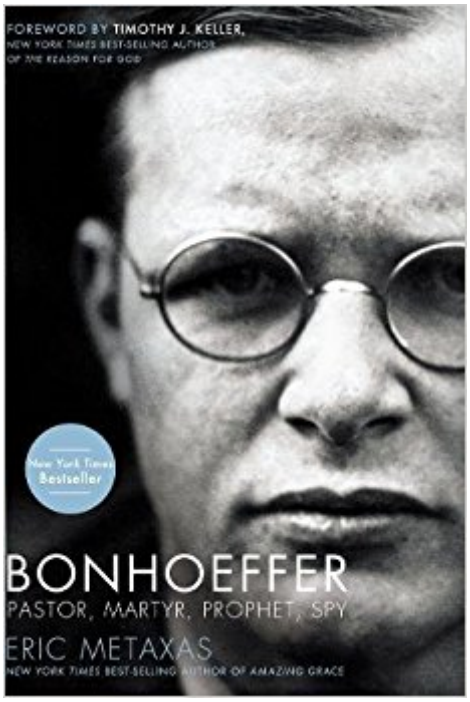
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Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy



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Synopsis

WHO BETTER TO FACE THE GREATEST EVIL OF THE 20TH CENTURY THAN A HUMBLE MAN OF FAITH?As Adolf Hitler and the Nazis seduced a nation, bullied a continent, and attempted to exterminate the Jews of Europe, a small number of dissidents and saboteurs worked to dismantle the Third Reich from the inside. One of these was Dietrich BonhoefferÃ¢â ¬â •a pastor and author. In this New York Times best-selling biography, Eric Metaxas takes both strands of BonhoefferÃ¢â ¬â„¢s lifeÃ¢â ¬â •the theologian and the spyÃ¢â ¬â •and draws them together to tell a searing story of incredible moral courage in the face of monstrous evil. Metaxas presents the fullest accounting of BonhoefferÃ¢â ¬â„¢s heart-wrenching decision to leave the safe haven of America to return to HitlerÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Germany, and sheds new light on BonhoefferÃ¢â ¬â„¢s involvement in the famous Valkyrie plot and in Ã¢â ¬Å“Operation 7,Ã¢â ¬Â• the effort to smuggle Jews into neutral Switzerland. In a deeply moving narrative, Metaxas uses previously unavailable documents?including personal letters, detailed journal entries, and firsthand personal accounts?to reveal dimensions of Bonhoeffer's life and theology never before seen."Bonhoeffer is the story of a life framed by a passion for truth and a commitment to justice on behalf of those who face implacable evil.Ã Â Includes ReadersÃ¢â ¬â„¢ GuideÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Å“[A] beautifully constructed biography.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Alan Wolfe, The New RepublicÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Å“Metaxas tells BonhoefferÃ¢â ¬â„¢s story with passion and theological sophistication. . . .Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Wall Street JournalÃ¢â ¬Å“[A] weighty, riveting analysis of the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. . . .Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Publishers WeeklyÃ¢â ¬Å“Metaxas presents Bonhoeffer as a clear-headed, deeply convicted Christian who submitted to no one and nothing except God and his Word.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Christianity TodayÃ¢â ¬Å“Metaxas has written a book that adds a new dimension to World War II, a new understanding of how evil can seize the soul of a nation and a man of faith can confront it. . . .Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Thomas Fleming, author, The New DealersÃ¢â ¬â„¢ WarÃ¢â ¬Å“Metaxas has created a biography of uncommon powerÃ¢â ¬â •intelligent, moving, well researched,vividly written, and rich in implication for our own lives. Or to put it another way: Buy this book. Read it. Then buy another copy and give it to a person you love. ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s that good.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Archbishop Charles Chaput, First Things"A definitive Bonhoeffer biography for the 21st century."Ã¢â ¬â •Kirkus Reviews2011 ECPA Book of the Year2011 Canterbury Medal by the Becket Fund recognizing courage in the defense of religious liberty2011 Christopher Award winner highlighting the power of faith, courage, and action"A definitive Bonhoeffer biography for the 21st century."-Kirkus ReviewsÃ Â

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Customer Reviews

In this weighty, riveting analysis of the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Metaxas (Amazing Grace) offers a comprehensive review of one of history's darkest eras, along with a fascinating exploration of the familial, cultural and religious influences that formed one of the world's greatest contemporary theologians. A passionate narrative voice combines with meticulous research to unpack the confluence of circumstances and personalities that led Germany from the defeat of WWI to the atrocities of WWII. Abundant source documentation (sermons, letters, journal entries, lectures, the Barman Declaration) brings to life the personalities and experiences that shaped Bonhoeffer: his highly intellectual, musical family; theologically liberal professors, pastoral colleagues and students; his extensive study, work, and travel abroad. Tracing Bonhoeffer's developing call to be a Jeremiah-like prophet in his own time and a growing understanding that the church was called "to speak for those who could not speak," Metaxas details Bonhoeffer's role in religious resistance to Nazism, and provides a compelling account of the faith journey that eventually involved the Lutheran pastor in unsuccessful attempts to assassinate Hitler. Insightful and illuminating, this tome makes a powerful contribution to biography, history and theology. Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

''In Hitler's Germany, a Lutheran pastor chooses resistance and pays with his life. . . Eric Metaxas tells Bonhoeffer's story with passion and theological sophistication, often challenging revisionist

accounts that make Bonhoeffer out to be a 'humanist' or ethicist for whom religious doctrine was easily disposable. . . Metaxas reminds us that there are forms of religion -- respectable, domesticated, timid -- that may end up doing the devil's work for him. --Wall Street Journal''In this weighty, riveting analysis of the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Metaxas offers a comprehensive review of one of history's darkest eras, along with a fascinating exploration of the familial, cultural, and religious influences that formed one of the world's greatest contemporary theologians. A passionate narrative voice combines with meticulous research. . . Abundant source documentation brings to life the personalities and experiences that shaped Bonhoeffer . . . Insightful and illuminating, this tome makes a powerful contribution to biography, history, and theology.'' --Publishers Weekly''A welcome new biography of one of the twentieth century's leading lights. Metaxas magnificently captures the life of theologian and anti-Nazi activist Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945), who 'thought it the plain duty of the Christian-and the privilege and honor-to suffer with those who suffered.' In the finest treatment of the man since Eberhard Bethge's Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Man of Vision, Man of Courage (1970), Metaxas presents a complete, accessible picture of this important figure, whose story is inspiring, instructive, and international in scope. . . Metaxas rightly focuses on his subject's life, not his theology, though readers will learn plenty about his theology as well. The author makes liberal use of primary sources, which bring Bonhoeffer and other characters to vivid life. For the most part, Metaxas allows this epic story to play itself out, unhindered by commentary; where he does add his own voice, the conclusions are sage. A definitive Bonhoeffer biography for the twenty-first century.'' --Kirkus Reviews (starred review)''In this weighty, riveting analysis of the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Metaxas offers a comprehensive review of one of history's darkest eras, along with a fascinating exploration of the familial, cultural, and religious influences that formed one of the world's greatest contemporary theologians. A passionate narrative voice combines with meticulous research. . . Abundant source documentation brings to life the personalities and experiences that shaped BonhoefferÃ¢â ¬Â|Insightful and illuminating, this tome makes a powerful contribution to biography, history, and theology.'' --Publishers Weekly''A welcome new biography of one of the twentieth century's leading lights. Metaxas magnificently captures the life of theologian and anti-Nazi activist Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945), who 'thought it the plain duty of the Christian-and the privilege and honor-to suffer with those who suffered.' In the finest treatment of the man since Eberhard Bethge's Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Man of Vision, Man of Courage (1970), Metaxas presents a complete, accessible picture of this important figure, whose story is inspiring, instructive, and international in scope. . . Metaxas rightly focuses on his subject's life, not his theology, though readers will learn plenty about his theology as well. The author makes liberal use of primary sources, which bring

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On the morning of April 9, 1945, German pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer was executed at Flossenburg concentration camp. The camp doctor, H. Fischer-Hullstrung, later remembered:[Just before the execution] "I saw Pastor Bonhoeffer kneeling on the floor, praying fervently to God...so certain that God heard his prayer...I have hardly ever seen a man die so entirely submissive to the will of God."Others testified that, up to his last day, the 39 year old Bonhoeffer remained cheerful. He knew what he had to do, was reconciled to God's will, and was able to climb the steps to the gallows "brave and composed."Who was this man who died so bravely--who Hitler himself, from his bunker beneath Berlin just three weeks before his suicide, ordered to be "destroyed?" He's the subject of best-selling author Eric Metaxas's new biography, "Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy."Shortly after his conversion in 1988, Metaxas read Bonhoeffer's The Cost of Discipleship and learned the story of the young man who, "because of his Christian faith stood up to the Nazis and ultimately gave his life." From then on, he was determined to tell the story to others. And tell it he has.Metaxas takes readers, in 592 pages, through Bonhoeffer's entire life, from his parent's courtship to his memorial service. No corner of the subject's life is left unexplored. Through the author's use of Bonhoeffer's personal letters to family and friends, earlier biographies, interviews with those who knew Bonhoeffer, and other thorough research, readers get a comprehensive and balanced look into one of recent history's greatest theologians.Appropriately, Metaxas emphasizes Bonhoeffer's theology and how it played out in his life. In contrast to "cheap grace," Bonhoeffer believed that true grace influences all aspects of a Christian's life. Christianity is more than formal religion, and it requires believers to be willing to sacrifice everything to God. Christianity is also more than legalistic morality. Ethics, according to Bonhoeffer, can't be reduced to a set of rules. These beliefs are what led this humble and devout follower of Christ to be involved in a plot to assassinate Hitler.How Christianity and assassination plots can be reconciled is hard for many to fathom--especially those who have lived only in peace and safety. We must consider Bonhoeffer in the context of his life, his country, and the war that he had no choice but to be a part of. Ethics, once so clear, become unclear. Do we lie to the Nazis, or do we give them information that leads to the deaths of innocents? Do we obey our nation's laws, or do we defy them by leading Jews into safety? Do we fight in Hitler's army, or do we refuse, knowing that we will be beheaded and leave

our family destitute? These are some of the questions Bonhoeffer faced.But readers can sympathize with Bonhoeffer. Metaxas masterfully puts us in his world. We celebrate with him in his family's parlor. We study with him in his illegal seminary. We watch with him as his world unravels. And we see him agonize over decisions, decisions that are not so clear, and decisions that he often had to make without the support of others.Metaxas's "Bonhoeffer" will be one of the best books of the year. I've learned, as expected, much about the life of a great and inspiring Christian. But I've also learned about the world, sin and evil, what it really means to be a Christian, and what it really means to live. There are a few books that, years after I have read them, I realize have had a great influence on me. This will be one of them. You can't go wrong with this book; I give it my highest recommendation.I received a free review copy of this book through the Thomas Nelson Booksneeze program.

Eric Metaxas' biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer attempts three objectives; to explain the life of Bonhoeffer and position him as an inspiring, brilliant and heroic theologian opposing the National Socialists and Hitler, to explain the originality of Bonhoeffer's theological views and chart their evolution and to recount the events surrounding the main efforts to overthrow or assassinate Hitler of which Bonhoeffer participated.Generally the book succeeds in its three goals. There is plenty of evidence provided on Bonhoeffer's good works and nature; on his religious beliefs as guiding lights to live by and its contretemps of the times and the drama of coup attempts provide a needed narrative that keeps the book moving.The books is very informative. The early parts outline Bonhoeffer's two initial conflicts first between science and religion as his family was well established in both fields and then within religion whether to be swayed or persuaded by the liberal views of Adolf von Harnack or the more conservative but newer views of Karl Barth. This was a rewarding introduction to leading theologists of the time.Unfortunately the book then moved into a much drier less interesting phase where Bonheoffer's life is recounted. Metaxas relies heavily on quoting long passages from Bonhoeffer's letters, sermons along with letters from his family and friends to describe Bonhoeffer or recount specific situations. The problem with this is the change from Metaxas's dramatic modern writing style to the more dated passages is jarring. Towards the end he tests a reader's patience when he quotes the entire Sermon on the Mount and the entire eulogy at Bonhoeffer's memorial mass.A large body of the book is dedicated to the mid 1930's where Bonhoeffer is working to create a new church, the Confessing Church. This was quite informative and again interesting to understand how the German Lutheran Church is much more aligned with the State than anything we have in the US. As such the efforts by Hitler to corral and manipulate the

church and how this lead to increasing his following are important to understanding how he enjoyed such broad support for so long. Equally illuminating are the religious backgrounds on Goring, Hitler, Borman and others that were not only anti Christian but appeared to find value in pagan ceremonies; far from what I had come to understand.But this section runs longer than I would have liked and ultimately the story focuses on the 1944 attempt on Hitler. While Bonhoeffer is connected to the conspiracy his role is quite tangential. The efforts taken on by the conspirators is gripping but one is left a bit empty by not only their failure but the baffling inability to act sooner despite their clear anger and distaste with the Nazi regime. Metaxas is somewhat easy on them explaining the need to both eliminate Hitler and to organize a force to fully assume power at the same time. But given how much these men knew (including Bonhoeffer) about the concentration camps and atrocities in Poland is does seem odd that they would not have tried more desperately and sooner.In the end my interest was drifting towards other members of the resistance who appeared to make more effort, take more risk and suffer greatly for it such as Martin NiemÃƒÂ¶ller or Hans von DohnÃƒÂ¡nyi.For a Germany after the war Bonhoeffer must have represented a very important figure of goodness, enlightenment and deeper spirituality at a time of overpowering need. His writings, actions and grace were enormous contributions that inspire and justify recognition to the current day and this biography brings all of that to light.

This is a very enlightening historic story. So many people think Hitler popped up like a mushroom, fully formed and a murderous psychopath and wonder how the Germans could have given him power. The truth, seen through the eyes of this good and noble man, is far more subtle. The Germans were mad as hell and Hitler fed into that anger and convinced the Germans that their enemies would pay for all their troubles. Certainly sounds like America in this ridiculous election season. Only the Godly and pure of spirit like Bonhoeffer, actually saw what was happening because he was firmly rooted in his family and his God. I only pray that the United States has its own Bonhoeffer, that will stand up, when noone else will. Every human needs to read this book.About the writing: It is NOT a dry history book, it is a fascinating story that truly allows you to understand this man. I find it difficult to put down.

This is a wonderfully rich biography of such a significant historical figure. Metaxas' historical research is first-rate, as he quotes primary sources at great length throughout the book: papers, letters, journals, etc. One really feels that history has been brought to life in this excellent book.Metaxas presents Bonhoeffer's life story in a highly chronological way, beginning with his

childhood and family life, then on through his travels abroad, and culminating with the pivotal final years in Germany. Yet despite the book's nearly 550-page length, I did not at all feel as though the book was too long or too detailed. Metaxas writes in such an engaging style that I did not want to stop reading. If I could have, I might have read the book through in one sitting, because it really was that interesting. I highly recommend this book.

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