



Bonhoeffer's Black Jesus: Harlem Renaissance Theology and an Ethic of Resistance

Reggie L. Williams

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Dietrich Bonhoeffer publicly confronted Nazism and anti-Semitic racism in Hitler's Germany. The Reich's political ideology, when mixed with theology of the German Christian movement, turned Jesus into a divine representation of the ideal, racially pure Aryan and allowed race-hate to become part of Germany's religious life. Bonhoeffer provided a Christian response to Nazi atrocities.

In this book author Reggie L. Williams follows Bonhoeffer as he defies Germany with Harlem's black Jesus. The Christology Bonhoeffer learned in Harlem's churches featured a black Christ who suffered with African Americans in their struggle against systemic injustice and racial violence—and then resisted. In the pews of the Abyssinian Baptist Church, under the leadership of Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., Bonhoeffer absorbed the Christianity of the Harlem Renaissance. This Christianity included a Jesus who stands with the oppressed rather than joins the oppressors and a theology that challenges the way God can be used to underwrite a union of race and religion.

Bonhoeffer's Black Jesus argues that the black American narrative led Dietrich Bonhoeffer to the truth that obedience to Jesus requires concrete historical action. This ethic of resistance not only indicted the church of the German Volk, but also continues to shape the nature of Christian discipleship today.

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