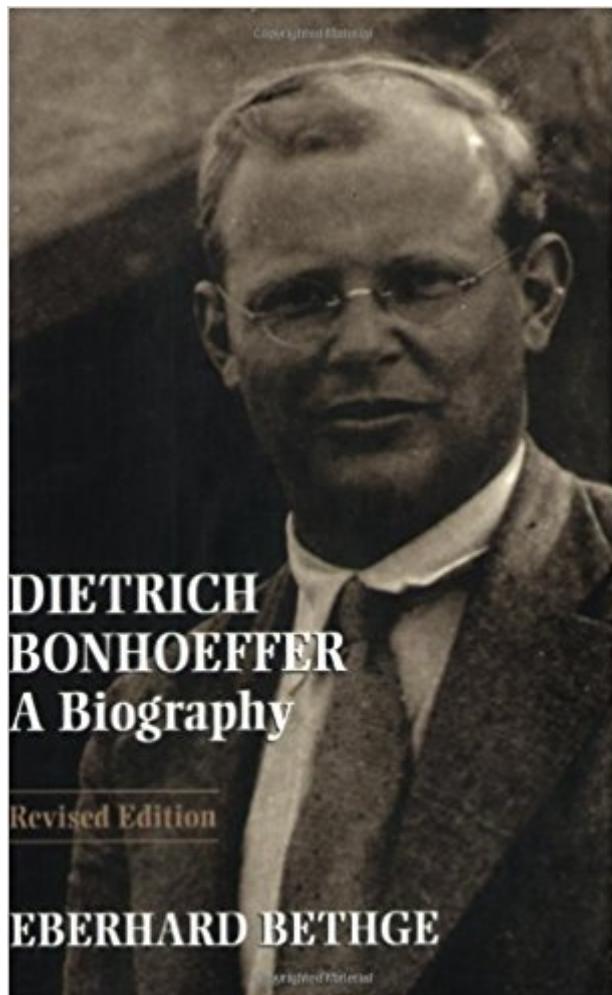


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Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography



Synopsis

Eberhard Bethge's exhaustive biography of Bonhoeffer is recognized throughout the world as the definitive biography. Victoria Barnett has now reviewed the entire translation for this edition, correcting hundreds of mistakes and omissions, and adding in sections from the German, for example, on Bonhoeffer's childhood, that have never before appeared in English.

Book Information

Paperback: 1048 pages

Publisher: Fortress Press; Rev Sub edition (February 1, 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0800628446

ISBN-13: 978-0800628444

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 2.5 x 9.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (25 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

About 20 years ago, I read an older translation of this biography. Then, as now, a reader cannot help but be impressed by the thorough and meticulous scholarship that went into its preparation. Because of its size and scope (900+ pages), it may be somewhat daunting to new readers who may be just now encountering Bonhoeffer. However, given the nature of his literary output (Bonhoeffer was still a young man when he died, and many of his ideas exist only in limited or underdeveloped forms), this in-depth look at the man and his motivations by the individual who probably knew him best is essential to an informed understanding of his work. For Bonhoeffer admirers, it doesn't get any better than this.

In this work, Bonhoeffer's student and friend brought me closer to Bonhoeffer than I thought possible. Previously, I had thought Letters and Papers From Prison was as close as I could get to understanding the "religionless" Christian -I was wrong. Bethge's opus gives an incisive look into the formation of Bonhoeffer the man and the theologian which sheds more light on his Christian fortitude in the Nazi tempest. I whole-heartedly recommend this work for it has been an inspiration

to me as a human being as well as a student of theology

Eberhard Bethge was Dietrich Bonhoeffer's closest friend and the lifelong editor and interpreter of his life and writings. For the first time we now have the completely unabridged biography in a revised and updated English translation. This is not only a classic of twentieth century biography; it also addresses key issues not only of German and European history, World War II, and the Holocaust but also, through Bonhoeffer's theology, the church and modernity. It sharply poses the question of authentic Christian life. A big book and a challenging read!

Upon starting this book I knew very little about Bonhoeffer; I had read some of Ethics and I knew of his murder by the Gestapo. Thus, there was something new on every page for me, and despite the book's length it never seemed oppressive in detail. In fact if the author can be faulted for one thing it is his lack of information about Bonhoeffer's courtship and engagement; which is discussed almost as an aside. On every other point though, the author did a wonderful job. His explanations of Bonhoeffer's theology are clear and understandable. Considering that much of what Bonhoeffer took for granted, theologically speaking, is alien to the American intellectual tradition that is a great accomplishment. The book is also a welcome antidote to the conception of 1930's and 1940's Germany as synonymous with Hitler and National Socialism. For even under the totalitarian state there were still men like Bonhoeffer who stood up against the regime

An outstanding, detailed and gripping story of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christian fortitude. Eberhard Bethge's exquisitely detailed knowledge and references about Bonhoeffer's life, from beginning to end is a wonderful tribute to Bonhoeffer. The reader asks the question what possessed Bonhoeffer to pursue the dream of a restive German society with Christianity abounding. Unless one has lived under a dictatorship perhaps this makes one restless. This book provides clear and concise answers.

Bethge was Bonhoeffer's closest friend and colleague. He devoted his life to bringing Bonhoeffer to the world's attention. This expanded volume, in remarkable ways, weaves together Bonhoeffer's life and his theological insights. In this 100th anniversary of the birth of this 39 year old martyr, this long book deserves careful reading, even by those who have read Bethge's somewhat shorter version published a number of years ago.

This is not a book for the faint of heart or for someone who just wants a little information about Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Eberhard Bethge was Dietrich Bonhoeffer's dearest friend. He knows the adult Dietrich Bonhoeffer perhaps better than anyone else. This book is deeply personal and revealing of the author and of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. It is an amazing Biography and I really must say that I really appreciated and liked this book. If he left something out it was because he did not know something. If you want to know Bonhoeffer from his dear friend who was with him through his ups and downs and knows the struggles of being incarcerated with the cloud of death hanging over one's head then this book is book is a must.

No one has done more to remind the world of the life and witness of Dietrich Bonhoeffer than Eberhard Bethge. In this definitive biography, Bethge gives us the man in all his complexity in a life lived before God. To Bethge's credit, Bonhoeffer's amazing life is not romanticized, nor is Bonhoeffer's thought reduced to a particular school of theology or ideology. Rather, Bonhoeffer's story is told with the dynamism that characterizes human life--dreams, growth, joys, sorrows, shifts in belief, duplicity, hope. Here is a hero that comes to us as a real human being, one who is forced to wrestle with the exercise of faith in a totalitarian world. Bethge's knowledge of the history of modern theology is critical in being able to adequately relay to the reader Bonhoeffer's own unique theology and where he agreed and/or differed with great theologians of his day. Do yourself a favor and get this biography. Bonhoeffer's witness is too grand to settle for a lesser narration of his fascinating life.

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