

**Review of DeJonge, Michael P.
University Press, 2017. 281 pp.**

Oxford: Oxford

Dietrich Bonhoeffer cites and refers to no one more than Luther, yet Bonhoeffer's own relationship to the Lutheran tradition remains a relative lacuna in Bonhoeffer studies. Recent scholarship, however, has begun to fill the void, and Michael DeJonge's new monograph is a significant contribution to this arena. In fact, DeJonge's book is a _____ in Bonhoeffer scholarship, showing how Lutheran theological frameworks permeate Bonhoeffer's thought. Picking up where his previous monograph left off—

(OUP, 2012)—DeJonge argues that “Bonhoeffer's thinking was Lutheran and should be in the _____” (DeJonge, 2017, 115). DeJonge's contention is that Bonhoeffer self-consciously understood himself and developed his thought in relationship to Luther and in contrast to other confessional traditions (7). DeJonge seeks to show that a Lutheran theological framework is hermeneutically fruitful for _____

question would need to clarify the nature of the gospel against false teaching while reasserting the roles and modes of governing proper to the state and the church according to two kingdoms thinking” (210). Even when Bonhoeffer’s thought moves from a focus on the church’s confession to the responsible action of individuals in 1939, Bonhoeffer’s “thinking about active resistance to political power finds some precedence in Luther himself” (259). DeJonge consistently shows Bonhoeffer to be a Lutheran thinker, who struggled with confessing the truth and proclaiming God’s law and God’s gospel in a Lutheran key.

DeJonge’s entire book is filled with key insights into reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer and understanding the central thrusts of his argumentation. As a Lutheran dogmatic theologian myself, I found DeJonge’s ability to formulate accurate Lutheran theology surprising and impressive. In my reading of secondary literature in Bonhoeffer studies, many scholars do not understand how to think like a Lutheran, mistakenly attributing Lutheran thinking to Bonhoeffer’s genius or simply not understanding his argument. DeJonge, however, has learned to think from within the Lutheran tradition himself. In fact, in one moment in particular, DeJonge shows himself to be a creative participant in Lutheran systematic theology. Discussing Bonhoeffer’s criticism of the *how*—which Bonhoeffer says gives into Reformed thinking that focuses on the natures more than the person by trying to answer the question of Christ can be present as both God and man (72–74)—DeJonge notes that the *how* can be read differently from this sort of “how” thinking. DeJonge suggests, “There is also a way of reading the majestic genus not as a reversion to illegitimate ‘how’ thinking but as a form of legitimate ‘how’ thinking within ‘who’ thinking. Such ‘how’ thinking could perhaps be characterized as a descriptive ontology of the present person of Christ, precisely what Bonhoeffer names as the task of christology” (74). Although these types of statements are fairly rare since DeJonge’s point is to understand Bonhoeffer and show Bonhoeffer’s creative engagement within the Lutheran tradition, DeJonge is no mere repeater of Bonhoeffer himself. He is engaging within the Lutheran tradition creatively with and against Bonhoeffer, and his insights are worth considering.

All in all, any aspiring Bonhoeffer scholar *must* read this book. DeJonge’s study is one of those rare birds that opens up possibilities and avenues for further thought and research. In each chapter, I found myself reconsidering aspects of Bonhoeffer’s thought in light of DeJonge’s insights. Even if one has been long convinced of Bonhoeffer’s fundamental Lutheranism, DeJonge’s hermeneutical framework will open doors to understanding and reading Bonhoeffer anew. For anyone interested in Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s theology, I cannot recommend this book enough!

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