

The Burke Library
Union Theological Seminary

Finding Aid for

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer Manuscript Collection
From the Collections of Union Theological Seminary**

Finding Aid prepared by:
Elizabeth Russey, March 2003

Summary Information

Creator: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 1906-1945; Union Theological Seminary; et al
Title: Dietrich Bonhoeffer Manuscript Collection
Inclusive dates: 1929-1998
Bulk dates: 1930-1946
Abstract: Correspondence, photographs, and administrative material relating to Dietrich Bonhoeffer's year as a student at Union Theological Seminary in 1930-1931 and his subsequent visit to New York as a visiting lecturer in 1939; translations of Bonhoeffer's sermons; copies of correspondence between Emmi Bonhoeffer and Julia Braun-Vogelstein re: the Bonhoeffer family and the German resistance; materials in remembrance of Bonhoeffer, including copies of the Paul Louis Lehmann Collection, the manuscript collections of the National Lutheran Council and the Papers of Samuel S. Gray, Jr.
Size: 1.0 linear foot
Storage: Onsite storage
Repository: The Burke Library
Union Theological Seminary
3041 Broadway
New York, NY 10027
Phone: 212-280-1502
Fax: 212-280-1456
Email: awt@uts.columbia.edu
Homepage:

http://www.uts.columbia.edu/burke_library/collect.html#special_coll

Administrative Information

- Provenance: The Bonhoeffer Manuscript Collection was artificially created from the collections of Union Theological Seminary and donations from outside sources.
- Access restrictions: This collection is unrestricted.
- Preferred Citation: item, folder title, box number, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Manuscript Collection, Burke Library, Union Theological Seminary

Biography

Dietrich Bonhoeffer--along with his twin sister, Sabine--was born on February 4, 1906, in Breslau, Germany. Later a student in Tübingen, Berlin, and at Union Theological Seminary in New York -- as well as a participant in the European ecumenical movement-- Bonhoeffer became known as one of the figures of the 1930s with a comprehensive grasp of both German- and English-language theology.

He wrote his dissertation, *Sanctorum Communio*, at the end of three years at the University of Berlin (1924-1927) and was awarded his doctorate with honors. *Act and Being*, his Habilitationsschrift, or qualifying thesis allowing him to teach at the University of Berlin, was accepted in July 1930. The following year, 1930-1931, Bonhoeffer spent a postgraduate year at Union Theological Seminary in New York. He assumed his post as a lecturer in theology at the University of Berlin in August 1931. In the winter semester 1932-1933 Bonhoeffer presented the lectures that were published as *Creation and Fall*. His final lecture courses at Berlin--published as *Christ the Center*--along with a seminar on the philosopher G. W. F. Hegel, were taught in the summer of 1933. His authorization to teach on the faculty of the University of Berlin was finally withdrawn on August 5, 1936.

Bonhoeffer served as a curate for a German congregation in Barcelona during 1929-1930. Following his ordination at St. Matthias Church, Berlin, in November 1931, he was to help organize the Pastors' Emergency League in September 1933, prior to assuming the pastorate of the German Evangelical Church, Sydenham, and the Reformed Church of St. Paul in London. During his sojourn in England, Bonhoeffer became a close friend and confidant of the influential Anglican Bishop, George Bell. After the Confessing Church was organized in May 1934 at Barmen, Germany, Bonhoeffer returned from England in the spring of 1935 to assume leadership of the Confessing Church's seminary at Zingst by the Baltic Sea--a school relocated later that year to Finkenwalde in Pomerania. Out of the experiences at Finkenwalde emerged his two well-known books, *Discipleship* and *Life Together*, as well as his lesser-known writings on pastoral ministry such as *Spiritual Care*. His work to prepare pastors in the Confessing Church continued all the way to 1939.

Bonhoeffer's early travel to Rome and North Africa, his curacy in Barcelona, and his post-doctoral year in New York (including regular work at Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, as well as travel to Cuba and Mexico), opened him to the ecumenical church.

Bonhoeffer's theologically rooted opposition to National Socialism first made him a leader, along with Martin Niemöller and Karl Barth, in the Confessing Church (Bekennende Kirche), and an advocate on behalf of the Jews. Indeed, his efforts to help a group of Jews escape to Switzerland contributed to his arrest and imprisonment in the spring 1943. His leadership in the anti-Nazi Confessing Church and his participation in the Abwehr resistance circle (beginning in August, 1939) make his works a unique source for understanding the interaction of religion, politics, and culture among those few Christians who actively opposed National Socialism, as is particularly evident in his drafts for a posthumously published *Ethics*. His thought provides not only an example of intellectual preparation for the reconstruction of German society after the war but also a rare insight into the vanishing social and academic world that had preceded it.

He was hanged in the concentration camp at Flossenbürg on April 9, 1945, one of four members of his immediate family to die at the hands of the Nazi regime for their participation in the resistance movement.

Collection Scope and Content Note

The Dietrich Bonhoeffer Manuscript Collection consists of primary source material related to the life and activities of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran theologian, professor, and member of the German resistance. Although this collection is not extensive, it contains some unique material related to Bonhoeffer's year-long residence at Union Theological Seminary in 1930-1931, including transcripts, correspondence, and Bonhoeffer's "Deceased Alumnus file," a collection of material maintained by the UTS Alumnae/i Office.

The bulk of the collection consists of copies of material located at other repositories, including Princeton Theological Seminary and the National Lutheran Council. The collection also includes correspondence, newspaper clippings and other manuscripts from Bonhoeffer's friends and family that eulogizes his life. For a far more extensive listing of the collected and occasional works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, see the *Bonhoeffer Bibliography: Primary Sources*.

The collection is divided into three series:

- Series I: Union Theological Seminary, 1929-1976 (0.25 lin. ft.)
This series contains correspondence, administrative files, newspaper clippings, and other material related to Dietrich Bonhoeffer's study at Union Theological seminary in 1930-31 as a student and his subsequent visit to New York as a visiting lecturer in 1939. The series includes correspondence with Henry Smith Leiper, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Samuel Cavert; Bonhoeffer's application to Union Theological Seminary; and his transcripts from Tübingen and Berlin universities and from Union Theological Seminary. This series also contains Bonhoeffer's "deceased alumnus file," a collection of clippings, correspondence, and other material maintained by the Union Alumnae/i office. The majority of the material

in this series is original and some is written in German. Arrangement is by document type and then chronological.

- Series II: Remembrances, 1944-1998 (0.5 lin. ft.)
Series II contains material written after Bonhoeffer's death in 1945. It includes correspondence and other documents that recount the activities of Bonhoeffer and remembrances from his friends and family, including a petition related to Bonhoeffer's inclusion in Yad Vashem. Much of the material is copied from other manuscript collections at Princeton Theological Seminary, and the files of the National Lutheran Council. This series also contains some material related to Samuel S. Gray, administrator following its liberation of the Flossenburg Concentration Camp, the location of Bonhoeffer's hanging.

Series II also contains correspondence (in German) between Emmi Delbrück Bonhoeffer and Julia Braun-Vogelstein between 1965 and 1970. Dietrich Bonhoeffer is only briefly mentioned, and there are only several passing references to the Bonhoeffer family. The significance of this correspondence is in the insight it gives into the lives of these two women, particularly in how they addressed Germany's cultural and political legacy as survivors of the German resistance. Original letters written by Braun-Vogelstein are included in this series. This series also includes typewritten transcripts of both the Braun-Vogelstein and Bonhoeffer letters, along with an overview of the correspondence written by Victoria Barnett. Photographic copies of the Emmi Bonhoeffer letters are located in Series III.

Arrangement is alphabetical by creating institution/creator. A listing of the exact locations of original material held by other institutions is located in the accession file. For more information, see a member of the archival staff.

- Series III: Photographs, undated (0.25 lin. ft.)
This series contains photographs of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Flossenburg Concentration Camp. This series also contains photographic copies of letters written by Emmi Bonhoeffer to Julia Braun-Vogelstein (see Series II for Braun-Vogelstein's letters to Bonhoeffer and a typewritten transcription of the correspondence between the two women.) Arrangement is alphabetical.

Processing

The Dietrich Bonhoeffer Manuscript Collection was artificially created, meaning that no original order could be maintained. The collection is arranged, therefore, loosely by creating body.

Folded materials were flattened. Newspaper clippings were photocopied on acid free paper. Staples, rubber bands, and metal clips were removed and replaced with plastic clips. All materials were placed in acid-free folders and boxes.

Contents List

Series I: Union Theological Seminary

Correspondence [1929-1931, 1939] (2f)
 Union Theological Seminary Records
 Dietrich Bonhoeffer [1930-1936]
 Alumni Deceased file [1930-1964]

Series II: Writings

“The Church and Eschatology” [1926]
 “The Finkenwalde Sermons” [1976]
 “The Psalms” [1969]

Series III: Remembrances

Samuel S. Gray, Jr.
 Correspondence [1945]
 “Dissent, Protective Custody, and Concentration Camps” [n.d.]
 “Concentration Camp Flossenburg” (Toni Siegert, trans. Anna Shantz) [1982] (2f)
 Jean Lassere [1981]
 Paul Louis Lehmann Collection, Princeton Theological Seminary Libraries
 [1932-1967]
 Sabine Leibholz – Correspondence [1946]
 National Lutheran Council-Lutheran World Action Collection
 Correspondence files, 1939-78, 1980
 Box 4, folder “No Greater Love – Documents, 1946
 Box 4, folder “No Greater Love – General, 1946
 Stephen Wise - Petition for the Recognition of Dietrich Bonhoeffer – Exhibits.
 State of Israel Commission for the Designation of the Righteous at Yad Vashem
 [1997-1998]
 Tafel Family [n.d.]
 “The Hitler Plot” [1944-1945]
 Julia Braun-Vogelstein
 Correspondence [1965-1970]
 Transcriptions [n.d.]

Series IV: Photographs

Dietrich Bonhoeffer [n.d.] (2f)
 Dietrich Bonhoeffer statue [n.d.]
 Emmi Bonhoeffer
 [n.d.]
 Correspondence [1965-1970]
 Flossenburg concentration camp [1945]