

Keith Clements, *Appointments with Bonhoeffer: Personal Faith and Public Responsibility in a Fragmenting World* (London: T&T Clark, 2022), pp. xi +203. ISBN 978-0-5677-0705-5 (hbk).
doi:[10.1017/S1740355323000189](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740355323000189)

This is a very thoughtful collection of essays that employ Bonhoeffer's writings and his life as a means of reflecting on contemporary ecclesial, political and social issues. Bonhoeffer has of course been used this way before, but the lengthy period from the 1960s to the 1990s when the world seemed to be moving into an era of post-religious, stable and prosperous life now seems far behind us. The title of this book says as much, for we live today in a 'fragmenting world' that is riven with anxiety, violence and the resurgence of religion, which is hardly what was expected 60 years ago. Clements writes as an applied theologian, seeking to relate Bonhoeffer to the issues of public theology, ecumenism, reconciliation and the nature of belief in God. Throughout the 15 chapters Anglicanism continually makes an appearance, but Clements illuminates Bonhoeffer's theology in a way very different from past Anglican theologians such as Alec Vidler and John Robinson in the 1960s when they wrote on Bonhoeffer and presented him as a catalyst for change in the churches, especially in the Church of England. This volume, therefore, is of great interest both in its own right, and also because it shows how Anglican theology has changed over 60 years.

Clements is one of the most distinguished scholars of Bonhoeffer and an elder statesman in ecumenism. He is a Baptist theologian and pastor; he was General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches from 1997 to 2005. His excellent study of George Bell and J.H. Oldham as pioneer ecumenists was published in 2022 by Fortress Press, and he has also published extensively on Bonhoeffer and twentieth-century theology in England. Bonhoeffer and William Temple died within a few months of each other at the end of the Second World War. Although Temple was in his 60s and Bonhoeffer was only in his 30s, it is significant how much both theologians still speak across nearly 80 years to our current condition in the churches. (Stephen Spencer has just produced a new study of Temple.)

The volume is made up of commissioned articles, conference lectures and sermons, and it is striking how much Clements combines the very local and the global in his writings. There are sermons near where he lives outside Bristol (Clements taught for many years at Bristol Baptist College), talks to Bonhoeffer conferences in Sweden (2012) and South Africa (2014), a paper for the World Council of Churches (WCC) Assembly in Karlsruhe (written in 2020 – the WCC assembly was then postponed) and two lectures in Australia (2017 and 2019). The range of Clements' thought is extraordinary, because there is a deeply suggestive lecture comparing Bonhoeffer and Thomas Traherne on their affirmation of the world, the unity of heaven and earth in the incarnation, and materiality. This must be the first time these two theologians have been compared. Equally suggestive is the way in which a chance remark of Bonhoeffer's on the importance of reading Friedrich von Hügel, the Catholic modernist, is placed in its context, and then exegeted by a close reading of von Hügel.

There are several lectures and talks which do not show the Anglican Church in a good light. It is no surprise that Clements, who has written on several occasions with great lucidity about George Bell, should be appalled at Justin Welby's handling of the 2015 accusation of sexual abuse against Bell. Clements' tone in this chapter is measured, considered and yet deeply critical of how the Church of England handled this matter, and it is put into context by a comparison with Bonhoeffer's 1943 prison essay 'What does it mean to tell the truth?', which makes a distinction between being true to the facts and being responsible in speech to the living God and to human relationships. Bonhoeffer points out in this essay that the teacher who asks the child in front of the class whether his father comes home drunk fails to observe the proper boundaries of authentic discourse in the classroom, which is a boundary willed by God so that 'the living truth between persons' can be preserved (Bonhoeffer, *Works*, Vol. 16, pp. 601). It is quite clear that Clements considers the Church of England to be presumptuous in this case, acting to enhance its battered reputation on child abuse, and he provides strong justification for his judgement.

One of the tensions which Clements observes acutely is that of William Temple's Anglican moderation in his philosophical writing indebted to Idealism during the 1930s, and the far more dialectical theology of Barth (p. 62), which is also found in Bonhoeffer, even if Bonhoeffer expressed 'divine transcendence in terms of mystery' (p. 65). Mystery is a concept that is crucial for Bonhoeffer, and it is found both in personal relationships and above all in the Incarnation, where God's glory is revealed to those who can see it, but Bonhoeffer felt that Anglican theology found this difficult. The tension between Anglican theology and the Confessing Church also broke out in the refusal of Leonard Hodgson, Anglican professor at Oxford and secretary of the Faith and Order movement, to invite only the Confessing Church to the 1937 Faith and Order Conference in Edinburgh. Temple was chair of the WCC Provisional Committee and supported Hodgson's position, although Bonhoeffer did not know this. It was therefore a troubled Bonhoeffer who visited England in 1939, and while much is rightly made of George Bell's close friendship with Bonhoeffer at this time, and during the Second World War, nevertheless Bonhoeffer found the pragmatic, consensual nature of English Anglicanism at this time difficult to bear, both for its theological reasonableness and, above all, because it would not see the crucial nature of the struggle in Germany on the nature of the true church.

There is a searching lecture on the Brexit debate, and the question of the theological significance of nationhood, which Bonhoeffer (and Clements) sees as providing a means for sustaining human life as an 'order of preservation', thus allowing nations (like marriage and family) to nourish human life, so long as they remain open to God's word. Clements sensitively discusses the vexed topic of British identity, and the four nations which make up the United Kingdom, and moves finally in this perceptive essay to the question of 'what are we to do?', in terms of fostering stability and cooperation in Europe, by finding a new identity which inspires us into growing interdependence.

Clements is excellent in showing how much Bonhoeffer's writings were shaped by the necessity of action, whether in the daily self-denying discipline of discipleship or in the far more demanding issue of decision about the Third Reich and the German Church. He takes the concept of *Stellvertretung* as paradigmatic for

Bonhoeffer. This is a German word which is difficult to translate simply, but in essence it refers to vicarious, representative action which bears the needs of others and stands for that person before God and others. It is, of course, supremely embodied by the action of Jesus Christ who always exists as the love shown in that relationship even unto death on the cross. Clements quotes Rowan Williams as elucidating the term by use of a further concept, which is that of vulnerability – that is, we make ourselves vulnerable to what the other is vulnerable to. This provides a structure of human life which echoes that of both Christ's own life, and that of the members of the body of Christ, which is the church. Throughout this collection of essays the question of action looms large.

This is not an easy collection to read for an Anglican theologian. There are times when Bonhoeffer's dismissal of 'the good' as a concept in ethics seems too much indebted to a Lutheran theology of the will of God, as an overarching reality (p. 193). But far more uncomfortable to read is the over-simplification of Bonhoeffer by John Robinson in *Honest to God*, as a secular revolutionary (p. 27), the refusal of Temple and Hodgson to hear what Bonhoeffer was saying to them, or Justin Welby's handling of the accusations against George Bell. Clements, however, is very far from being a point-scoring Baptist theologian. What is deeply moving in this fine volume is how Clements returns repeatedly to Bonhoeffer's writings to show how the complex and difficult issues of national identity, public service, social reconciliation and truth telling can be illuminated by the writings of a theologian who died nearly 80 years ago. Clements has put us very much in his debt for a collection of essays that is a master-class in showing how applied theology can work in addressing the world in which Christians are called to be responsible for all those in need, and to bear that world before God's judgement and mercy. I shall reread these essays in the years to come with great appreciation.

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Brian Douglas, *Sacramental Poetics in Richard Hooker and George Herbert: Exploring the Abundance of God* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2022), pp. 143. ISBN 978-1978714076.
doi:[10.1017/S1740355323000190](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740355323000190)

The seventeenth century is a very important period in the formative history of the Anglican Church. This book by Brian Douglas, a research professor at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture in the Charles Sturt University in Canberra, Australia, highlights the worldwide expansion of the Anglican Communion after the break with Rome in the previous century. The author, himself an Australian Anglican priest, explores the sacramental theology of Richard Hooker and George Herbert. For students of that period who may know little about these men, with this reviewer included, it is a revelation.