The Bonhoeffer Legacy: An International Journal



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The Bonhoeffer Legacy: An International Journal
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The Bonhoeffer Legacy: An International Journal is a fully refereed academic journal aimed principally at providing an outlet for an ever expanding Bonhoeffer scholarship in Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific region, as well as being open to article submissions from Bonhoeffer scholars throughout the world. It also aims to elicit and encourage future and ongoing scholarship in the field. The focus of the journal, captured in the notion of 'Legacy', is on any aspect of Bonhoeffer's life, theology and political action that is relevant to his immense contribution to twentieth century events and scholarship. 'Legacy' can be understood as including those events and ideas that contributed to Bonhoeffer's own development, those that constituted his own context or those that have developed since his time as a result of his work. The editors encourage and welcome any scholarship that contributes to the journal's aims. The journal also has book reviews.

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Editorial

The Bonhoeffer Legacy: An International Journal, now concluding its fifth volume, was initiated principally to provide an outlet for an ever expanding Bonhoeffer scholarship in Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific region, one that includes at least one annual conference as well as a range of symposia and other events called from time to time by Bonhoeffer scholars and interested parties. The initial aim was to support and encourage this extant scholarship from the Australasian region as well as to forge links with and draw into the region the wider and ever expanding Bonhoeffer scholarship to be found internationally. The international links have grown significantly during the past five years, indicated by an increasing authorship in and subscriptions to the journal coming from all parts of the world and matched by an increasing international presence at the annual conference. As a result, the Editorial Board made the decision at the outset of Volume 5 to alter the sub-title to *An International Journal* in order to capture this reality.

The focus of the journal, seen in the notion of 'Legacy', remains on any aspect of Bonhoeffer's life, theology and/or political action that is relevant to his immense contribution to twentieth and twenty-first century events and scholarship. 'Legacy' can be understood as including those events and ideas that contributed to Bonhoeffer's own development, those that constituted his own context or those that have developed since his time as a result of his work and the many commentaries on it. In other words, Bonhoeffer's legacy can be traced back to the events, philosophies and theologies that preceded his time as well as drawn forward to help in understanding the world we inhabit today, especially around issues of faith, non-faith and the ethics entailed in human action.

In this second issue of the fifth volume, we have a variety of international scholars whose work illustrates yet again the richness and diversity of the Bonhoeffer legacy. In the opening article, Barry Harvey from Baylor University, USA, a foremost Bonhoeffer scholar with long-term credentials in the International Bonhoeffer Society, offers an article that builds on his keynote presentation at the 14th Annual Bonhoeffer Conference held in Sydney, Australia in 2018. In the following paper, Robert Vosloo from Stellenbosch University, South Africa, also a renowned Bonhoeffer scholar, has built on his own keynote presentation at the same conference. In the third article, Jason Lam from Melbourne School of Theology, Australia and formerly Hong Kong, has also written an article based on his presentation at the 2018 conference. Similarly, Joel Banman, currently completing a doctorate in Bonhoefferian theology at Otago University, New Zealand, offers an article based on his presentation at the conference. The fifth article comes from Dustin Benac who is also completing a doctorate, this time at Duke University, USA. Dustin's article emanates from a paper he presented in the Bonhoeffer Section at the 2018 American Academy of Religion Conference. Finally, Di Rayson provides a review of Jennifer McBride's 2017 book, *Radical Discipleship.*

As we continue to suggest, Bonhoeffer's theology is akin to the unfinished symphony and so possesses an unusual capacity to be taken in any number of directions and to continue to stimulate new theological, ethical and indeed political thought. The legacy of Bonhoeffer is unique in its capacity to take us back to some of the most ancient of theological considerations as well as sharpen our attention to issues alive at the present time.

Terence Lovat
Newcastle, Australia
December, 2018

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A Hard Habit to Break: Re-Imaging Public Theology in a World After Christendom

Barry Harvey

Introduction

Interest in the topic of public theology has been on-going for several decades. When I first wrote on it two decades ago, the primary question was whether theology 'qualifies as a form of public discourse, and if so, how it should properly submit its claims to the scrutiny of a public ostensibly "constituted by open conversations, plural discourse, and diverse communities"'.[1]

In some ways the terms of the debate remain the same, for example, in the widely-shared assumption that there are only two options: identifying with one's social location or withdrawing into a private enclave protected from the taint of the world. Since I first dipped my toe into the contested waters swirling about this question, however, the world has become less stable, more divided, less cooperative, more polluted, and unable to reason together across ideological boundaries. Social fragmentation has not, regrettably, slowed down globalisation one iota. The increase and concentration of wealth marches merrily on. 'The centre did not hold', writes Walker Percy in his dystopic novel *Love in the Ruins*, but 'the Gross National Product continues to rise.'[2]

With this turbulent setting as the backdrop, what might Dietrich Bonhoeffer have to offer to an inquiry into public theology? Several times in his prison letters he speaks of a worldly Christianity, though

1. Barry Harvey, 'Insanity, Theocracy, and the Public Realm: Public Theology, the Church, and the Politics of Liberal Democracy', *Modern Theology* 10/1 (1994): 27.
2. Walker Percy, *Love in the Ruins* (New York, Picador, 1999), 18.