The Cost of Discipleship

by DIETRICH BONHOEFFER
"Dietrich Bonhoeffer," writes Reinhold Niebuhr in his preface, "was one of the truly creative spirits of the Church." In Nazi Germany he carried his Christian loyalty to the actual point of taking up his cross and going to his own Golgotha. The memoir of his life which introduces the book is a record of spiritual devotion so supreme that one who reads it cannot help feeling that his own soul stands before it to be judged, chastened—and it may be lifted to better consecration.

What Bonhoeffer himself has written is in tune with what has been written about him. He sets forth what the doctrine of the grace of Christ really means, in distinction from the formalisms of thought which have often obscured its searching truth; he treats at length the Sermon on the Mount; and he concludes with a rapt and semi-mystical interpretation of "The Church of Jesus Christ and the Life of Discipleship." Here are convictions wrought in the fires of magnificent self-sacrifice and a courage which went all the way to a martyr's death.

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Dietrich Bonhoeffer was born in Breslau, February 4, 1906, the son of a university professor. He went to Tubingen University and to Berlin University where he studied under Harnack. At twenty-four he became a lecturer at Berlin University. But before actually starting on his career he went to Union Theological Seminary in New York for a time.

When Hitler came to power in 1933 Bonhoeffer abandoned his academic career which seemed to him to have lost its proper meaning. He left Germany for a time but he soon returned and on April 5, 1943, was arrested by the Gestapo and thrown into prison. On April 9, 1945, he was executed at Flossenburg just a few days before this concentration camp was liberated by the Allies.