

PART 1
Letters and Documents, Diary

**1. From Office of the Gestapo, Berlin, to Reich Church Minister
Hanns Kerrl^[1]**

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Berlin, November 30, 1937

To the Reich and Prussian Minister for Church Affairs, Berlin W 8, Leipziger
Strasse 3

Re: Preachers' seminary in Finkenwalde

Dossier: none

In accordance with the decree of August 29, 1937, from the SS Reichführer and head of the German Police^[2]—S—PP (II B) 4431/37—the preachers' seminary in Finkenwalde, under the leadership of Director of Studies *D. Bonhoeffer* has been closed.^[3] Decisive for my decision was the fact that the entire teaching staff of the seminary^[4] belonged to the confessional front and the purpose of this teaching institution clearly was to educate the vicars in the spirit of the confessional front and to equip them with the tools to complete the second theological exam before the examination offices of the confessional front.

In order to prevent the influence of the Confessing Church on theological education, I find it necessary that above all the preachers' seminaries that are under the direction of the confessional front and guided by its spirit should be closed.

May I request notification as to whether you consent to my position on this matter and, in particular, support the closing of the Finkenwalde preachers' seminary.

[1.] BA Potsdam, file 51.01, vol. 22522; typewritten with handwritten signature and stamp: "German Secret State Police, Office of the Gestapo"; return address "Berlin SW 11, Prince-Albrecht-Strasse 8"; stamped with date received: "Reich Minister Kerrl Berlin, Central Office, received: December 3, 1937"; previously unpublished.

[2.] Heinrich Himmler.

[3.] This announces the closing of the Finkenwalde preachers' seminary on September 28, 1937, based on the "Himmler Decree" of August 29, 1937 (see Beckmann, *Kirchliches Jahrbuch 1933–1944*, 205–6); see *DB-ER*, 584, and *DBW14*:298–99. [After the October 1934 Dahlem synod, the Confessing Church established its own seminaries (Finkenwalde was one of five) and examination committees for candidates for the ministry, largely because most of the German theological faculties and regional church theological examination committees were under the leadership of the German Christians. These new preachers' seminaries were considered "illegal" by the official church authorities. In August 1937, the Himmler Decree banned most activities of the Confessing Church, thereby making Finkenwalde and the four other preachers' seminaries illegal under state law.—VB]

[4.] The other teacher besides Bonhoeffer was inspector of studies Wilhelm Rott.

I refer to the written notification of November 11, 1937—B.S. 18.36—of your decision regarding the preachers' seminary in Elberfeld.^[5]

I would appreciate rapid enforcement.

Signed: Heydrich^[6]

Notarized: [illegible signature]

Chancellery staff member

14 2. To the Finkenwalde Brothers^[1]

December 20, 1937

Dear Brothers,

In these days my thoughts go out especially to you all. At the very least, a Christmas letter should be the sign of our fellowship. It will reach you amid the fullness and joy of your work. Most of you are in parish work, and it is a great joy to me that letters from the various regions of our church in which you work have continued to reach us. Others are in the final phase of tranquil scholarly work, which they undoubtedly will relish to the utmost. Four brothers are in prison.^[2] We remember them daily.

The balance sheet for this year is rather clear and unambiguous. Twenty-seven from your circle have been in prison; for some it lasted several months. Some are still detained at present and have spent the entire Advent in prison.^[3] Among the others there won't be a single person who has not experienced the impact, in his work and his personal life, of the increas-

[5.] The police also closed the Confessing Church preachers' seminary in Wuppertal-Elberfeld on the basis of the "Himmler Decree" (*DB-ER*, 589).

[6.] Reinhard Heydrich.

[1.] *NL*, A 48,3 (2); mimeographed with handwritten signature; no address is given, but probably written in Gro-Schlönwitz. Previously published in *GS* 2:524–30; cf. also *PAM* 2:81–88. After Reich propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels declared that all newsletters and mimeographed materials fell under the [1933—VB] editorial laws, Bonhoeffer's circular letters to the former Finkenwalde seminarians had to be labeled as "personal letters" and personally signed by Bonhoeffer (cf. *DB-ER*, 593) to avoid censorship. The letter exhibits a fair number of minor spelling and other errors, which were corrected in *DBW* 15 without being noted in each case.

[2.] [It is unclear which four students Bonhoeffer meant; as the following passage makes clear, twenty-seven seminarians who had studied under him in Finkenwalde had been arrested since the Himmler Decree, including Fritz Onnasch, Erich Klapproth, and Wilhelm Rott.—VB]

[3.] Regarding the wave of arrests by state authorities that affected the Confessing Church during 1937, see *DB-ER*, 577–86, and Niesel, *Kirche unter dem Wort*, 137–59.

ingly impatient attacks of the anti-Christian forces.^[4] Now, even the place where we could gather for quiet work and brotherly help and reinforcement has been taken from us.^[5] This has made it more difficult to maintain our community, and some work can no longer be done. Perhaps this should teach us to ground our community even more strongly by listening together to the Word and by prayer. This is a time of testing for us all. Particularly now, the great task is to ensure that those among us who are isolated are not left alone. More than ever, the responsibility for this falls upon each of you. Please don't neglect it. We have said farewell to Finkenwalde in great thankfulness for everything that God gave us in the two and a half years of seminar work, and we are prepared to fulfill the new tasks we face. What we have learned will stay with us; what was ineffectual will fall aside. And already today we can say that the new paths along which we are being led will also give us reason for deep gratitude. Pray that the service to our young brothers will be done properly; lend a hand wherever you can.

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I would have liked to give each of you a copy of my book^[6] for Christmas. When it was published I often dedicated it in spirit to you all. I did not do this on the title page, because I did not want to claim you for my thinking and theology. Our fellowship is grounded in something else. The thought of giving the book to each of you for Christmas unfortunately had to be dropped due to finances. Anyway, you know what is in the book.

What we now want to say to one another on the occasion of Christmas and the end of the year I will attempt to say for us all, following the Daily Text^[7] for the last week of the year:

Christmas Eve: Ps. 41:5 [4] "O Lord, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you." This is a text of confession. The manger of the son of God who became flesh is the proper place for our confession. The

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[4.] After the resignation of the Reich Church Committee on February 12, 1937, the radical anti-Christian forces in the state and the party around Joseph Goebbels, Alfred Rosenberg, and Martin Bormann intensified their ideological and administrative pressure on the churches, under the slogan of "deconfessionalization of public life." Cf. Scholder, "Politics and Church Politics," in *Requiem for Hitler*, 155.

[5.] See 1/1. During the two months between the closing of Finkenwalde and the beginning of the collective pastorates in Köslin and Groß-Schlönwitz on December 5, 1937, Bonhoeffer and Eberhard Bethge lived with Bonhoeffer's parents in Berlin (see E. Bethge, "Marienburger Alle 43," in *Friendship and Resistance*, 73). In October they left Berlin for a vacation trip to southern Germany (see Bethge's letter of October 26, 1937, to their friends, in Andersen et al., *So ist es gewesen*, 316–18).

[6.] Bonhoeffer's book *Discipleship* (DBWE 4) had appeared in November 1937.

[7.] These were the daily devotions (*Losungen*) published by the Moravian (Herrnhut) brotherhood.

one who bore our flesh and blood knows our heart. We are all wounded and torn by our manifold sin.

Where else should we seek grace for all disloyalty, all lack of faith, all failure, but in God's lowliness in the manger? Where else would we seek salvation for our souls, for our lives, but in the one who has appeared for our salvation? Despite all the work and unrest, may no one enter the Christmas season without seeking time to make his confession to our Lord Jesus. So will he make us partake of both his humility and his innocence. Whoever is alone and must do without the grace of brotherly fellowship and reinforcement, may God reveal to him all the more gloriously what true fellowship is. Wherever we may be, we speak in one spirit, as we did often at the same table of the Lord's Supper: Heal my soul, for I have sinned against you. Thus on Christmas Eve we will become grateful anew for the great mercy of God, our savior.^[8]

Christmas day: Mal. 3:1 "See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will soon^[9] come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming." The fact that this Advent text encounters us today teaches us that even the fulfillment of all promise and all proper expectation has only begun. Even the time of fulfillment is a long time of waiting. Thank God for this—so we say, regarding our sin. May this waiting soon end, and the time be shortened—so we pray, regarding the cross that burdens Christendom throughout the world. May the work of the messenger, who is coming to prepare us to stand before Christ, be done soon. May Christ come to his temple, to his church in the hour when it is ready and awaits him, as the adorned bride awaits her bridegroom.^[10] May the divine "soon" be fulfilled at the hour of mercy.

- 17 Second day of Christmas: Ps. 104:13 and 14 "From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work. You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use." God, who has given us the savior, is also willing to provide for our bodily life, as long as we are on this earth. Indeed, it is his earth. It must serve his purposes. The father will give his dear children in Jesus Christ what they need.^[11] Whoever has placed belief in Christ must not worry about the

[8.] Regarding Bonhoeffer's understanding and practice of confession, see the section on confession in the 1936 Finkenwalde lectures on pastoral care (*DBW* 14: 589–91), the 1936/37 Finkenwalde session on confession (*DBW* 14: 749–55), and *DBWE* 5:108–18); cf. also *DB-ER*, 465–66.

[9.] [*NRSV* here reads "suddenly."—*VB*]

[10.] Cf. Rev. 21:2.

[11.] Cf. Matt. 6:8.

coming day.^[12] In the middle of the cold winter, we are to see God's earth already full of fruits, grass, and seed. This should not be too difficult for us, should it, since we saw the eternal light enter the deep night, since we know of the blossom that in the middle of the winter night bloomed? "I know a rose-tree springing." Through God's power and love the heavenly spring has already dawned—"Amid the cold of winter, when half-spent was the night."^[13]

December 27, 1937: Ezek. 16:6 "I passed by you, and saw you flailing about in your blood. As you lay in your blood, I said to you, 'Live!'" Have we truly understood the greatness of the miracle that happened to us? Resurrection of the dead has occurred. We lay in our blood, struck and cast down by our own sin. We could not raise ourselves again. Then God had mercy and spoke in the authority of his love: Live! And we stood up, held and strengthened through God's mercy. Live!—God has begun a new life in us; he commands us now really to live this life, the life of his grace and help. Let us not disobey this command of God. God wants not dead Christians but Christians who live to their Lord.^[14] If we do not hear this Word, Christmas has passed us by.

December 28, 1937: Zech. 2:8 "For thus said the Lord of hosts . . . : Truly, one who touches you touches the apple of my eye." Just as the innocent children of Bethlehem, whom the church remembers today,^[15] were the first who had to give their lives for Jesus's sake, so in all ages the church-community of Jesus has suffered persecution and death for the sake of its Lord. But the same Lord for whose sake we suffer disgrace, hatred, and imprisonment has promised to protect us like the apple of his eye. It is not we who protect him through our sacrifice; it is he who protects us. He stands up for us—this is the Christmas message. Whoever touches us for Christ's sake will be dealt with by our Lord himself. Nothing can befall us if we suffer injustice for Christ's sake. Thus we want to leave those who do us injustice in his hand alone—his hand of judgment and of mercy. This is the lesson of the murder of the children of Bethlehem, namely, that Christ is not in the hand of his enemies, but that the enemy is in the hand of God.

December 29, 1937: Ps. 25:10 "All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees." Are

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[12.] Cf. Matt. 6:25–34.

[13.] From the first stanza of the pre-Reformation Advent hymn, "I know a rose-tree springing" (*Es ist ein Reis [Ros] entsprungen*). [The English is taken from *The Hymnal of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America*, 17.—VB]

[14.] Cf. Rom. 14:8.

[15.] In the church calendar, December 28 is traditionally the Feast of the Holy Innocents (see Matt. 2:16–18).

you, who have experienced hardship in this year, able to speak today with all your heart that the paths of the Lord are pure goodness and truth? Did you know that God was good to you when he sent you misery and imprisonment? Has God made himself known to you as the true and faithful one when he took so much from you? No one who says No to God's promises and commandments is able to say Yes to his paths. Agreement with God's will occurs in daily submission to his word. Something may appear to us as minor disobedience, and yet it will take from our hearts the gratefulness and praise for God's paths. It is painful and difficult to walk under Christ's yoke when we do it against our will. It is easy and gentle,^[16] when God at Christmas has overcome and won our hearts for it.

December 30, 1937: Ps. 20:5^[17] "May we shout for joy over your help,^[18] and in the name of our God set up our banners." In the past times of crisis for the church, we have received several offers of human help.^[19] Yet they have only brought us into temptation, particularly when they were well intentioned. For how should even the best human intentions help the church in a struggle with the devil? We have celebrated Christmas. Jesus is born. He is our help. He alone. Here is God's help for human beings in temptation and crisis. Do we think this help insufficient? Are we becoming impatient? Let us meet all temptations with the joyful confession: May we shout for joy over your help. We unfold our banner for the struggle. Upon it is inscribed: Jesus, the helper.

December 31, 1937, New Year's Eve: Ps. 71:18 "So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to all the generations to come." With astonishment we stand at the end of the year. For some time now we have grown accustomed to the fact that we cannot count on having long periods of time. We neither could nor should do so. Learning obedience on each new day is enough for us. But time moves on, and our text today speaks to us about growing old. Thus, despite everything, it

[16.] Cf. Matt. 11:30.

[17.] [In the German Bible this is verse 6.—VB]

[18.] [NRSV has "victory."—VB]

[19.] [Bonhoeffer is clearly referring here to the legalization procedure presented by official church leaders, which offered those trained at the illegal Confessing Church seminaries a "legal" route to ordination and ministry. Legalization, however, required that they take their theological and ordination examinations under the official church committees, which were dominated by German Christians. In the wake of the Himmler Decree and the arrests of many illegal pastors, this was even more tempting for Bonhoeffer's students. Bonhoeffer was bitterly opposed, and in fact this letter marks the beginning of a new, intense phase of his efforts to convince his students to withstand the temptation. See esp. *DB-ER*, 607–20, and Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 94–98.—VB]

is good to turn our eyes, for once, to the prospect that perhaps a long life still lies before us, that the day of judgment perhaps will not arrive tomorrow or the day after. "Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land" (Jer. 32:15). So perhaps we will become gray during this time of struggle for the church, and new generations will bear new burdens on their shoulders. Therefore we pray to God, for whom a thousand years are as one day,^[20] for the grace that he may let us, throughout the years, remain proclaimers of his might. Years and generations pass away, but God's Word does not.^[21] Indeed, we are merely one link in the chain. Yet the question, anxious and joyful, remains: which generation will live to see the day of judgment? Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!^[22]

The mediation texts for the coming weeks are^[23]

December 26–January 1, 1938:	John 1:1–18
January 2–January 8:	Luke 2:21–40
January 9–January 15:	Eccles. 50:24–26 or Ps. 1
January 16–January 22:	Hag. 1
January 23–January 29:	Hag. 2
January 30–February 5:	Mal. 1
February 6–February 12:	Mal. 2
February 13–February 19:	Mal. 3

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Eberhard's^[24] address is Groß-Schlönwitz via Schlawe/East Pomerania. In the event of any changes, please also let us know your addresses. Albrecht Schönherr is pastor in Brüssow, at the estate of General Field Marshall von Mackensen.^[25] We are currently seeing more of Brother Maechler.^[26] Are the brothers in Berlin keeping up their monthly meetings?

[20.] Ps. 90:4.

[21.] Isa. 40:8.

[22.] Rev. 22:20.

[23.] Regarding the sense and significance of the daily practice of meditation that was observed in the seminary for the brothers' life together, with its elements of personal contemplation of Scripture, prayer, and intercession, see *DBWE* 5 (*GL*): 85–91, and the 1936 "Introduction to Daily Meditation," *DBW* 14: 945–50.

[24.] The reference is to Eberhard Bethge, who was inspector of studies for the collective pastorate in Groß-Schlönwitz after December 1937.

[25.] For an account of Schönherr's time as a pastor in Brüssow under the patronage of August von Mackensen, see Schönherr, . . . *Aber die Zeit war nicht verloren*, 115–27.

[26.] Since 1936 Winfried Maechler had been assistant pastor of the Confessing Church in Schlawe, under Superintendent Eduard Block; see Maechler, *Ein Christ in den Wirren des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 32–33.

God bless your work in the congregations, and may God fill you with joy. Heartfelt greetings to you and your households from all the brothers, Fritz^[27] in prison, Eberhard from his work, and your ever faithful

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

3. To Paula Bonhoeffer^[1]

December 21, 1937

Dear Mama,

Many thanks for your letter^[2] and the package for me to open on Christmas Eve! Unfortunately, I received the wrong delivery from Chr. Kaiser,^[3] so I would like to ask you to send Franz^[4] the book from Berlin. I am going to
 21 send it to Karl-Friedrich^[5] myself. Fritz O.^[6] was released yesterday. That is a very great joy. Christmas otherwise would have been difficult indeed. Could you send me several white shirts for the holidays? I'm very sorry to trouble you even more. Here we're doing splendidly. From Iwand, unfortunately, we hear otherwise.^[7] The good weather will surely hold until New

[27.] Friedrich (Fritz) Onnasch had been arrested during the state measures against the Confessing Church in November 1937, and spent four weeks in prison in Stettin. After December 1937 he became inspector of studies for the collective pastorate in Köslin.

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (6); handwritten postcard, postmarked Stolp. Partially reproduced in *GS* 6:433.

[2.] Letter not extant.

[3.] The reference is to Chr. Kaiser Publishers in Munich, which published Bonhoeffer's book *Discipleship* in 1937.

[4.] The reference is to Bonhoeffer's friend Franz Hildebrandt, who was considered "non-Aryan" under National Socialist law. In August 1937, he emigrated to England after three weeks' imprisonment for "collection misdemeanors" (he had repeatedly forwarded the collections from Confessing Church services not to the regional church consistory but to the Council of Brethren [the governing body for the Confessing Church—VB], defying a law forbidding this, "Law regarding the administration of wealth in the Protestant regional churches," passed on March 11, 1935. With this law the church authorities sought to destroy the Confessing Church's financial autonomy. For more information on this, see Kersting, *Kirchenordnung und Widerstand*, 242–49. Until the fall of 1938, Hildebrandt lived as a refugee in the parsonage of Julius Rieger in London-Sydenham.

[5.] The reference is to Bonhoeffer's eldest brother, Karl-Friedrich.

[6.] The reference is to Fritz Onnasch.

[7.] The Confessing Church preachers' seminary in Bloestau (East Prussia), led by Hans Joachim Iwand, had been closed by the police. Iwand provisionally continued

Year's Day. Here, of course, some Christmas preparations are going on. We treated ourselves to real beeswax candles as a present for the entire group. Many greetings to Papa and you, dear Mama, from your grateful

Dietrich

4. Inscription in the Copy of *Discipleship* for Martin Niemöller^[1]

To Pastor Martin Niemöller at Advent 1937

in brotherly thanks.

A book that he himself could have written better than
the author.

5. To Paula Bonhoeffer^[1]

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Dear Mama,

On your birthday I am thinking a great deal about you all.^[2] I wish you a good new year. Once more I am traveling, and so only today am I getting around to this greeting. After New Year's, hopefully it will be quieter, so that I can write in more detail. Thank all of you very much for the lovely Christmas things! Here all is going well. Greetings to you from your grateful

Dietrich

to train seminarians for three months in Jordan (Neumark). See H. J. Iwand, *Von der Gemeinschaft christlichen Lebens*, 3 and 17. Under the auspices of Superintendent Fritz Heuner, Iwand then attempted to found a new preachers' seminary in Dortmund. On December 18, 1937, Iwand, Heuner, and the candidates were arrested (see Iwand, *Theologie in der Zeit*, 118, and *DB-ER*, 589).

[1.] *NL*, A 45 (42); later typewritten copy; according to information received from Jan Niemöller, the original has been lost (letter to the German editor, October 22, 1994). The inscription gives no date or address, but the book was probably sent from Groß-Schlönwitz. Previously published in *GS* 2:307. Martin Niemöller had been arrested on July 1, 1937, by the Gestapo at his home in Berlin-Dahlem (see *DB-ER*, 654–57) and was in pretrial confinement in Berlin-Moabit prison until his trial began on February 7, 1938. Bonhoeffer's *Discipleship* reached him there.

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (7); handwritten postcard; no date or address given. It was probably sent en route from Köslin to Groß-Schlönwitz. Partially reproduced in *GS* 6:433–34.

[2.] Bonhoeffer's mother's birthday was December 30.

6. To Franz Hildebrandt^[1]

January 3, 1938

Dear Franz,

Heartfelt thanks for your letter.^[2] I was pleased in equal measure by the agreement with and critique of my book.^[3] I am very willing to admit that Asmussen's commentary on Galatians^[4] doesn't fit with my exegesis of Matt. 5:17f.^[5] With Luther's commentary on Galatians,^[6] though, things stand *very* differently. Just don't end up establishing a law of humanity, you anti-nomist!^[7] I eagerly await your work and meet it by reciprocating your agreement and critique of mine.^[8] Now for the *third* attempt: Julius^[9] should please obtain for me there (with Cromwell's^[10] help): *The Way of Holiness*, by Father Benson (Oxford).^[11] I need it for an exegesis of Psalm 119.^[12] Many thanks for the effort. Gustav^[13] is still in my debt. I'll pass that on to you and Julius!

Affectionate greetings to both of you from your
Dietrich

[1.] In the personal possession of Gottfried Rieger; handwritten postcard; stamped in Groß-Schlönwitz/Schlawe. Cf. *NL*, Anh. D 1,1 (2); cf. also *NL*, A 45 (43); a later type-written copy, partially reproduced in *GS* 6:434. The postcard (to London) has been stamped: "Reichsparteitag [Reich Party Day—VB] commemorative postcard. Price 25 R[eich]p[ennies] including cultural donation" and portrays a parade of SA troops carrying swastika flags.

[2.] Letter not extant.

[3.] Bonhoeffer is referring to *Discipleship*.

[4.] Asmussen, *Theologisch-kirchliche Erwägungen zum Galaterbrief* (1935).

[5.] Cf. *DBWE* 4:115–20.

[6.] Martin Luther, *In epistolam sancti Pauli ad Galatas commentarius*, 1531/1535 (WA 40/1 and 40/2).

[7.] This is an allusion to the first and fundamental theological dispute between Bonhoeffer and Hildebrandt about Marcion and the relative importance of the Hebrew Bible for Christian proclamation and theology (see *DB-ER*, 138).

[8.] After 1937 Hildebrandt worked on a study, "The Gospel and Humanity," for which he received his doctorate from Cambridge in 1941; except for brief excerpts it remained unpublished. In it he attempted a new evaluation of humanity, human rights, and pacifism on the foundation of Luther's distinction between law and gospel. He took natural law, reason, and freedom to be necessary components of a state order that would preserve community for the sake of the weakness of the flesh. See Hildebrandt, "Kirche und Recht," 502–3.

[9.] The reference is to Julius Rieger.

[10.] The reference is to Philipp Cromwell, a lawyer in London.

[11.] This is the title of a book that appeared in 1901, by R. M. Benson, who founded the Anglican community "Society of St. John the Evangelist" in Oxford in 1865. See Rieger, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer in London*, 29.

7. To the Young Brothers in Pomerania^[1]

Dear Brother,

In recent weeks, I have received letters and personal messages that make it clear that our church and our young theologians, particularly in Pomerania, are encountering an hour of severe temptation.^[2] Because here it is no longer the matter of an individual crisis but rather one and the same temptation is threatening many, you will permit me, dear brother, to attempt an answer to all concerned. Nonetheless, this letter is meant for you very personally. It should address everything you have written or said to me.

We must go way back. We will agree that when we declared ourselves one with the cause of the Confessing Church, it was a step of the most certain faith and, because of that, a venture that was incomprehensible in human terms. There was a joy, a certainty of victory, a readiness for sacrifice that gave our entire personal and official life a new direction. I don't mean that there were not all kinds of secondary human considerations that played a role—who knows even his own heart?—but what made us so joyful and ready to fight and, perhaps, even prepared to suffer was one thing, namely, that we knew again that a life with Jesus Christ and his church is worth the whole effort. We believed that in the Confessing Church we not only had found the church of Jesus Christ but through God's great goodness had actually experienced it. A new life under God's joy-giving Word began for individuals, for pastors and congregations. If only God's Word was among us, then we no longer wanted to be afraid and worried about the future.

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[1.] See 3/9.

[13.] Reference is to Pastor Gustav Schönberger in London.

[1.] *NL*, A 56 (6); typewritten mimeograph with handwritten signature; no date or address given, probably sent from Groß-Schlönwitz, definitely around the end of January 1938. Previously published in *GS* 2:297–306. Bonhoeffer wrote this letter immediately before a convention of the Brotherhood of Young Theologians in Pomerania, in Stettin on January 24–25, 1938, that was to attempt to establish a common position of the “illegals” against the regional church consistory's offer to legalize them. See Ludwig, *Die “Illegalen” im Kirchenkampf*, and Klän, *An der Wegscheide*, 142–43. [After 1935 candidates for the ministry who studied and were ordained within the Confessing Church were considered “illegal” and denied jobs, salaries, and pensions by the official German Evangelical Church. After 1937 official church authorities offered “legalization” proceedings to these candidates; this meant a de facto repudiation of their examinations and ordinations by the Confessing Church.—VB]

[2.] For more on the course of the Church Struggle in Pomerania and its consequences for the illegal vicars of the Confessing Church, see *DB-ER*, 606–20, and Klän, *An der Wegscheide*.

25 With this Word we were willing to pass through struggle, through suffering, through poverty, through sin, and through death to finally reach God's eternal kingdom. Young people and fathers of large families stood here side by side. What was it at the time that united and fortified us with such gladness? It was the one and ancient realization, given to us once more by God himself, that among us Jesus Christ wishes to build his church, which lives solely from the preaching of the pure, unadulterated gospel and by the grace of his sacraments, and which in its actions is obedient solely to him.^[3] Christ wishes to hold fast to such a church; he wants to protect and lead such a church. Only such a church is permitted to be free of all fear. The Confessional synods of Barmen and Dahlem bore witness to this and to nothing else.^[4] Was this an illusion? Was it perhaps stated under the impression of external circumstances that appeared to favor a "realization" of this belief? No, it was the most certain faith, it was the biblical truth itself, that was then made known before the entire world. It was the witness to Christ that overcame hearts, created joy, and called to the obedient deed. Dear brother, are we not at least still in agreement that this was the case? Or do we want today to revile God's grace, which was so generously given to us?

So, then, the struggle for the true church of Christ erupted. Or do you possibly believe that the devil would take such trouble to annihilate a small band of idealists who were carried away? No, the storm arose because Christ was in the boat.^[5] The struggle demanded sacrifice from the very beginning. Perhaps it has not always been clear to everyone how much personal sacrifice, how much sacrifice, too, on the part of the congregations was required for the members of the Councils of Brethren to fulfill their duty to the church. But it was a sacrifice joyfully given for the sake of the cause of Jesus Christ. Who was permitted to retreat as long as the call still came from Jesus to be the church, the church that serves him alone? Who was allowed to disengage himself, as long as *no one* had relieved him of the task of caring for the pure proclamation of the gospel and the building up of congregations in conformity with Scripture and the confessions of our church?

If we are still agreed on this, then let us ask ourselves, in all candor, what has happened between those beginnings and our present situation, or, as one might also say, what has happened between the church provinces in

[3.] Cf. Augsburg Confession, Article 7 (*Book of Concord*, 42).

[4.] The first Confessional synod of the German Evangelical Church was held in Wuppertal-Barmen on May 29–31, 1934. The second Confessional Synod was held in Berlin-Dahlem on October 19–20, 1934. Cf. the texts of the synodal resolutions in Schmidt, *Bekenntnisse*, 2:91–98 and 157–62.

[5.] Cf. Matt. 8:23–27.

which even today they live and act and struggle on the very basis of these beginnings, and our church province? Why for several months, do voices in Pomerania continue to complain that our church lies paralyzed, as if in a spell, that an internal narrowness and stubbornness diverts us from fruitful work? How has it come about that brothers who were in the Confessing Church with full certainty say today that their gladness has been lost, that they no longer know why they could not do their work just as well under the consistory as under the Council of Brethren? And can we deny that the witness of our Pomeranian church recently has become ever weaker? That the word of the Confessing Church has to a great extent lost its faith-wakening and with that its discerning^[6] power? That the true theological-ecclesiastical decisions grow more obscure behind the strategic considerations? And has all of this not had its effect upon our own preaching? We ask about the reason for all this.

26

I believe the answer is not as difficult as one would like it to be. The so-called paralysis in the Confessing Church, the lack of gladness, the weakness of the witness, all come from our very own disobedience. Let us not think now about the others but about ourselves and our work. What has become of the first, clear insights of the Confessing Church in our congregations? Have our congregations been truly and vividly interested in them? Is there a c[ongregation]-c[hurch]-council or a local Council of Brethren that stands in unshakable fellowship with the cause of the Confessing Church and with those of us who are confessional pastors? That carries us and helps us to take new paths in the parish? Or why do we not have it? Should the congregations alone, once again, be to blame for this? There are parish members who have the opposite opinion. Are the parishes too “immature”? As if a parish could be too immature to hear God’s word and obediently act according to it, but for unchurchlike action they are “mature” enough! Who taught us to think of our congregations with such disdain? Who, then, made the cause of the Confessing Church into a matter of “maturity”? As if the maturity of a parish did not consist of precisely its plight before God! Where are the district Councils of Brethren, formed from the parish Councils of Brethren, which could help the district pastors bear their great responsibility? Where is the Pomeranian confessional synod, which could only genuinely emerge through the congregation, and which should have shown the way for the Pomeranian church? In other words: why did we in Pomerania not seriously implement the insights

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[6.] [The German here is *scheiden* (literally, “to divide” or “to distinguish between”). —VB]

[Erkenntnisse] of the Dahlem synod?^[7] And if we did not do this, did we ever take Barmen entirely seriously? Other, far more unchurched provinces fought the promising struggle for the church of the gospel, based upon clear ecclesiastical-theological decisions and, in all their suffering, rejoiced in this from their hearts. Why, so often, did we stand by? Why is the theological discussion among us so strangely quiet? In this hour it is truly not a question of one accusing the other, but rather that each person confesses that through disobedience we have often thoughtlessly scorned God's grace, which we received in the beginnings of the Confessing Church. Our word and our deed often broke apart. Now that we reap the fruits of this, however, we begin to blame one another; indeed, we grumble about the path that has been ruined by our own disobedience and thus no longer gives us gladness.

Let me try, once more, to say this differently: there is a Church Struggle as law and a Church Struggle as gospel. At present the Church Struggle, to a great extent, has become a law for us against which we rebel, an ominous, wrathful law that beats us down. No person can bear and fight the Church Struggle as law without perishing and utterly failing. Church Struggle as law means Church Struggle without gladness, without certainty, without full authority [Vollmacht]; it means Church Struggle without promise. How does this come about? It doesn't happen any differently than in personal life. The merciful Word of God, from which we withdraw in disobedience, becomes a hard law for us. That which, done in obedience, is a gentle and light yoke, becomes an unbearable burden for the disobedient.^[8] The more we became stubborn in disobedience against the merciful Word, the more difficult it becomes to turn around, the more willfully we rebel against God's claim. But just as there is only the one way in personal life, that of
 28 turning around, of repentance under God's word, in which God again grants us the lost community, so it goes in the struggle of the church as well. We do not receive back the lost gift of a Church Struggle as gospel without repentance, that is, unless the church struggle itself becomes repentance for us. Even if the obedience of repentance may be harder today than it was

[7.] [The October 1934 Dahlem synod was torn by divisions between the more radical members of the Confessing Church and the more moderate leaders. The two most contentious resolutions passed at Dahlem were Article 3, which declared the Confessing Church to be the one true church in Germany, sharing no common confession with the German Christians; and the declaration of church *Notrecht*, or emergency law. Under *Notrecht*, the Confessing Church could establish its own governance structures, training, examinations of candidates for the ministry, etc.—VB]

[8.] Cf. Matt. 11:30.

previously when we failed to be obedient—only in this way does God wish to help us back to the right path.

Dear brother, if I speak in this way to you who are not yet firmly installed in ministry in the church, I know that perhaps you bear the smallest amount of guilt for all this. Indeed, you have been affected by some practices that a pastor in office could evade. But must not this very fact fill you with particular joy and gratitude, namely, the fact that the church expects you to walk the very clear path? That precisely you today have been given a responsibility that perhaps has never rested upon a young generation of theologians in our church? The Confessing Church in Pomerania must first come into being. Put in human terms, it will depend on you, too, whether it can emerge or not. Last week we were connected through our meditation text from Haggai 1.^[9] There it is stated: “These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the Lord’s house. Then the word of the Lord came by the prophet Haggai, saying: Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?”^[10] It cannot at all be my concern to “stand you back up,” to talk you into something. But it does matter above all to reawaken in you, through God’s word, courage, gladness, faith in Jesus Christ, who is and will remain with his Confessing Church, *whether you go along with it or not*. You should know that the faith that threatens to be extinguished in you still lives, as in the beginning, in many congregations and parsonages, that inside Pomerania and outside, at posts of forlorn hope, lonely brothers witness to this faith with the greatest gladness. The church of Jesus Christ that lives by his word alone and wants to be obedient in all things to him alone still lives, and will live, and calls you back out of temptation and tribulation. It calls you to repentance and warns you against the disloyalty that must end in despair. It prays for you that your faith not waver.

29

But now, back once more to your own questions: you say that the situation today is different from that in the beginning; because of that we should act differently. I can think of only one change in the situation that could also change our action, namely, if the consistories, the EOK^[11] etc. were to relieve us of the responsibility for a church leadership in accordance with the confessions. Since, given the current makeup of church administrators, it is out of the question that this would ever happen, only those who throw sand

[9.] Cf. the list of meditation texts at the conclusion of Bonhoeffer’s letter of December 12, 1937 letter to the Finkenwalde brothers, 1/2. Haggai 1 was proposed as the meditation text for the week of January 16–22, 1938.

[10.] Hag. 1:2–4.

[11.] [Evangelischer Oberkirchenrat, the governing council of the Old Prussian Union church.—VB]

in their own eyes can be in doubt. But since the situation looks more threatening from outside than before, as the nonchurch powers lay claim to the church, this can only give us more reason to close ranks even more strongly there where this intrusion [Einbruch] has not yet succeeded, namely, in the Confessing Church.

You say that the Confessing Church would surrender the possibility of finding an entry into the congregations, that is, the possibilities for proclaiming the gospel. Do you recall that the G[erman] C[hristians] made precisely the same argument and that evil fruit grew from that? Don't you see that by subordinating yourself to the consistory, you make yourself the henchman of the secular powers that intend to win the parishes not at all for the gospel but for a very different doctrine?

You say that, under the consistory, you would hold on only to the Scripture and confession. Do you recall all those who have already declared this before you? And given the case that this would be possible—which is not possible—do you forget that the church is greater than your parish? Do you forget your brothers and their parishes? Do you realize that with your step to the consistory, you give the struggle against the Confessing Church its most effective weapon? Is it clear to you that a Council of Brethren that would only practice a so-called spiritual leadership, as you wished, would be leading an illusory existence, which can be swept away in a moment? You yourself will be made responsible if the Confessing Church is crushed in this manner. Your step to the consistory is the strongest imaginable confirmation of the judgment of the anti-Christians against the Confessing Christians.

30 You complain about the Council of Brethren. Do so, if you must, to it directly as well! But please also ask yourself whether you joined the Confessing Church for the sake of a good or miserable Council of Brethren. Ask yourself whether you would be willing to stand up for the cause of the Confessing Church even if there were no longer any Council of Brethren whatsoever, indeed, whether you are willing, isolated from any kind of church leadership or brotherly fellowship, to witness and to suffer for the Confessing Church wholly alone, before God and human beings? No, you do not simply have a choice between two church governments. You can't suddenly now reaffirm that from which you have separated yourself in faith because of some completely different reasons, without being at odds with yourself and your faith. God's word calls you to loyal participation in the Confessing Church under the leadership of the Council of Brethren, as weak as both may be.

You no longer hope for any success for the Confessing Church; you no longer see any way out. Indeed, who among us would see a way out? God alone sees it and will certainly show it to those who humbly wait for it. Per-

haps we hoped once that the Confessing Church would achieve public recognition in Germany. But was this hope full of promise? Certainly not. Now we have learned to believe a church that follows its Lord under the cross.^[12] That holds more promise. Finally, you say that you would be prepared for any personal and professional sacrifice if you only knew why they were necessary. Why, dear brother? Not for any humanly apparent reason, not for a flourishing church nor for a convincing church leadership, but simply because the path of the Confessing Church must be traveled even through barren stretches of drought and desert, and because you are not meant to stay behind in the desert. That is, for the sake of the poor church, which will of course continue even without you under the leadership of its Lord, that is, for the sake of your faith and your certainty you should stay with the Confessing Church.

What should happen now? There are so many reasons, and theologians can prove everything. Everything will depend on whether God will give his witness anew into our hearts. Jesus Christ alone can break the spell. Yet we want to face several tasks clearly. We will not achieve a renewal of our Confessing Church unless we first intercede with God on its behalf in fervent prayer. An hour of prayer for our church and its leadership should unite us and cleanse and clarify our thoughts. God will then lead us again to the true path. But then we want to tackle what has been neglected. We want to struggle for full theological clarity about the insights of the Confessing Church. We are not willing to let go before we have reached firm ground. We tend to move from questions of truth to the order of the day all too easily. Yet how should a clear leadership for a parish or a church be possible without a clear theology? The false front lines in the Church Struggle arise whenever the question of truth is bypassed. Let us resume the discussion also with those who confront us with questions! But it should be a discussion in ultimate truth! The discipline in theological work, preaching, and catechism that pastors undergo in other regional churches is truly no dishonor to these churches and their pastors. Shouldn't such discipline be possible at least among the young brothers of our church, for mutual help and reinforcement? All this takes place only for better ministry to our congregations. What is finally at stake here is to prepare for the establishment of a Pomeranian Confessing synod. For this we need local and district Councils of Brethren. And once we have come that far, only then will the inexhaustible field of work that is the Confessing Church's specific task begin: the

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[12.] Cf. Bonhoeffer's interpretation of discipleship under the cross in *Discipleship* (DBWE 4), esp. 84–91 and 225–52.

ordering of church life with respect to the practice of baptism, the office of godparents, instruction, confirmation, confession and communion, visitation, etc. There are already church districts in the Confessing Church that tackle these questions seriously. But there is no authority except for the organs of the Confessing Church that could do this work under the sole direction of the word of God. There is enough work. We must only tackle it at long last.

32 Before I close, one more word about the brochure by P. Schütz, *Why I am still a Christian?*^[13] This is a splendid attempt to review things again and again, with new words and in great openness for the questions, from an outside perspective. Nonetheless, for some it has brought only tribulation [Anfechtung] instead of help. Why? Because ultimately it proceeds from an impossible premise. Schütz looks for the church in the attitude, in the countenance of the Christians. We, however, look for the church in God's word alone. Schütz's book has an incredibly debilitating effect, for it leaves human beings to themselves. But "it is a precious thing for the heart to *become firm*, which occurs through grace."^[14] Our heart becomes firm solely by God's Word and sacrament.

Let me hear from you again. Greetings from your stalwart
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

8. To His Parents^[1]

Köslin, train station

My dear Parents,

Many thanks for your suggestion to meet in Stettin.^[2] February 4 is not so good here, since there's work in the morning and the time is too short afterward. But I was thinking of Sunday or Saturday (February 6 or 5). Would

[13.] Schütz, *Warum ich noch ein Christ bin* (1937). [Bonhoeffer mentions his critique of Schütz later in one of his theological letters from prison (*DBWE* 8:430) and a 1944 letter to Maria von Wedemeyer (*Love Letters from Cell* 92, 154). Cf. also *DB-ER*, 844.—VB]

[14.] Heb. 13:9. [Italics are Bonhoeffer's. The German translation differs from the *NRSV* wording, which reads: "for it is well for the heart to be strengthened by grace."—VB]

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (8); handwritten postcard; postmarked Köslin, January 27, 1938. Previously published in *GS* 6:435.

[2.] On January 11, 1938, Bonhoeffer was arrested in Berlin-Dahlem at a meeting of the directors of theological education and leaders of the vicars' groups in the Confessing Church in the Old Prussian Union and banished from Berlin and Brandenburg. See

that suit you? I can hardly reach Stettin from Schlönwitz before 2, but I could leave on Saturday and meet you already on Sunday morning. Please write me about this.

Greetings to you from your
Dietrich

All is going well. What will the seventh^[3] bring? I will write Ch.^[4] after four weeks have passed. That seems better to me.

9. To His Parents^[1]

33

February 10, 1938

My dear Parents,

It is truly nice that you plan to arrive already on Saturday. I'll pick you up at the station. Perhaps then we can spend some time together during the evening at the Preußenhof.^[2] I will be leaving for Stettin already on Friday evening. Would it be possible, dear Mama, for you to send me my black suit, which I wanted to take with me last time from Berlin and which I still really need, (Mrs. von Kleist,^[3] Poelitzerstr. 103) or to bring it with you? If this is too much trouble for you, I can naturally manage without it, and it could perhaps be sent to Schlawe for me. I am already looking forward eagerly to the days in Stettin.

Greetings from your grateful
Dietrich

DB-ER, 597-98, as well as Bonhoeffer's letter at the end of February 1938 to the Gestapo (1/10). After some time Karl Bonhoeffer was able to get permission for his son to visit the family in Berlin.

[3.] The trial of Martin Niemöller began on February 7, 1938, in the special court [Sondergericht] in Berlin-Moabit. [The Nazi regime created these special courts to try political cases.—VB]

[4.] The reference is probably to a Gestapo official named Chantré. Cf. Bonhoeffer's letter from the end of February 1938 to the Gestapo, 1/10.

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (9); handwritten postcard; postmarked Köslin. Partially reproduced in *GS*6:435.

[2.] [A hotel.—VB]

[3.] The reference is to Ruth von Kleist-Retzow.

10. Request to the Gestapo^[1]

34 In the middle of January 1938,^[2] I was invited to Berlin for a discussion of church matters. Since in any case I needed to travel to Berlin at that time for personal reasons, to visit my father, I agreed to come. In the Dahlem parish hall, where the meeting was to take place, I found a group of some thirty leading Confessing pastors from throughout the Old Prussian Union. Under the chair of Pastor Lic. Niesel,^[3] some important church issues were to be discussed, particularly the possibility of the subordination of Confessing vicars and assistant pastors to the consistories.^[4] After only a half hour, officials from the Gestapo appeared, took us all in large police vans to Alexanderplatz; we were interrogated; pastors who were not residents of Berlin and Brandenburg were banished from Berlin and Brandenburg, and the others were forbidden to leave Berlin and Brandenburg. No reason was given for these measures. The meeting was neither forbidden, nor was it kept particularly secret, as its location makes clear, nor could the topic of discussion offer any reason for special measures. Afterward, we learned that our gathering had been mistakenly suspected of being a theological lecture session for Confessing Church students,^[5] and that [the Gestapo] had been surprised not to find a single student. Since then, I have been banished from Berlin and Brandenburg, although through my father, Privy Counselor Professor K. Bonhoeffer, I have obtained official permission for personal visits to Berlin. I am not in the position, however, to carry out any church duties for my large family and circle of acquaintances who reside in Berlin. Moreover, the State Police measure, which is still incomprehensible to me, naturally burdens me. To my mind the measure affected me only through coincidence, and it seems to me that its scale stands in no proportion to the occasion.

[Dietrich Bonhoeffer]

[1.] *NL*, A 61 (1); undated carbon copy; probably from the end of February 1938; see Bonhoeffer's January 27, 1938, letter to his parents, 1/8. Previously published in *GS* 2:295–96. The letterhead is "Pastor Lic. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Schlawe/Pom., Koppelstr. 9." [The letter is addressed to the Geheime Staatspolizei, or Gestapo.—VB]

[2.] On January 11, 1938.

[3.] Wilhelm Niesel.

[4.] [A reference to the legalization debate.—VB]

[5.] On November 9, 1935, one day after its opening, the church college (*Kirchliche Hochschule*) in Berlin-Dahlem, which had been established and supported by the Confessing Church for the winter semester of 1935–36, was banned and dissolved by the Gestapo, which also sealed its rooms. Until March 1941, it continued to operate illegally in private rooms by constantly changing location. Cf. Besier, "Die Gründung der Kirchlichen Hochschule Berlin 1935/45 und ihre 'Väter.'" [For eyewitness descriptions of this situation, see Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 86–88.—VB]

11. To the Finkenwalde Brothers^[1]

35

March 14, 1938

Dear Brothers,

You've now gone for two weeks without meditation texts. I'm especially sorry about this and beg your pardon. The enclosed sermon has been finished for a while,^[2] but I couldn't get around to the letter to you. I was often on the road, and I preferred to have some quiet to write to you. First, I would like to thank all those brothers who so kindly remembered me on my birthday.^[3] There were a great number of letters, and each one of them gave me great joy.^[4] This sign of your faithful remembrance and prayer has greatly encouraged and strengthened me for work. Many thanks for this.

Recently the requests for gatherings of the participants from individual course groups have increased. It is painful for all of us that here, too, such great obstacles have arisen.^[5] But we must somehow deal with this. I thought of inviting all the groups from the earlier sessions^[6] to an estate for a gathering and then to repeat that, depending on the number of incoming registrations. It won't be possible to invite each group individually one after the other, but I think we must be satisfied with the other solution. I may be able to write more details in May. It would indeed be nice to see and talk to one another again!

We should make the effort to come together with the former brothers as often as possible, so that things don't fall apart in the long period in between gatherings. In this respect we are often lax and forget that it could be an aid not only for oneself but for the other person if we could visit him sometime. It goes without saying that such time together should be not just for catching up with one another but for more than that. We need someone occasionally to ask us where we stand with our reading of the Scripture, our time for meditation, our prayer, and our work on sermons. Let us not

36

[1.] *NL*, A 48,3 (3); typewritten mimeograph, initialed by hand; no return address, but probably from Groß-Schlönwitz. Previously published in *GS* 2:531–33.

[2.] A sermon on Rom. 5:1–5; see 3/3.

[3.] Bonhoeffer's birthday was February 4.

[4.] None of these birthday letters from 1938 remains, with the exception of the letter from Robert Zenke to Bonhoeffer on February 4, 1938, mentioned in ed. note 9.

[5.] The Himmler Decree of August 29, 1937, which was directed against the Confessing Church's educational institutions, also banned all its theological cohorts and retreats. Cf. Beckmann, *Kirchliches Jahrbuch 1933–1944*, 205, and *DBW* 14, 1/149.

[6.] The retreat for former Finkenwaldians took place in Zingst on June 20–25, 1938. Cf. *DB-ER*, 593, and the July 18, 1938, circular letter, 1/21. Bonhoeffer held a Bible study on the sixth request of the Lord's Prayer: "Lead us not into temptation"; see 2/4.

relapse here into false courtesy; we used to know better! Help one another also in intercessory prayer. Continue to think of us as well. We all need this help today. It seems that God sends us all the external difficulties in getting together so that our spiritual life becomes stronger and more alive. I don't know whether we always consider this; for that reason, however, the troubles of our individual colleagues are almost unbearably hard. We all still look too much at that which is flesh and too little at that which is spirit.^[7] We are all able to see the difficulties and allow our gaze to be captivated by them. What we must learn more and more, however, is to point to the help that God's spirit offers us daily and hourly. But we will experience this help only when we take the step of promise and obedience, just as the waves of the Red Sea only parted when Israel set its foot in the water.^[8] Thus everything is to stand on faith and obedience.

One more thing: I have thought that it could be helpful for one or another of you occasionally to send in a sermon you have given. Especially those who are all alone will perhaps be very glad to do so. It's also a pretty good discipline to do this at least once a year. I will be happy to read the sermons and send them back with my comments, as best I can. Perhaps this is also something helpful that we can offer one another.^[9]

37 We think of you all a great deal and often wish we had more news from you. Fritz and Eberhard^[10] have much to do and much joy in their work. Some things are different and more difficult, but others are more pleasant.^[11] Soon the holidays will be here again.^[12] God help us all the time and make us faithful in our ministry. Greetings to you from your faithful
D[ietrich] B[onhoeffer]

[7.] Cf. the Pauline contrast between "flesh" and "spirit" in Rom. 8:12–16, and other places.

[8.] Cf. Exod. 14:21–22.

[9.] With regard to this, see Robert Zenke's letter (*NL*, C 25) of February 4, 1938, to Bonhoeffer, which reads in part: "Many thanks for your letter [not extant] and the critique of the sermon. I accept it, although I had thought that precisely my sermon for New Year's had for once been quite respectable. But such is life. The danger of this position [i.e., the parish ministry—VB] is that the proclamation is reduced out of revivalist [*volksmissionarischen*] considerations. Due to your letter, I preached a reserved and matter-of-fact sermon on the twenty-ninth, in light of January 30 [the anniversary of Adolf Hitler's appointment in 1933 as Reich Chancellor]. Barth's exegesis of Rom. 13 [see Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, 475–502] was good preparation for me for the sermon, which I held with great joy, notwithstanding its objective brevity and 'negativity' [Karl Barth's remarks on Rom. 11:21–13:7 were titled "The Great Negative Possibility"—VB]—or precisely because of that. People attended, too, more than on other Sundays."

[10.] The references are to Fritz Onnasch and Eberhard Bethge.

Meditation texts:

March 13–March 19:	John 18:1–27
March 20–March 26:	John 18:28–40.
March 27–April 2:	John 19:1–15
April 3–April 9:	John 19:16–30
April 10–April 16:	John 19:31–42
April 17–April 23:	John 20:1–18
April 24–April 30:	John 20:19–31
May 1–May 7:	John 21
May 8–May 14:	1 John 1–2:6
May 15–May 21:	1 John 2:7–17

12. To Else Niemöller^[1]

38

Friedrichsbrunn, April 18, 1938

Dear Mrs. Niemöller,

During this Passion Week, the thoughts of many people, including many younger theologians who are attached to your husband and pray for him daily, go to you and your children. God has provided that a special bless-

[11.] [I.e., compared with the situation in Finkenwalde.—VB]

[12.] The first session of the collective pastorates in Köslin and Groß-Schlönwitz concluded at the end of March 1938. Bonhoeffer and Eberhard Bethge then left for a two-week holiday at the Bonhoeffer family vacation house in Friedrichsbrunn, until around April 25, 1938, when the summer session in the collective pastorates began. See the comment in Bethge's April 16, 1938, circular letter to his family and friends from Friedrichsbrunn: "With great thankfulness I can report that we did good work for an entire winter semester, and arrived at the end without any interference [i.e., by the Gestapo—VB]. . . . We [Bethge and Bonhoeffer] came here via Weimar and Eisenach. . . . A large swastika flag as a drapery in the church, as it was in Eisenach on the lectern there, with a large 'yes' [for the occasion of the April 10, 1938, plebiscite on the Austrian *Anschlu*—VB]. On the same evening in Eisenach, up on the Wartburg tower . . . a large golden swastika was erected, in the place of the cross, and that during Passion week. A good example for confirmation classes!" (in Andersen, *So ist es gewesen*, 325 and 327).

[1.] LKA EKvW, file 5,1, fasc. 2, no. 431; handwritten. See also the typewritten copy in *NL*, A 45 (47). Previously published in *GS* 2:307. Martin Niemöller was tried for "misuse of the pulpit," offenses under the Malicious Practices Act [*Heimtückegesetz*], and "encouraging disobedience against state orders." His trial began on February 7, 1938, and ended on March 2, 1938, with a de facto acquittal [he was sentenced to time already served—VB]. Niemöller was taken to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp as Hitler's "personal prisoner" after Hitler's cabinet refused to consent to Hitler's demand for Niemöller's rearrest. See Niemöller, *Was würde Jesus dazu sagen?* 62–64.

ing should now radiate from your home to the church-community and the entire church. When those of us on the outside hear that you can remain steadfast and confident and patient in all your sadness, it truly serves only the honor of God and God's church. This is a great mercy of God for which we are thankful. It is indeed a great joy that, wherever one goes, people still ask about your husband, and that simple parishioners, when they visit the authorities, witness with great steadfastness to that for which your husband is suffering. That has a powerful effect upon the congregations. In all this, may God grant you and your children the great joy of Easter.

In the solidarity of daily intercessory prayer, greetings to you, with great admiration and gratitude, yours

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

39 **13. To Spes von Bismarck**^[1]

Dear Spes,

At Pentecost^[2] my thoughts go especially to you. I hope that your recollection of confirmation classes and confirmation day is as lively as mine. More important than the recollection, however, is to keep proceeding. And I believe that the church, despite everything, is once more on the path. Hopefully, we can see each other again soon. Please greet your parents, and warm greetings to you yourself, from your

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

14. To Martin Strege^[1]

Schlawe, Koppelstrasse 9, June 9, 1938

Dear Brother Strege,

Herewith I am extending a friendly invitation to you to the first meeting of the theological committee on Wednesday, June 15, 1938, in Greifenberg (the superintendent's office) at 11:30 a.m. Agenda: 1. Constituting the com-

[1.] In the personal possession of Spes Pompe; handwritten postcard; postmarked Berlin-Marienburg, Bahnpost, Zug 24/28, June 5, 1938. Cf. *NL*, A 45 (48). Previously published in *GS* 6:436. Bonhoeffer confirmed Spes von Bismarck on April 9, 1938, in Kieckow; cf. *DB-ER*, 439, and Bonhoeffer's sermon on Mark 9:24, 3/3.

[2.] June 5, 1938.

[1.] *NL*, A 45 (49); later typewritten copy. Previously published in *GS* 6:437–38.

mittee. 2. Drawing up a statement concerning the message: “What divides us from the Council of Brethren” (Boeters)^[2] at the wish of the Council of Br[ethren]. 3. Loyalty oath issue.^[3] 4. Other.

With brotherly greetings, your
Bonhoeffer

15. To Paula Bonhoeffer^[1]

40

Dear Mama,

I’m here for several days.^[2] I’ve been on the road a great deal recently. So I didn’t get around to writing. But I’m doing quite well. In the coming week I’ll spend a few days vacation in Rowe by the sea.^[3]

Greetings from your
Dietrich

[2.] In 1937–38, the “Pomeranian Circle of Brethren” gathered under the leadership of Stettin consistorial official Ernst Boeters; this group increasingly distanced itself from the Council of Brethren’s continuation of the course taken by the Confessing synod in Dahlem, with its claim to church leadership. [At the October 1934 Dahlem synod, Confessing Church leaders were divided between radicals who claimed that the Confessing Church represented the true German Evangelical Church and that there could be no compromise with the German Christians (thereby raising the specter of a schism within the GEC) and the moderate factions that sought to preserve church unity through compromise. The Dahlem declaration that emerged from the synod represented the radical viewpoint; hence Boeters’s group would have represented the more moderate course.—VB] Boeters’s group had outlined its position in a document, “What Divides Us from the Council of Brethren” of May 14, 1938. Cf. Meier, *Der evangelische Kirchenkampf*, 3:281.

[3.] On April 20, 1938 [Hitler’s birthday—VB], Friedrich Werner ordered pastors to swear a loyalty oath to Adolf Hitler, under threat of removal from office. Regarding the controversial manner with which the leadership councils of the Confessing Church dealt with this, see *DB-ER*, 607–20, as well as Glenthøj, “Die Eideskrise in der Bekennenden Kirche 1938.”

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (10); handwritten postcard; postmarked Zingst, June 21, 1938; previously unpublished.

[2.] Bonhoeffer was on a retreat with his former Finkenwalde seminarians in Zingst on June 20–25, 1938. See *DB-ER*, 593.

[3.] [Rowe was on the Baltic seacoast.—VB]

16. From the Finkenwalde Brothers to Gerritdina Stokmann^[1]

June 23, 1938

Dear Miss Stokmann,^[2]

As the brothers of Werner Koch,^[3] we want to assure you of our fellowship with him. The community in the body of Jesus Christ helps transcend spatial separation—and more: it helps conquer the trial of faith.

With heartfelt prayers of intercession, yours
[signatures]

41 **17. To His Parents**^[1]

My dear Parents,

The days in Zingst, where I was together with all the former Finkenwalde brethren, were undisturbed and lovely. Now we are spending a few days vacation here^[2] before the work goes on. I hear that no changes in our work are to be expected in the near future. Perhaps that has something to do with Uncle Rudi?^[3]—I lie here on the beach in the sun and am reading. That is very lovely.

Greetings from your grateful
Dietrich

[1.] In the personal possession of the Koch family at the time of *DBW* publication; handwritten postcard, written by Christoph Harhausen, stamped Zingst, June 23, 1938. Signed by Bonhoeffer and forty-four participants of the retreat of former Finkenwaldians in Zingst. Cf. the subsequently typewritten copy in *NL*, A 4,45 (50). Previously unpublished.

[2.] Gerritdina Stokmann was Werner Koch's fiancée.

[3.] Werner Koch had been arrested following the publication of the May 28, 1936, memorandum from the second provisional administration of the German Evangelical Church to Adolf Hitler; Koch had been imprisoned since February 13, 1937, in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. The text of the memorandum is in Greschat, *Zwischen Widersprung und Widerstand*, 104–43. See also *DB-ER*, 531–35. [See also Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 83–85.—VB]

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (11); handwritten postcard; postmarked Stolp, June 29, 1938. Partially reproduced in *GS* 2:533 and *GS* 6:436.

[2.] Bonhoeffer was together with Eberhard Bethge in Rowe on the Baltic Sea.

[3.] "Uncle Rudi," a reference to General Rüdiger Graf von der Goltz, was the Bonhoeffer family code name for preparations for war that, in this instance, meant a reduction in the Gestapo's measures against the church's work. See *DB-ER*, 626, about this situation, as well as Bonhoeffer's September 18, 1938, letter to Erwin Sutz, 1/29.

18. To Martin Strege^[1]

Schlawe, Koppelstrasse 9, July 4, 1938

Dear Brother Strege,

I hereby invite you again to the first meeting of the theological committee on Wednesday, July 13, in *Köslin*, Elisenstrasse 3, at 11:30 a.m. (the same agenda).^[2] I kindly request a prompt confirmation of your coming.

With brotherly greetings, your
Bonhoeffer

19. To Friedrich-Ernst Schröter^[1]

42

July 10, 1938

Dear Brother Schroeter,

Heartfelt thanks for your letter.^[2] I'm very pleased that the work has had a good start.^[3] We, too, can still work in peace and are very grateful for each day. We hear almost nothing from our brothers in the west.^[4] I am traveling as little as possible, because to me it seems important above all that work can still proceed in peace in some places. That is also so important for our brothers. With regard to Matt. 5:34, one is happy here when one-fifth remain clear.^[5] The pseudo-Lutheran exposition of the Sermon on the

[1.] *NL*, A 45 (51); later typewritten; previously unpublished.

[2.] Cf. Bonhoeffer's June 9, 1938, letter to Strege, 1/14.

[1.] Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Handschriftenabteilung, Autogr. I/2431; handwritten; no return address given, but probably written in Groß-Schlönwitz; previously unpublished.

[2.] Letter not extant.

[3.] Friedrich-Ernst Schröter was a seminarian in the fourth Finkenwalde session (winter 1936–37) and worked afterward as an illegal pastor of the Confessing Church in the Old Prussian Union Church.

[4.] The reference is to the former Finkenwalde seminarians in the western provinces of the Confessing Church of the Old Prussian Union Church.

[5.] Matt. 5:34–35: "But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven . . . or by the earth." The reference is to the vehement debates within the Confessing Church about the loyalty oath to Hitler, which [church chancellery director—VB] Friedrich Werner had decreed for pastors on April 20, 1938. See especially Bonhoeffer's August 11, 1938, letter (1/22) about this to the Old Prussian Union Council of Brethren, as well as his August 23, 1938, circular letter, 1/24.

Mount, and with it the theology that was taught throughout Pomerania, is once more avenging itself here.^[6]

43 Moreover the ghost of Essen still haunts this region and is turning the heads of the best people.^[7] I see only new confusion and apostasy coming out of this. The planned agreement to be of one opinion about Barmen 1^[8] (without calling Barmen by name, since one must almost begin to be ashamed of it in the Confessing Church!) in the spirit of Burghart^[9] is simply a falsehood and a surrendering of God's grace, which God extended to us in Barmen and Dahlem. The eyes of many brethren in the Confessing Church are still captivated by numbers. If we don't get clarity soon with regard to this Essen matter, much will fall apart. Here much work is being postponed "because now the solution from Essen is coming." This is terrible. Fortunately the young brethren are clear. That is a great gift and help.

With all good wishes for you and your work and with brotherly greetings to you and the brethren, your

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The *Discipleship* is intended for the circle of brethren, but in case of emergency for you.^[10]

[6.] Bonhoeffer understood his exegesis of the Sermon on the Mount in *Discipleship* as genuinely "Lutheran" and polemicly vehemently against the distortion of Luther's teaching by Luther's "students." Cf. *DBWE* 4, esp. 49–53. Later, in *Ethics*, he particularly accuses "pseudo-Lutheranism" of fatally ripping asunder the unity of the whole of reality [*Wirklichkeitsganze*] into "two realms" and, with that, of proclaiming the "autonomy of the orders of this world" against "the law of Christ" (*DBWE* 6:56; see also 289–91).

[7.] The negotiations in Essen in the summer of 1938 attempted to unify the different factions within the Confessing Church; for Bonhoeffer's rejection of these, see especially his September 10, 1938, letter to Karl Koch and Friedrich Müller (1/26) and the letter of the same date to Wilhelm Niesel (1/27).

[8.] Among other things, the Essen negotiations focused on working out a common understanding of the May 1934 Barmen theological declaration; the first thesis of the declaration was particularly contested. [The first thesis read: "We reject the false doctrine that the church could and should recognize as a source of its proclamation, beyond and besides this one Word of God, yet other events, powers, historic figures, and truths as God's revelation." From Hockenos, *Church Divided*, 179.—VB]

[9.] Hermann Georg Burghart represented the so-called neutrals in the Essen negotiations. In Bonhoeffer's June 1936 essay, "On the Question of Church Communion" ("Zur Frage nach der Kirchengemeinschaft"), his judgment was that "the neutrals pose a special problem. In the first place, one must say that in reality there are no neutrals; they simply belong to the other side" [*DBW* 14:675].

[10.] Apparently Bonhoeffer had enclosed a copy of his book *Discipleship*.

20. To Martin Strege

44

20.1. Letter^[1]

Groß-Schlönwitz, parsonage, July 14, 1938

Dear Brother Strege,

A final attempt to bring about the meeting. *Wednesday the twentieth of July in Labes* (superintendent's office). Please let me know soon. Hopefully, this time it will work!

Cordial greetings, your
Bonhoeffer

20.2. Telegram^[2]

No meeting = Bonhoeffer

21. To the Finkenwalde Brothers**21.1. Bonhoeffer's Circular Letter^[1]**

(Personal letter)

Dear Brothers,

The holidays together continue to live in us.^[2] It was a rich time such as I have only very seldom experienced. In the two letters of John that we meditated on at the end, John not only wanted to communicate with his brethren “with paper and ink” but also desired to speak with them “face to face” “so that our joy may be complete” (2 John 12). Certainly, after our days together, we understand this better than ever. More than everything else, the spoken word is what touches us, draws us toward responsibility, strengthens us. In the conversations that went uninterrupted from morning till late in the night, the Lord Jesus Christ was among us and firmly joined us anew. We were granted to hear one another, helping our brothers think through and bear their decisions, and we were able once more to address one another with Jesus's call, the only help to faith and obedience. Thus

45

[1.] *NL*, A 45 (52); later typewritten; previously unpublished.

[2.] *NL*, A 45 (53); later typewritten; telegram from Groß-Schlönwitz on July 18, 1938; previously unpublished.

[1.] *NL*, A 48,3 (4); typewritten mimeograph with handwritten signature; no place or date, certainly sent from Groß-Schlönwitz on July 18, 1938. Previously published in *GS* 2:533–35.

[2.] The retreat of former Finkenwalde seminarians was held in Zingst on June 20–25, 1938.

now we know once more how fulfilled our joy is through such encounters in fellowship. In these days many may have realized again how poor we had become, how often our prayer for one another had become empty and thoughtless during the time when we didn't see one another. It is one of the many gifts of these days that with intercession we can be there again for one another in an utterly different reality, and now hopefully after these "face to face" conversations, the conversation through "paper and ink" will be revitalized.

Once again, I thank those who attended for coming, with all my heart. Some greatly sacrificed time and money for the sake of their brothers. It was no small matter to come from the Rhine and from easternmost East Prussia. But I am certain that each of you returned home just as rewarded as the rest of us. To those who were not there, I may say: we really missed you. Many sent us faithful brotherly greetings. We thank them especially. Indeed, they were present in our community through "paper and ink." We knew that they, too, had to make a sacrifice by not coming. There were questions about some, of whom unfortunately we didn't know much. But certainly the many cards of greeting that went out to those who were absent gave to all a sign of the community that exists.

46 Forty-five brothers came. The photographs, which we are still awaiting, will preserve a memory for us. We will certainly do everything to come together next year as well.^[3] We are grateful that it was possible this year, despite everything.

I greet all of you in the fellowship of prayer for the health of your body, soul, and spirit (3 John 2), for your homes, for your ministry, and for your congregations. Don't let yourselves be confused by the multitude of negotiations and plans that we are in the midst of once again.^[4] "Be on your guard, so that you do not lose what we have worked for, but may receive a full reward" (2 John 8).

Your faithful
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

[3.] A retreat of former Finkenwalde seminarians did not take place in 1939.

[4.] This refers to the Essen negotiations in the summer of 1938 about finding consensus among the different factions within the Confessing Church and the disputes about the pastors' loyalty oath to Hitler. See *DB-ER*, 599–605, and Niesel, *Kirche unter dem Wort*, 163–67.

21.2. Report by One Participant about the Zingst Retreat, June 20–25, 1938^[5]

Report by a brother

It is not easy to report on our holidays together. The senior brothers can at least imagine the external surroundings, the swimming, the games on the beach, conversations behind the dunes, and everything else that this location has made so familiar to us.^[6] The essential contents of these days are difficult to describe, but if I now simply enumerate what was done and discussed, you may nonetheless be able to feel some of the experience.

The day of course began with devotions in the usual form and, following breakfast, meditation, immediately followed by singing.^[7] Before supper, too, we sang for a half hour. Brother Bonhoeffer held the Bible study in the morning about the concept of temptation, an exegesis of the sixth petition.^[8] It is to be hoped that this study will later be made available to all the brothers. Free time was from 11:30 to 4, including the midday meal, which naturally was used by many for personal individual conversations.

After coffee, discussions were held together, introduced by short reports by individual brothers on their experience with preaching, pastoral care, confirmation classes. As to preaching, the main issue was to say one thing and yet to go through the entire text, further about the necessity of speaking concretely and about the proper way to preach paranetic texts^[9] as gospel.

In the discussion about pastoral care the need of probably everyone was addressed, namely, how to help parishioners who wish to be Christians but who, out of distrust or fear, shut their eyes to the path of the Confessing Church. Both the liberating aspect of the good news and the commandment about the “first step” should be strongly impressed on the many enslaved consciences.^[10] In so doing, we must consider that the red card and participation in worship services of intercession^[11] are already “solid food” that not everyone can digest,

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[5.] *NL*, A 48,3 (4); typewritten mimeographed addition to Bonhoeffer's July 18, 1938, circular letter. Partially reproduced in *GS* 2:535–37. The author is not identified.

[6.] The work of the Confessing Church preachers' seminary under Bonhoeffer's leadership began on April 26, 1935, in Zingst, before the move to Finkenwalde on June 24, 1935. See *DB-ER*, 424–28, and *DBW* 14:1043.

[7.] For more regarding the daily routine and its individual components in Finkenwalde and in the collective pastorates, see *DBWE* 5:48–80.

[8.] See 2/4. [The reference is to “Lead us not into temptation,” the sixth petition in the Lord's Prayer.—VB]

[9.] [Sermons or exhortations.—VB]

[10.] Cf. *DBWE* 4:61–67.

[11.] The reference is to membership in the Confessing Church (usually signified by a red membership card) and participation in the worship services where the Confessing

whereas the individual's personal responsibility for home and parish is "the milk"^[12] that must first be given to such people.

The discussion about confirmation classes included the necessity of beginning with regular devotions, introducing the children through this to the Psalter, of evaluating the aid of the monthly devotional text and hymn, of introducing them lovingly to daily Bible reading, the necessity of having them learn much and strictly, and dealing separately with those less gifted. The collection of verses for fourteen- to eighteen-year-olds, now being distributed by the VL,^[13] will be very useful for our classes, next to other essential sources of help. Perhaps we have still not paid enough attention to the fact that instruction in confessing^[14] belongs in the confirmation classes as well.

48 In the evenings we first received the brothers' reports from their parishes and then discussed the situation of our Confessing Church in general and that of our younger brothers^[15] in particular. The report by one Saxon brother^[16] about the work in his province gave us joy. Recently several brothers were retained by their congregations under explicit directive there until they were forced out by physical violence. There, too, the first attempts at regular parish evangelization, a mobile ministry of the proclamation of the Word, have been made by those brothers available for it.^[17] It was clear to us that there can never be any talk of lack of work among us, even when the path to a pastorate is largely blocked for us, and that we must try everything to remain in the parishes where we have been sent, even if in some places a Council of Brethren neglects its duties of spiritual leadership, and thus our obedience to the Council of Brethren must lead this body to issue the appropriate directives to us.^[18] The fact that stagnation appears to have set in among some of the church leadership, that here and there simple obedience and gladness are in danger of becoming lost and

Church intercessory list, with the names of those suffering under the state's repressive measures (e.g., prohibitions on public speaking, removal from parishes, confinement in prison or a concentration camp), was read.

[12.] Cf. 1 Cor. 3:2.

[13.] The reference is to *Evangelische Christenlehre: Ein Altersstufen-Lehrplan*, offered by Martin Albertz and Bernhard Forck in 1938. [The VL, or *Vorläufigekirchenleitung*, was the second provisional government of the Confessing Church, of which Albertz and Forck were both members.—VB]

[14.] Cf. the plan for confirmation instruction in *DBW* 14, 2/27. ["Instruction in confessing" (*Beichtunterweisung*) refers to confession of sin, not the creedal confessions.—VB]

[15.] [I.e., the "illegal" Confessing Church pastors.—VB]

[16.] Probably Hans-Henning Zippel.

[17.] Regarding Bonhoeffer's distinction between the offices of ministry and of preaching, see section 1 of Bonhoeffer's lecture on homiletics (1935–36) in *DBW* 14, 2/10, as well as *DB-ER*, 609.

[18.] [By "appropriate directive," Bonhoeffer means the order to remain in the parishes.—VB]

that in their stead the focus on the numbers, winning over those who stand on the sidelines, the bishops, the neutrals, etc. is costing so much good energy, has moved us to write a letter to the leading men of our church,^[19] which is to be delivered personally by several of the brothers. (Whoever wants the letter may write Brother Bonhoeffer.) We know that some of the brothers in leadership are grateful for such voices from the circle of brothers.

There was yet another burning task and obligation for us, namely, the service of pastoral care that we owe those brothers who have left us for the consistory.^[20] In the near future, each of them will be visited by two brothers. Here it has become clear to us anew that we must take our visits to one another and to all brothers in our respective church districts as an unconditional necessity. The decisions that all of us face now and in the time to come are difficult to bear alone. One more thing we agreed upon with one another: to help one another in the time to come in evangelization [Volksmission],^[21] each time with four 49
brothers who live closest to one another. The address list shows us who our neighbors are and whom we can invite to join us in this evangelization in the manner that has been worked out among us.

Several had to leave already on Friday. So Friday morning we held our communion, strengthened by the words of our meditation text: "And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith."^[22] We are not victorious, but we are allowed to participate in faith in the victory of Christ, who has conquered all that causes us such crisis and anxiety. And it is *our* belief, the belief of our entire brotherhood, to which this victory belongs. Our thanksgiving is that this belief has been strengthened anew for us in these days. For that reason we hope that such a period of fellowship will be made possible next year as well.

We very much want to tell you that we have thought of you all daily in our intercessions, particularly of our two sick brothers, Brothers Lohmann and Wichmann.^[23] Likewise for our brother Koch^[24] and all those imprisoned. We

[19.] Letter not extant.

[20.] [The reference is to those Finkenwalde seminarians who had become legalized; this was a bitter blow to Bonhoeffer. See the recollections by one of them in Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 97–98.—VB] Regarding the legalization controversy within the "brotherhood of young theologians in Pomerania," see DB-ER, 607–20, and Klän, *An der Wegscheide*.

[21.] Regarding the tradition of the Finkenwalde seminarians' parish mission outreach, see DB-ER, 542–45, and DBW 14, 2/10.4. [The *Volksmission* emerged in the nineteenth century in both Protestant and Catholic churches as an evangelization movement. Throughout this volume it has been translated accordingly, but readers should note that in DBWE 16 the editor chose to translate it as "church renewal." Cf. DBWE 16:27.—VB]

[22.] 1 John 5:4.

[23.] The reference is to Gerhard Lohmann and Georg Wichmann.

[24.] The reference is to Werner Koch; see the postcard of June 23, 1938, to Gerritina Stokmann, 1/16.

thank you for sending your letters and greetings here. All of us send greetings to you.

Meditation texts:

July 10–July 16:	Jude
July 17–July 23:	John 4:5–42
July 24–July 30:	John 5:1–29
July 31–August 6:	John 6:1–34
August 7–August 13:	John 6:35–69
August 14–August 18:	John 8:1–36
August 21–August 27:	John 9:1–41
August 38–September 3:	John 11:1–45

50 **22. To the Council of Brethren of the Old Prussian Union**^[1]

August 11, 1938

To the Old Prussian Union Council of Brethren, Berlin:

For a Confessing pastor, it is a difficult decision to have to speak out against a decision of an Old Prussian Union Confessing synod,^[2] particularly when he can only look back with deep gratitude and deference to the service

[1.] *NL*, A 45 (54); carbon copy, initialed by hand; no return address. Previously published in *GS* 2:308–15. At the peak of the nationalistic frenzy in Germany that followed the *Anschluss* of Austria (March 12–13, 1938) into the German Reich, Friedrich Werner, president of the Evangelical High Church Council in Berlin, issued a “decree regarding the loyalty oath of clergy and church officials of the Evangelical Church of the Old Prussian Union” (Beckmann, *Kirchliches Jahrbuch 1933–1944*, 232–33). The text of the required oath was “I swear: I shall be faithful and obedient to Adolf Hitler, the Führer of the German Reich and people, and shall observe the laws and conscientiously carry out the duties of my office, so help me God.” Besides Bonhoeffer, Karl Barth protested vehemently against the synodal resolution that declared pastors free to swear the loyalty oath in his “open letter” “to the 6th Confessing synod of the Evangelical Church of the Old Prussian Union” (Beckmann, *Kirchliches Jahrbuch 1933–1944*, 252–55). See also Gerlach-Praetorius, *Die Kirche vor der Eidesfrage*, 92–170. [See also Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 156–58.—VB]

[2.] The sixth Confessing synod of the Old Prussian Union Church met on June 11–13, 1938, in Berlin-Nikolassee; the second meeting of the sixth Confessing synod was held in Berlin-Steglitz on July 31, 1938. (Cf. *DB-ER*, 599–603, and Glenthøj, “Die Eideskrise in der Bekennenden Kirche 1938.”) Only in mid-August 1938, after the overwhelming majority of pastors had taken the oath, did a circular letter of July 13, 1938, from Martin Bormann “to all *Gauleiter*” [regional party leaders—VB] of the NSDAP become known, in which he remarked that the pastors’ loyalty oath to Hitler only had “internal church relevance,” since church leaders had ordered it “on their own . . . without

done by this synod up to now, when he knows of God's blessing and promise that have lain upon the previous synods. But a synod that has dared to call forth a majority decision and thereby to deviate from the original Christian [urchristlich]^[3] principle that synodal decisions are to be unanimous (in any case where Christian faith and Christian life are affected), a synod that believes it could answer for the spiritual violation of a strong minority (in the opinion, certainly, that it performs a decisive brotherly service in such a difficult matter through a "directive"), must indeed take into account that the dissent within the synod extends far beyond the synod, into the clergy and the congregations. Nonetheless, for someone who had not borne synodal responsibility and who can therefore only judge by the outcome itself, it is difficult enough to stand as an individual against a synod that bowed in prayer for the leadership through the Holy Spirit. He must be aware of the danger of arrogance [superbia], and he must be prepared to be summoned to better knowledge and to obedience. On the basis of the synodal resolutions of the second meeting of the sixth Confessing synod, I can do nothing but raise the charge against these resolutions that they are an offense against Christian fellowship, and also will be culpable for confusion and offenses to consciences.

51

1. From the perspective of the responsibility that has been placed upon me, I must first say that the synodal resolution must bring the young preachers of our church into difficult distress.^[4] Assuming that (point 1) the question whether the state required the oath really could not have been clarified further,^[5] nonetheless it remains highly unsettling that not even where it was a matter of immediate demands on Dr. Werner (points 2–4), the synod

obtaining the decision of the Führer beforehand" (cf. Beckmann, *Kirchliches Jahrbuch 1933–1944*, 255). The party would take no position on the matter and make no distinction "whether a member of the clergy had taken the oath to the Führer or not." Even the Prussian minister for church affairs, Hans Kerrl, saw to it that those who refused would not be disciplinarily punished—"It was a crushing blow" (*DB-ER*, 601).

[3.] [This term signifies an origin going back to early Christianity.—VB]

[4.] Neither Bonhoeffer himself nor the "illegal" Confessing Church theologians were immediately affected by the decree to take the oath, since they did not hold "legal" pastorates and consequently were not registered with the Evangelical High Church Council. The decree to take the oath primarily affected the older pastors who considered themselves part of the Confessing Church but who could now lose their "legal" pastorate if they refused to take the oath. In protesting, Bonhoeffer's concern was that the Confessing Church as a whole reject the required oath requirement on theological and political grounds, so as not to endanger the cooperation and trust between the "elder" and the "younger" [i.e., "illegal"—VB] pastors.

[5.] Cf. the documentation of the Steglitz resolutions in Beckmann, *Kirchliches Jahrbuch 1933–1944*, 250–52.

insisted upon the complete clarification of its necessary demands. To point
 52 2: to what extent did Dr. Werner “accept” the loyalty oath when this^[6] has
 not publicly been determined, neither in the protocol of the oath itself
 nor, for example, in the official gazette [Amtsblatt] of the GEC? The very
 fact that the declaration^[7] can be recorded in the personnel files makes
 it clear that matters here are being decided not ecclesially but personally.
 As long as the declaration of the loyalty oath is not accepted generally and
 publicly as a *church* declaration, no responsible church regulation has been
 met. It already becomes clear on this point that the overall question has
 not been dealt with and resolved from the perspective of what the *church*
 of Jesus Christ has to say and require in the matter of this oath, for the
 sake of the sacredness of an oath, regardless of what consequences that
 can have. Instead, the question has been how the individual pastor could
 personally take this oath without a too heavily burdened conscience. But
 that is a different question, and thus to this date the question has not been
 raised in the Confessing Church. This is where we might seek the reason
 why the synod was so unsuccessful in turning this affair of the oath into a
 clear confession to the Lord Jesus Christ. Why was the synod content with
 private assurances for individual cases and did not insist that Dr. Werner
 announce the acceptance of the loyalty oath publicly, before the eyes of the
 state as the actual partner to the oath? Why did people here let themselves
 be satisfied with an unclear situation, which led all the young brothers to
 ask themselves the dangerous question as to why they alone should always
 insist on ultimate clarity in their relationship to the consistory, when such
 unclear relations between the permanently appointed [beamtet] pastors
 and Dr. Werner are allowed to prevail, indeed are approved by the synod?
 The same holds true for points 3 and 4. The public recognition of the fact
 that the vow of ordination is binding for those who take it has, so far as I
 can see, simply not been stated in a clear, public, and understandable man-
 53 ner for everyone. To the naive reader, point 4 gives the impression that the
 address by the EOK about the oath^[8] was left unspoken. Otherwise one
 would not have been satisfied with some kind of oral and written declara-
 tions, as though such things suddenly had acquired some kind of value

[6.] [I.e., the oath requirement.—VB]

[7.] [I.e., that the oath has been taken.—VB]

[8.] The Evangelical Oberkirchenrat, or High Church Council, issued an address that was to be read before the oath was administered by the consistory president. The concern of this church body in decreeing the loyalty oath was explained as follows: “The pastor, in confirming the conscientious fulfillment of the duties of his ministry, testifies that he is willing to fulfill the commission he took upon himself in his ordination in its entirety, in constant awareness of the obligation toward Führer, Volk and Reich. A loyalty oath to the

in the church. If this had been considered to be a matter of the entire church and not as a private affair, then the younger brothers would have indeed been considered in this matter. Then, even for their sake, complete clarity, openness, and truthfulness would have been insisted upon, instead of giving them a rather questionable example, to say the least, for church decisions and a burden on their consciences. Precisely in light of this, one would wish that the judgment of those ordained by the Confessing Church and those colleagues who are not publicly recognized—where this indeed affects them—would not have been considered superfluous and would have been listened to. To my knowledge—and I state this explicitly and with deep regret—this was not the case in the various preliminary discussions. Never has a confessional synod left its young preachers so alone as in this irrevocable decision.

2. Personally I have the following to add: if I see this correctly, the second meeting no longer made the theological question, as to whether an oath was possible at all, the topic of discussion. Instead, it bound itself, by the rules of order, to examine whether the demands raised in the first meeting^[9] had in the meantime been fulfilled—that is, it didn't have to answer a question of confession of faith, but had to make a judgment about the matter at hand. Within the synod this judgment varied. Even where common confessional prerequisites existed, no unanimity in the judgment of the matters at hand could be reached. (Here I leave aside the fact that one could raise justifiable reservations, based upon the confessions, already against the resolutions of the first meeting, and that for this reason it was deeply regrettable that the second meeting, by following its agenda disregarded or had to disregard this.) In any case, the situation in the second meeting was that interpretations of the given facts stood opposed to other interpretations. One may therefore indeed say that here a question of confession had turned into a personal question of conscience. Some believed—with an elastic conscience—to see in the matter at hand prerequisites given that would just barely suffice for a personal taking of the oath. Those with less elastic consciences feared that not everything here was as yet entirely truthful, entirely clear and pure, and that for this reason it must be seriously advised against taking the oath under these circumstances. The synod did not bow to this crisis; it did not take up discussion of this question once more from the very

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Führer transcends all differences in ecclesial viewpoints. It signifies the personal attachment [*Bindung*] to the Führer under the solemn appeal to God" (Beckmann, *Kirchliches Jahrbuch 1933–1944*, 234).

[9.] Cf. the documentation of the resolutions by the synod in Berlin-Nikolassee in Beckmann, *Kirchliches Jahrbuch 1933–1944*, 239–40, esp. 244–47.

beginning in spiritual calm and patience, in the certainty that the Holy Spirit could lead even a divided synod back to unanimity. It did not venture to halt the meeting, commend the matter to God, call for the intercession of pastors and congregations, in order to come together again, after some time had passed, on the same matter and struggle for unanimity. Rather, the synod reached for a shortcut self-made solution by force. It *issued a directive* to the brethren to take the oath and with that (to be sure, in the opinion that in precisely this it was doing a brotherly service) broke the rule of brotherly love as it is given in the New Testament, and it has also made itself culpable for the confusion of consciences and of their guilt.

Rom. 14:1: “Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions.”

Rom. 14:15: “If your brother or sister is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died.”

Rom. 14:21: “It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother or sister stumble.”

Rom. 14:23: “But those who have doubts are condemned if they eat, because they do not act from faith.”

55 1 Cor. 8:9–12: “But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed. But when you thus sin against members of your family, and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.”

There are only two possibilities. Either this is a question of confession and the majority see their decision as the decision of the Holy Spirit; then those who have strayed, after they have been instructed, must be submitted to doctrinal discipline [Lehrzucht], and, finally, in case of failure, fellowship with them must be suspended. Then, according to the opinion of the synod, the application of paragraph 4 (removal from office)^[10] would quite justifiably come into effect for this errant majority.^[11] With that, the dissenting brethren are expelled from the community of the Confessing Church. Or this was a matter of a different judgment of conscience; then, however, [one] offended against the weaker brethren with the *directive* to

[10.] In the oath decree, Werner had explicitly threatened removal from office if the swearing of the required oath were refused.

[11.] [Ilse Tödt believes that here, as in the first sentence of this paragraph, Bonhoeffer meant “minority.”—VB]

swear (“to eat meat,” “to eat the sacrifice to the gods”),^[12] for in the church-community the rule is that the stronger should rather renounce their freedom than confuse the weaker and constrain them to sin. Every constraint upon weak consciences makes itself guilty against Christ, who died for the sake of the weak. The “directive” of the synod signifies the unbrotherly and guilty abandonment of the weak and the establishment of an unbearable law in the church-community. The freedom of the individual conscience that longs for complete truthfulness must be respected here, since the views of the facts differ, precisely because it is not possible for the majority to convince the dissenters to assent to the resolutions of the second meeting on the basis of Scripture and confession. It would truly be dangerous if one were to talk these dissenting brothers into consenting that their longings were Enthusiastic,^[13] that we could not help being sinners and therefore were to sin more boldly [*pecca fortiter*].^[14] That would be the most serious misuse of the central article of our Protestant church.^[15] I can hardly escape the impression that in this synodal directive the world’s judgment has prevailed over the brotherly love for the weak and over the community within the church. The synod shifts the responsibility for the lack of clarity in the oath affair to others and regards the consciences of the dissenters only as something “to work out.” Where is there room in the New Testament for this latter term? (They couldn’t seriously have been thinking here of Matt. 16:19?!)^[16]

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3. What is to be done? In the next few days the oath will have been irrevocably taken, on the responsibility of the synod, and some consciences will be burdened through this. The rift thereby brought about in the Confessing Church is—in human terms—irreparable. That is the particular gravity of this oath affair. I can only regard the guilt that the Confessing Church has taken upon itself, through the “*directive*” to take the oath, as the outcome of a path where a lack of authority, gladness in confession, courage of faith, and readiness to suffer has been evident for some time. It will be hidden from no one that this means a grave temptation for many parishioners and pastors. Will we learn from this? Will the Confessing Church be willing to confess openly its guilt and division? Will it make the room for prayer for

[12.] [Cf. Romans 14:21 and 1 Cor. 8:10.—VB]

[13.] [The reference is to the Reformation movement.—VB]

[14.] This alludes to Martin Luther’s statement to “sin boldly, but believe and rejoice in Christ that much more boldly” (*pecca fortiter, sed fortius fide et gaude in Christo*) (LW 48:282). See also *DBWE* 4:51.

[15.] The reference is to the Augsburg Confession, Article 4 (*Book of Concord*, 38–39).

[16.] [“Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”—VB]

forgiveness, and for a new beginning, which would be proper in this hour? Will it in this way honor the truth and once more console the consciences that yearn for truth alone, of those brethren who have split off, and bind their consciences to God's word? Will the confessional synods learn that it is necessary to consult and decide in the calm and patience demanded by this matter, despite all dangers and difficulties? Will they once and for all have learned that majority resolutions in matters of conscience murder the spirit? Will the confessional synod have the authority to speak once more to the younger brethren? Does it see the danger into which it has brought its word through the last meeting? Today these are open questions.

I am including several quotations by Vilmar^[17] that have become decisive for my view of the oath.

I request that the Council of Brethren pardon what is falsely seen and judged, and instruct me accordingly.

D[ietrich] B[onhoeffer]

23. To the Members of the Theological Committee of the Confessing Church in Pomerania^[1]

Theological Committee

August 18, 1938

Dear Colleagues,

The theological committee, which has to date been unable to convene due to the fact that its members live in remote places, had to be expanded with the approval of the Council of Brethren. Our brothers Bultmann, Grude, Vedder, Voßberg^[2] are hereby invited now to join the committee. Through the greater number of members, the ability of the committee to do its work is assured. I cordially ask the brothers I have named not to let us down.

The first meeting is now to take place on Thursday, August 24, at 11:30 a.m. at Elisenstrasse 3 in Köslin. I warmly invite everyone to attend. Agenda: 1. Constituting the committee. 2. The tasks of the theological committee. 3. Clarification of the theological situation in our provincial church (among

[17.] This enclosure is not extant, but see the enclosure to Bonhoeffer's August 23, 1938, circular letter to his Finkenwalde seminarians, 1/24.

[1.] *NL*, A 45 (55); later typewritten; no return address, probably sent from Schlawe. Published in *GS* 6:438.

[2.] Peter Bultmann, Werner Grude, Wilhelm Vedder, and Martin Voßberg.

other things, at the wish of the Council of Brethren, discussion of the letter, “What divides us from the Council of Brethren”^[3]. 4. Other matters.

I ask the brothers to think particularly about points 2 and 3 and to propose some suggestions.—Travel costs will be reimbursed.—I particularly request a reply as soon as possible to me (Koppelstrasse 9, Schlawe).

With brotherly greetings, your
Bonhoeffer

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23a. To Susanne Dreß^[1]

17:122

Dear Susi,

On your birthday^[2] tomorrow, we will certainly all be thinking especially of you and wish for you with all our hearts that your new year has a good and joyful beginning. Hopefully, you now also take pleasure in your new apartment.^[3] How nice that all this was already completed before the event.^[4] I am now eagerly awaiting the telephone call from Berlin.^[5] In the week after next, I am coming through Berlin^[6] and already look forward to seeing you then. Warmest greetings to you all from

17:123

Your Dietrich

The cards^[7] are the hint about a present that I can only give you when I come to Berlin.

[3.] Cf. Bonhoeffer’s June 9, 1938, letter to Martin Strege, 1/14, ed. note 2.

[1.] Literary estate of Walter and Susanne Dreß [this collection is now in the Evangelisches Zentralarchiv in Berlin—VB]; handwritten on a card with calligraphy by Rudolf Koch with the text of Ps. 23:1, 2, 4. Probably sent from Groß-Schlönwitz (see the Chronology, p. 000); probable date is August 21, 1938. Cf. *NL*, Anh. A13. Previously unpublished. Edited by Dirk Schulz.

[2.] Susanne Bonhoeffer had been born on August 22, 1909.

[3.] In Berlin-Dahlem; Walter Dreß became the successor in the Dahlem parish of Martin Niemöller, who had been taken to the concentration camp in Sachsenhausen on March 2, 1938. Concerning the bitter dispute in the congregation about a successor [to Niemöller] and which church government was considered the right one, see 1/161, ed. note 6.

[4.] On August 26, 1938, Susanne and Walter Dreß’s son Andreas was born. See also Sabine Leibholz’s August 26, 1938, letter to Bonhoeffer, 1/25.

[5.] For news of the birth.

[6.] After the 1938 summer session of the collective pastorates in Köslin and Groß-Schlönwitz had ended, Bonhoeffer traveled together with Eberhard Bethge via Berlin to Göttingen, to help the Leibholz family with their flight out of Germany. See *DB-ER*, 631–33, and 1/25.

[7.] Beginning of writing on the edge of the card.

24. To the Finkenwalde Brothers**24.1 Bonhoeffer's Circular Letter^[1]**

August 23, 1938

Dear Brothers,

The interpretive verse [Lehrtext] for this day^[2] on which I would like to send you greetings again is "Do not let anyone divert you from the goal" (Col. 2:18).^[3] That is the right word that we must say to one another today. Here Paul is speaking about an umpire in a competition who cheats us of the victory medal through false directives and suggestions. Paul says, don't let yourselves be caught or lured by such people. The victory prize is sure to be yours as long as you don't let yourselves be misled in the decisive moment and reach for other means and ways to reach the goal. Then you will be cheated and lost. Why, however, should you be so foolish as to let certain victory be taken out of your hands? Stay on the right path, stay on the straight and narrow, which leads you to the goal; hold firmly to the truth that you once recognized. In three respects, this word is a clear directive for us today: first, whoever wants to tell us that today we should seek individual solutions for our difficulties, at least for us personally, is a deceitful umpire.^[4]

59 It has become our firm certainty that we will either win the victory in the fellowship of our brethren or not at all. Those who look out only for themselves have been cheated of the community of the church. Second, those who press us to find a solution for all difficulties at all costs are giving us bad advice. They make us forget that our goal is not to be comfortable and free of conflict but to win the victory prize after a completed run. Do we seek solutions in this world, or do we await the redemption that Jesus Christ has won for us through his death? Third, to those who want to make us anxious and dubious, by suggesting that we should at the very least rescue what we have in our current state, since we have been beaten, deprived, and shut out enough, we must reply that from this current state we expect nothing at all. Whatever God wants to destroy, we will gladly allow to be destroyed. We have nothing to rescue. We did not set our hearts on establishments and institutions, not even on our own. The false reliance on works that

[1.] In the personal possession of Sigrid Krause; typewritten mimeograph with handwritten signature; no return address, probably sent from Groß-Schlönwitz. Cf. also *NL*, A 48,3 (5); later typewritten copy. Previously published in *GS* 2:537–41.

[2.] According to the Daily Texts published by the Moravian church.

[3.] [This translation follows the German Luther Bible; the NRSV reads: "Do not let anyone disqualify you."—VB]

[4.] This is an allusion to the debate about the legalization of the illegal young vicars and assistant pastors in the Confessing Church. See *DB-ER*, 611–12.

depend on the church's so-called state is just as godless as any other and must deprive us of the victory prize. But we trust firmly that God will rescue his word, and with it us, in his wondrous way. That is the only state of affairs that we consider holding on to.

Dear brothers, bear with this short interpretation. We must all learn from these things each day. I look back on the past weeks with deep gratitude. The work goes on. I have received good news from you as well, personally and through letters, but unfortunately painful news too. In recent weeks brothers Hensel and Kiausch (Pomerania)^[5] have left us.

I should like to repeat the offer to comment on your sermons.^[6] I do it gladly, and for some who are alone, perhaps it is a help. At the moment I'm reading the new book by Althaus with interest and profit: Paul and Luther on the human being (Rom. 7 and 8).^[7] Brother Hofmann^[8] recommends *Most Divine Sermons of Jobst Sackmann* (Inselbücher 476).^[9] Dear brothers, forgive me when I sincerely ask you once again to look through your bookshelves. Some things are still missing, e.g., Harnack, *History of Dogma II*.^[10] Please be so good as to send the books back soon. We need them. Enclosed you will find the promised list of themes.^[11]

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I will think intensely of you all in the coming weeks, with all these matters still pending: "Do not let anyone divert you from the goal."

In faithful brotherly fellowship, your
Bonhoeffer

Meditation texts:

Sept. 4–Sept. 10:	Hab. 1
Sept. 11–Sept. 17:	Hab. 2
Sept. 18–Sept. 24:	Hab. 3
Sept. 25–Oct. 1:	Zeph. 1
Oct. 2–Oct. 8:	Zeph. 2
Oct. 9–Oct. 15:	Zeph. 3

[5.] Rudolf Hensel (a candidate in the fifth Finkenwalde session) and Helmut Kiausch (a candidate from the Groß-Schlönwitz session in the summer of 1938) had placed themselves under the regional church consistory in Stettin [i.e., they had gone through the legalization process—VB].

[6.] Cf. Bonhoeffer's March 14, 1938, letter to the Finkenwalde brothers, 1/11.

[7.] Althaus, *Paulus und Luther über den Menschen* (1938).

[8.] Hans Hofmann.

[9.] Sackmann, *Die höchst ergötzlichen Predigten des Jobst Sackmann* (1935). [Inselbücher 476 refers to the publisher and the number of the book.—VB]

[10.] Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, vol. 2.

[11.] The enclosure follows (24.2).

Oct. 16–Oct. 22:	Rom. 12
Oct. 23–Oct. 29:	Rom. 13
Oct. 30–Nov. 5:	Rom. 14
Nov. 6–Nov. 12:	Rom. 15:1–21
Nov. 13–Nov. 19:	Rom. 15:22–16:27

61 **24.2. Enclosure: Quotations on the Oath**

from August Friedrich Christian Vilmar

Vilmar, “Theological Morality.”^[12] On the *oath*:

p. 182:^[13] The oath, however, cannot be regarded as an act of free arbitrariness, on one’s own initiative. Rather, it requires an authority that demands it. . . .

p. 183: [The oath] . . . when legitimately required by the respective authority, [is] an assurance given to that same authority for which the one who swears the oath answers with his entire godly life, with his salvation. . . .

p. 184: . . . When a Christian takes an oath, his entire soul must be directed at the same time with the clearest and objectively most complete consciousness toward God the Father and toward Christ, therewith at the same time toward the salvation that is to be held in Christ alone and toward the subject of his assurance, so that he is capable of combining in one and the same thought, with the same decisiveness and certainty: how, just as he is not in a position to alter anything with regard to God, Christ, and Christ’s salvation in the slightest degree, so too should he neither want nor be able to alter the smallest thing about the subject of his assurance. Whoever is not fully clear about the one or the other of these two, swears the oath thoughtlessly. Whoever knows the subject of his assurance to be different than he presents, swears the oath falsely. Whoever loses sight of (doesn’t fulfill) the subject of his assurance, insofar as this subject contains a promise, breaks the oath. . . . Thus perjury and the breaking of an oath are a qualified (having occurred under aggravating circumstances) blasphemy against God. . . .

p. 185: . . . That oath also [would similarly be] . . . blasphemy against God . . . if its object includes anything that is incompatible with the oath-taker’s godly life, with God’s law, with salvation. . . . Therefore the taking
62 of an oath requires that the substance of the oath must be placed and must

[12.] Vilmar, *Theological Morality*, 1871.

[13.] The page numbers refer to the numbering in the second and third sections of Vilmar’s work, which are separate from the first section.

lie in complete and utmost clarity before the eyes of the oath taker, with no doubt, not even the slightest, as to the reality (truth, possibility of fulfillment) of that substance. By the very nature of the matter, the swearing of an oath can only refer to very simple subjects. . . . On the other hand, every taking of an oath with reservations, particularly when these come from the one who takes the oath, is unconditionally reprehensible—and to take an oath with mental reservations is an unconditional perjury. . . . The one who demands the oath, not the one who takes it, is responsible for the clear posing of the oath (the wording) that leaves no room for a single doubt.

25. From Sabine Leibholz^[1]

Berlin, August 26, 1938

Dear Dietrich,

I have wanted to write you so often but didn't have the peace of mind to do it. You wrote such a nice letter to us on Marianne's birthday,^[2] and now you wrote another, such a lovely letter to Gert.^[3] Heartfelt thanks to you for this. It also pleased me so much for Gert. In recent weeks he had no longer been able to maintain his old equanimity. Ultimately the resilience of the nerves simply gives in. At the moment it's hard to think all the way through all the decisions that need to be made, and that makes one so nervous. Unfortunately, he's simply sleeping so badly. So I must hold down the fort for two, and sometimes it's not very easy to keep in mind matters as divergent as existential questions and pressing worries alongside the large and small concerns and wishes of the children.—

This letter has been lying around since Suse gave birth in the meantime,^[4] and now I'm writing to you further from Göttingen, where we arrived on Saturday.^[5] We are so glad that Suse now has her son, and although she has to endure so much pain, at least up to now there's no fever, thank God. Both parents were

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[1.] *NL*, C 6; handwritten; previously unpublished. The Leibholz couple was staying with Paula and Karl Bonhoeffer in Berlin as they prepared to flee Germany, which increasingly appeared advisable (because of the August 17, 1938, order for "non-Aryans" to include the names "Israel" and "Sara" in passports. On October 5, 1938, passports of Jews were revoked and reissued with the imprint "J").

[2.] The birthday of Marianne Leibholz, who was Dietrich Bonhoeffer's godchild, was June 30. The letter mentioned is not extant.

[3.] The reference is to Gerhard Leibholz; letter not extant.

[4.] The reference is to the birth of Andreas Dreß, the son of Susanne and Walter Dreß, on August 26, 1938.

[5.] They arrived on August 27, 1938.

under quite some strain. Aunt Elisabeth^[6] is staying with us and helping me some with my preparations. We would so much like to see you before we leave.^[7] Are you coming here again? Many thanks for the lovely present that Marianne is to have. Unfortunately, I have not yet received the picture, and I'm sure it will be all right with you if she finds herself a nice reproduction of the *Lord's Supper* by Van Dyck.^[8] We were with her at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, where she was very happy and inexhaustibly able to take it all in. The lovely time at the sea now seems so long ago. We will leave around September 8. Till then there is still much to do. So please tell me whether you can still come, even if it is not as cozy in our house as it used to be. Everyone sends greetings to you. Your

Sabine

64 **26. To Karl Koch and Friedrich Müller^[1]**

Lic. Bonhoeffer

At present Göttingen, September 10, 1938
Herbergerlandstrasse 55^[2]

To President Dr. Koch-Oeynhausien

To President Müller-Dahlem^[3]

Your letter and the proposal for “regulations for the appointment of a church government”^[4] has reached me. For the sake of the Confessing Church, I must reject the proposal. The disavowal of the insights from the Barmen and Dahlem synods^[5] that God granted to us has become evident

[6.] Elisabeth von Hase.

[7.] The reference is to the Leibholzes' emigration to London via Switzerland. On September 9, Bonhoeffer and Eberhard Bethge accompanied the couple and their children by car on their way to the Swiss border from Göttingen to Giessen. See Leibholz-Bonhoeffer, *Bonhoeffers*, 85–88, and *DB-ER*, 631–33.

[8.] A painting by Anthony van Dyck.

[1.] LKA EKvW, file 5,1, fasc. 1, no. L 857; typewritten with handwritten corrections and signature. Cf. *NL*, A 45 (56); later typewritten copy. Previously published in *GS* 2:315–18.

[2.] After the conclusion of the summer session of the collective pastorates (end of August 1938), Bonhoeffer spent a good six weeks in September and October 1938 (until October 12) with Eberhard Bethge at the home of his twin sister, Sabine Leibholz, in Göttingen. On September 9, 1938, Bonhoeffer and Bethge had accompanied Sabine, her husband, Gerhard, and their children on their way to their exile in London. The original plan for a longer vacation trip together in southern Europe had to be abandoned since “the intent not to remind the military enlistment offices unnecessarily of [them]

here. No promise lies on this path, because it is being entered with ingratitude against God's gifts to his church and with a lack of clarity. I see it as my duty to counteract this proposal. You request a "prompt" declaration of affirmation for your plans. Moreover, you have already informed the EOK^[6] and the state offices about the proposal. With that you pressure us fatally in a matter where you should be asking for the most thorough advice and consideration. Since I now may let no time pass, for the present I raise the following objections, subject to a thorough explanation and to corrections:

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1. The silence about the Barmen and Dahlem synods in the new establishment of a church administration is not only a strategic maneuver, which must avenge itself in a short time, but it at the same time also signifies a theological decision that must split the Confessing Church. Every Confessing pastor must insist on knowing: Is Barmen valid (with all of its theses), or is it not? Will the new church administration stand on Barmen and be committed to it, or not? Our decision will depend on this. Why does the proposal not state what it means concretely "to take the confessions . . . seriously in proclamation, regulation and action"; why is a lack of clarity permitted to prevail here? Why is it not stated explicitly what "all" must "be fended off" for the sake of the witness to Jesus Christ? This is precisely what Barmen and Dahlem achieved. Why awaken the impression that today things are self-evident that have not been self-evident for five years? Your proposal turns Barmen and Dahlem into a church episode. With that the continuity

ultimately kept [them] from all plans related to German borders" (letter of August 21, 1938, from Eberhard Bethge to his cousins and friends from Groß-Schlönwitz, in *So ist es gewesen*, 330–31). During these weeks when the danger of war intensified due to Hitler's aggressive policy against Czechoslovakia (the Sudeten crisis), Bonhoeffer wrote his book *Life Together*. See *DB-ER*, 587–88, and *DBWE* 5:3–5.

[3.] [Karl Koch was president of the Evangelical Church of Westphalia, a rank corresponding to that of bishop in the Lutheran regional churches. Fritz Müller was president of the Provisional Church Administration [Vorläufige Kirchenleitung] of the Confessing Church.—VB]

[4.] *DB-ER*, 604. On August 23, 1938, in the course of the Essen negotiations about the reorganization of the GEC, a "proposal for a regulation for the nomination of a church administration in Old Prussia" was formulated, which was circulated under the title "Essen III." See Niesel, *Kirche unter dem Wort*, 163–67, and *DB-ER*, 603–5.

[5.] See the documentation of the first confessional synod of the GEC from May 29–31, 1934, in Wuppertal-Barmen and the second confessional synod of the GEC from October 19–20, 1934, in Berlin-Dahlem in Schmidt, *Bekenntnisse*, 2: 91–98 and 157–62. For Bonhoeffer's theological evaluation of the Barmen and Dahlem synod resolutions, see especially his essay "On the Question of Church Fellowship," from April or June 1936 in *DBW* 14, 2/19.1, as well as his lecture "Our Path according to the Testimony of Scripture," 2/5.

[6.] [Evangelischer Oberkirchenrat, or High Church Council.—VB]

of the Confessing Church, which goes back from Barmen through the confessions of the Reformation, the symbols,^[7] etc. all the way back to the Holy Scripture, has been abandoned. With that, however, Barmen is no longer a binding confession of the church.

2. Who is eligible to vote? Will the young pastors who have been ordained by the Confessing Church, and not admitted to the ministry only because of the false church government, be eligible to vote? If not, how will the church answer for the fact that it is these very brothers, who have followed the path of the Confessing Church, who are most clearly prevented from voting? Indeed, this is not to be answered for *ecclesially*, only at most out of false consideration for those who don't know and don't wish to know anything about the Confessing Church.

66 3. Who will present the electoral proposal? A private circle of churchmen, who have no ecclesial commission to do so? On the basis of what guidelines will the electoral proposal come into being? The signatures on the proposal, which in your opinion illustrate "how extensive the circle of those already is" who stand behind your plan, make me miss the very names of those in whom particularly the younger pastors in the Confessing Church place their trust (e.g., Albertz, Niesel, Scharf, Vogel, Staemmler, Anz, de Boor, et al.)^[8]. Instead there are numerous names that don't seem particularly appropriate for awakening church confidence.

4. In which consistories of the Old Prussian Union, in your opinion, might such theologians and jurists be found who might be expected to give the required declaration without pernicious inner reservations?

5. The commitment to Barmen has been included in the ordination forms of the Confessing Church.^[9] Is that to be left out in the future? Do you dare now to hush up Barmen, in the face of the same brothers whom

[7.] Bonhoeffer is referring to the confessions of faith [the "three ecumenical creeds," i.e., the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed—VB] from the early church. Cf. "The Three Ecumenical Creeds" (*Book of Concord*, 19–25).

[8.] Martin Albertz, Wilhelm Niesel, Kurt Scharf, Heinrich Vogel, Wolfgang Staemmler, Johannes Anz, and Werner de Boor.

[9.] For example, the ordination certificate for Otto Dudzus states: "After the candidate for the ministry . . . has sworn before God that he will practice the office of preaching in commitment [Bindung] to the word of God, as written in the Holy Scripture, witnessed in the confessions of our church and, opposing the false teachings of our times, confessed anew as binding in the Theological Declaration of the First Confessional Synod of the German Evangelical Church in Barmen, we have ordained him . . ." Issued by the Council of Brethren of the Old Prussian Union, church province of Berlin-Brandenburg, June 21, 1938. A photocopy of the document is in the *DBW* editor's possession.

you have committed to Barmen publicly, before God and the church-community? Whoever still recognizes God's directive for his church in Barmen and Dahlem and gratefully stands by that up to this hour, whoever recognizes in the present crisis of the Confessing Church only the hour of trial and proof, may not acquiesce to your proposal.

6. Please don't say that for manifold reasons it would be highly unwise at present to act in opposition. None of us in this situation knows what is wise or unwise. But it is certain that it is not advisable to act against God's clear directive, against the truth we came to know, and against the conscience. You yourselves are aware of the confusion caused by the sixth Confessing Church synod.^[10] After this defeat we had indeed expected a different, more spiritual statement from our church authorities. What has now been advised to us is the self-surrender of the Confessing Church. Here we will no longer follow.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

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27. To Wilhelm Niesel^[1]

September 10, 1938

Dear Brother Niesel,

The new proposal^[2] is the most evil document in the history of the Confessing Church. Even if one doesn't assume that it will ever become reality, it is reprehensible. It is simply the result of endless negotiations at the end of which the original intention was forgotten. I am now of the opinion that the younger brothers whom we have ordained, as well as the vicars, absolutely must be heard on this. You are perhaps the only one who could set that in motion,^[3] since I don't think that provincial consultations^[4] serve any purpose in this matter. Thus I sincerely ask you to take up this matter. If we

[10.] The reference is to the controversy about the loyalty oath issue; cf. Bonhoeffer's August 11, 1938, letter to the Old Prussian Union Council of Brethren, 1/22.

[1.] Literary estate of Wilhelm Niesel; handwritten; from Göttingen. Cf. *NL*, A 45 (57). Previously unpublished.

[2.] See 1/26, ed. note 4.

[3.] In the Old Prussian Union Council of Brethren, Niesel was responsible among other things for the training of new young theologians.

[4.] Bonhoeffer means separate Confessing Church consultations within each individual church province of the Old Prussian Union.

don't give warning about this in time, it will suddenly be too late and the consequences would have to be disastrous.

With brotherly greetings your
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

68 28. From Ruth von Kleist-Retzow to Eberhard Bethge^[1]

September 14, 1938

My dear Pastor Bethge,

I thank you from the heart for your good letter. It was genuinely refreshing for me. What this fellowship with Finkenwalde means! Two of the brothers, Nithack and Sander,^[2] were also here for two days, and the day before yesterday Albrecht Schönherr and his enchanting wife.^[3] Throughout all this how good I have it, at a time when I feel in almost constant need of comfort! Please tell Dietrich that I almost despaired under the burden of *Discipleship*.^[4] With “costly grace”^[5] it seemed to me that I met with not only a lack of understanding but also a lack of interest. And then I was disheartened by the impression that there was nothing but literary interest and that no sense of belonging together grew. . . . But yesterday evening with the “Beatitudes”^[6] was obviously better. The material may in general be too difficult for people who are accustomed to thinking very superficially about religious matters. Nithack and Sander, who recently attended, thought that costly grace could only move someone who had already asked seriously: how do I receive a merciful God?^[7] That will be correct. They helped me very well, particularly after everyone had left. Albrecht^[8] also gave me some pills to swallow. Very good that he did that. If only I could go back to school from the beginning. Instead, every day I get older. . . . And *still* these evenings are now my whole delight!

[1.] Literary estate of Eberhard Bethge; handwritten from Stettin. Partially reproduced in GS2:318–19.

[2.] Ulrich Nithack and Erwin Sander.

[3.] Hilde Schönherr, née Enterlein.

[4.] With several friends and acquaintances from the Confessing parish in Stettin, Ruth von Kleist had started a circle to read Bonhoeffer's *Discipleship* regularly.

[5.] See DBWE 4:43–56.

[6.] See DBWE 4:100–110.

[7.] [The sentence “How do I receive a merciful God” goes back to Luther and was the starting point for him of the Reformation. According to Heinz Eduard Tödt, Bonhoeffer posed a different question: How is the word (re)claimed by God in Jesus Christ? The editor thanks Ilse Tödt for this insight.—VB]

[8.] Schönherr.

Today I was at number 17^[9] and *what* did I find out! The counsel of the Old Prussian Union^[10] *not* to take the oath for the time being! I froze within from outrage. Now, after everyone except for three who were on vacation, has sworn it. . . . I find it so dreadful that the blood freezes in my veins. At my request Mrs. von Mackensen^[11] gave me the statement to take along. You will have it as well. It is something to think about, that one relied upon “circumstantial evidence” and acted on it! Now an “inquiry” will be sent off to the president of the High Church Council!^[12] I feel only that Dietrich must make the Council of Brethren of the Old Prussian Union ask forgiveness in a clear statement for leading its flock astray. When I think of the crisis of conscience that the individual pastors went through until they finally swore the oath with a wounded conscience, my heart stands still. And now they simply communicate the facts and add that they have sent an “inquiry” to the irresponsible “responsible” office. They should be utterly *destroyed* by the recognition that they offered false leadership because they *thoughtlessly* relied upon “circumstantial evidence” that has now been proven wrong. Oh, it remains true: “Here we stray and err, shrouded in deep night.”^[13] . . . But it must be made *known* because the extent of the guilt is immeasurable. Reimer is said to have announced his resignation^[14] and to have written very rudely. . . . But without yet knowing of this fact. How this will upset him and completely harden him! I had the impression that the Pomeranian Council of Brethren had communicated this counsel only to the three who didn’t take the oath. (Perhaps nonetheless to the directors of the ministerial meeting groups [Pfarrkonvent].) But Mrs. von Mackensen was also very irritated. From the very beginning Koch’s^[15] reasoning failed to convince me; it was simply a jingle.^[16] And who was right? K.B.!^[17] I should not be writing any of this, but I’m still seething.

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[9.] The office of the Pomeranian Council of Brethren in Stettin was located at Pölitzerstrasse 17.

[10.] She means the Council of Brethren of the Confessing Church of the Old Prussian Union.

[11.] Stephanie von Mackensen-Astfeld.

[12.] Friedrich Werner.

[13.] This is the beginning of the second stanza of the chorale *Aus irdischem Getümmel* (“From earthly turmoil,” by Christoph Aschenfeldt, in *Evangelisches Gesangbuch Brandenburg-Pommern*, 356).

[14.] Karl-Heinrich Reimer, a Confessing pastor under the patronage of Ewald von Kleist. [The reference is to his leaving the Confessing Church.—VB]

[15.] President Karl Koch.

[16.] [The German here, *Eselsbrücke*, literally means “donkey’s bridge.”—VB]

[17.] Karl Barth; see 1/22, ed. note 1. Regarding the situation, see also Rohkrämer, “Karl Barth in der Herbstkrise 1938.”

And as a supplement I took the communication about Essen^[18] along and just read it. I understand nothing of the legal questions, but it seems to me as though something like an “Agricultural Buying and Selling Cooperative”^[19] should be newly established! Am I incorrect when I gather that in this election system German Christians can also be nominated? When do they *not* preach “Christ”?! They will swallow the “unique and fulfilled revelation” in order to get in. Oh, how must you be feeling when this is hitting even me so deeply. I’m pleased that Brandt^[20] has announced his coming on Saturday–Sunday (in case he still gets leave from his barracks) so that I can talk with him about all these questions. I can understand the jurists, who determined the “circumstantial evidence,” least of all. The Essen proposal appears to me to be pure, downright, unvarnished unbelief, when I simply consider the salad of signatures.

In recent days I have thought so much about the “wounded conscience.” It is clear, isn’t it, that all actions that don’t correspond down to the iota with our essential view mean an offense? As I was recently discussing the question with my son,^[21] he said, “Naturally it is an offense.” . . . I found him downhearted because he is not in a position to take these things lightly, or like my son-in-law Wedemeyer^[22] to acknowledge them as “God’s will.” He is taking it hard. I myself believe that it is God’s will to forgive but not to justify them. Today it was a comfort for me to read that Abraham committed the same sin twice (passing his wife off as his sister)^[23] and nonetheless, as it is explained in the Jub[iläums] Bible,^[24] remained God’s “confidant.”^[25] “‘Sin boldly’—for Luther that could be only the very last bit of pastoral advice, of consolation for those who along the path of discipleship have come to know that they cannot become sin-free, who out of fear of sin despair of God’s grace.”^[26] Or is there still a justification in advance [for actions that “offend” the conscience? The more I attempt to get

[18.] See Bonhoeffer’s September 10, 1938, letter to Karl Koch and Friedrich Müller, 1/26.

[19.] [She is suggesting that the church might just as well be a commercial company, since the church leaders have lost sight of their mission.—VB]

[20.] Probably Günther Brandt.

[21.] Hans-Jürgen von Kleist-Retzow.

[22.] Hans von Wedemeyer.

[23.] See Gen. 12:10–20 and 20:1–18.

[24.] The Stuttgarter Jubiläumsbibel. [This was an extensively annotated edition of the Bible published in 1912 by the Stuttgart Bible Society. Cf. DBWE 16:48.—VB]

[25.] See the explanation of Gen. 20:18 in the Stuttgarter Jubiläumsbibel, 25.

[26.] This is a quotation from *Discipleship* (see DBWE 4:52) and Bonhoeffer’s interpretation of Luther’s statement: “Sin boldly, but believe and rejoice in Christ that much more boldly!” [This is from Luther’s *Briefwechsel*, 3:28, lines 121ff.; also in LW 48:282.—VB]

clear about this, the more it seems to me that here, too, the distinction between outcome and presupposition^[27] must be observed.

So the synod has been postponed due to the Essen question, as I've been told. . . . I'm glad that you apparently are having such a good vacation there.^[28] In any case I want to tell you that I'll be in Krössin October 4–14. If one can think as far as the fourth. After some urging, I offered the little essay^[29] to Söhlmann;^[30] rather half-heartedly. It would be just as fine with me if he didn't want to have it. I have received several replies that brought me great joy. From the eldest son in Lasbeck:^[31] "It is as though tailored for me." And from my eldest and first godchild, who attaches some confessions. To be allowed occasionally to be an instrument oh, that's what makes life rewarding. But who am I telling that to—

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both of you, for whom this is the content of your life. How well I understand it. The letter is for you both. I'm writing it in an evening hour, following a stay in the air-raid cellar! I was told about the radio broadcast. I don't have one.^[32]

My letter has really become too long, but who knows what the future brings. My son-in-law Wedemeyer must leave on Saturday.^[33]

Always in complete devotion, your
Ruth Kleist

29. To Erwin Sutz^[1]

September 18, 1938

Dear Brother Sutz,

It has been some time, once again—but it may well be a good sign that, despite such long interruptions, we return again and again to each other

[27.] Cf. *DBWE* 4:52.

[28.] In Göttingen.

[29.] In 1938 Ruth von Kleist composed an essay about reading the Bible: "Why should I read the Bible? A statement for my dear grandchildren, all godchildren, and for the great-grandchildren." Cf. Pejsa, *Matriarch of Conspiracy*, 233–34 and 403.

[30.] Fritz Söhlmann was the editor of *Junge Kirche*. Ruth von Kleist's essay was not published.

[31.] Jürgen von Bismarck.

[32.] The reference is to listening to the foreign radio stations during the Sudeten crisis in September 1938. On September 12, Hitler had given the Czech government an ultimatum to cede the Sudetenland to the German Reich under the threat of military action.

[33.] Hans von Wedemeyer had been drafted into the army.

[1.] In the personal possession of the Sutz family; handwritten; from Göttingen. Cf. *NL*, A 29,4 (20). Previously published in *GS* 1:48–45.

through correspondence. There are two reasons why I am writing you today, first, because I don't know how often I will still be able to write and because I want to thank you for always sending me your good devotions, as well as for your visit to Berlin and Finkenwalde, where unfortunately I missed you both times.^[2] Second, I'm writing because to my great relief that my sister with her husband and children are in Zurich^[3] for several weeks (Kurhaus Zurichberg, Prof. Leibholz) and because you might be hearing from them sometime. Please be good to them then! If you could visit them sometime without too much difficulty, that would be especially nice.

71 At the moment I have vacation and am trying to write something.^[4] But it goes slowly; I have too much else on my mind. I long greatly for a few quiet months for scholarly work. I would like to get all kind of things off my chest, but during work I don't really get to it. Too bad that you didn't bring me for a year to Zurich to stand in for Brunner!^[5] That would not have been bad at all. In remotest eastern Pomerania, one rather loses contact with the world. There is simply so much to do, too, that no time remains for quiet correspondence. One needs the little spare time that remains for one's own work. But the work continues to bring pleasure, while continuing to grow. The only strange thing is the existence in which there can be no worries, since each day is a gift. If one forgets that, then one becomes sometimes rather stubborn and would rather choose a somewhat more settled existence, with all the "rights" that one otherwise has at this "estate"^[6] and age. That would mean the abandonment of the work, however, and that simply won't do at the moment. You will know that our friend Jean Lasserre^[7] married a few weeks ago! I would like to see him again and will write him in the next days as well. How nice it would be if the three of us could be together again, particularly now! There would be so much to think and talk about. Let these short lines please you and remember our cause and my own, just as I often and gladly remember yours. χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη.^[8]

Your devoted

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

[2.] See Bonhoeffer's October 24, 1938, letter to Sutz from Finkenwalde, in which Bonhoeffer requests a visit to Finkenwalde (*DBW*14, 1/125).

[3.] The Leibholz family was en route to London as emigrants (see 1/25 and 1/26).

[4.] Bonhoeffer was working on his book *Life Together*.

[5.] From 1938 to 1939, Emil Brunner was a guest professor at Princeton.

[6.] [I.e., as a pastor.—VB]

[7.] Bonhoeffer, Sutz, and Lasserre had gotten to know one another during their studies at Union Theological Seminary in New York in 1930–31. See *DB-ER*, 152–54; this period is covered in *DBWE* 10.

[8.] "Grace to you and peace" (Rom. 1:7).

30. From Albrecht Schönherr to Several Finkenwalde Brothers^[1]

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Brüssow, October 7, 1938

Invitation

In the discussion about the church situation during a retreat in June of this year,^[2] fifty young pastors of the Confessing Church decided that it was also necessary here in northeast Germany for a group of Confessing Church theologians to convene in order to work through the pending church questions in a theologically thorough fashion. Recently you will have realized clearly how urgent it is that such a service be performed for the church.^[3]

The brothers at that time gave Pastor Dr. Bonhoeffer and myself the task of bringing such a group into being. Up to now the following have joined: Dr. Gollwitzer, Pastor Klapproth, Pastor Ebeling, all from Berlin, and Pastor Krause-Greifswald.^[4]

We thought of only inviting those brothers who are not already overburdened with other church work. It is indeed urgently necessary for thorough scholarly work that these brothers manage to be free as the case arises, even for several days. We think that for the time being it is best for this association to work entirely unofficially, and try to gain a hearing only through the work it does. We would like to ask you as well to join with us in this work.

The first meeting, when various technical questions would need to be discussed, is to take place from October 31, beginning at 11 o'clock, till November 2. Location: Stettin, Pölitzerstr. 103. You will receive more information in time.

For our first topic we chose "The Public-Legal Status of the Church." We consider this topic extremely urgent, particularly in view of the new generation in the Confessing Church.^[5]

It is imperative that all participating brothers prepare themselves thoroughly for this topic. I hope to be able to send all of you the theses of the papers sufficiently in advance. I expect your replies and registration by October 20 at the latest.

With brotherly greetings, your

A. Schönherr

[1.] Literary estate of Albrecht Schönherr; mimeograph with handwritten signature; previously unpublished.

[2.] The retreat of former Finkenwalde seminarians, held in Zingst on June 20–25, 1938. See 1/21.

[3.] This is an indirect reference to the issue of the loyalty oath to Hitler and the Essen negotiations ("Essen I" through "Essen III"). See 1/22, 1/25, and 1/26.

[4.] Helmut Gollwitzer, Erich Klapproth, Gerhard Ebeling, and Gerhard Krause.

[5.] This was because of the illegal status of the younger vicars and pastors in the Confessing Church.

74 **31. To Martin Fischer**^[1]

Dear Brother Fischer,

Heartfelt thanks for the announcement.^[2] I think of you with all good wishes and in brotherly affection.

“May God now give me each day as much as I need to live;
He gives this to the sparrow on the roof; how should he not give it
to me.”

(Claudius)^[3]

your humble

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

32. From Ulrich Nithack^[1]

Berlin-Friedenau, October 30, 1938

Esteemed, dear Brother Bonhoeffer,

Since now finally somewhat quieter times have arrived for me, I would like to get back in touch with you. Probably Brother Sander^[2] has already told you of our delightful trip through Pomerania. Afterward I waited for the assignment^[3] and on September 23 received the fine topic: “Vilmar’s^[4] teaching on the church is

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[1.] In the personal possession of Mrs. Ilse Fischer; handwritten postcard; post-marked Göttingen, October 12, 1938; previously unpublished. That same day, Bonhoeffer and Eberhard Bethge left Göttingen and returned to Pomerania via Berlin, since the 1938–39 winter session began in the collective pastorate in Köslin on October 17, 1938, and in Groß-Schlönwitz on October 19, 1938. During his stay in Berlin, Bonhoeffer’s brother-in-law Hans von Dohnanyi introduced him to the circle of Dohnanyi’s colleagues around justice minister Franz Gürtner. These contacts became ever more important with the beginning of the resistance conspiracy. See Bethge’s letters to his mother from Göttingen on October 8, 1938, and from Groß-Schlönwitz on October 23, 1938, in Andersen et al., *So ist es gewesen*, 334–35.

[2.] The announcement of Fischer’s engagement on October 1, 1938.

[3.] This is the last stanza of the poem “Täglich zu singen” (To sing each day) by Matthias Claudius, from the third section (1777) of the *Wandsbecker Boten*, cited here with slight variations [Bonhoeffer was quoting from memory—VB]. See the 1941 Pantheon edition, 1:282 (new printing: 150). Cf. also *DBWE* 4:167.

[1.] *NL*, C 25; handwritten; previously unpublished. Nithack was a member of the collective pastorate in Groß-Schlönwitz in the summer of 1938.

[2.] Erwin Sander.

[3.] For the papers to be written for the second theological examination taken before the Confessing Church Council of Brethren.

[4.] August Friedrich Christian Vilmar.

to be described and evaluated according to Holy Scripture.” The second section may indeed be quite difficult. Then on September 24 the call-up to the military arrived and for four weeks tore me away not only from work but from the entire mentality of the last half year. I wrote something about the personal difficulties that I had “on the front” in the circular letter, which may also reach Schl[awe].^[5]

Now I am reading Vilmar and am happy when I am reminded of many a conversation in Schlönwitz. It is consoling when this great preacher writes of “crises,” “disordered thoughts,” and “conspicuous slowness” in his work on sermons;^[6] but the fact that he never felt good anywhere when he hadn’t stood in the pulpit on Sunday is also encouraging and a reminder for self-examination. One often experiences the reverse. I am already eager to read Vilmar’s essay on church discipline in which he deals in detail with confession.^[7] For him private confession is self-evident^[8] on the basis of CA XI.^[9] Leafing through the book, I read of massive acts of penance that Vilmar put upon a prostitute: two worship services on Sunday, reporting to the pastor, learning things by heart, etc.^[10] But that cannot shake our confidence in the value of confession. I hope to be able to speak with my brothers here more often about confession. Brother Klapproth^[11] wants to try to convene the brothers frequently. Since Schlönwitz and particularly after the last session, I have a particular longing for such fellowship.

In the parish I have found that everywhere there is diminishing understanding for the Confessing Church. People are weary, that means in unbelief. They are seeking a *modus vivendi* and forget that we should not settle here too firmly at all.

I am pleased that brothers are now there^[12] again and pray for generous blessings upon the entire work.

In constant gratitude and with brotherly greetings I am your
Ulrich Nithack

[5.] This circular letter from Nithack is not extant.

[6.] See Vilmar, *Lehrbuch der Pastoraltheologie*, 69.

[7.] See Vilmar, *Von der christlichen Kirchenzucht* (1872).

[8.] *Ibid.*, 33.

[9.] Augsburg Confession, Article 11 (*Book of Concord*, 44).

[10.] Vilmar, *Von der christlichen Kirchenzucht*, 80–81.

[11.] Erich Klapproth.

[12.] In Gro-Schlönwitz near Köslin.

17:123 32a. To Walter and Susanne Dreß^[1]

November 4, 1938

Dear Susi, dear Walter,

You will be surprised to receive a letter from me at such an odd time. Dear Walter, I thank you for what you sent, which was not really for me, or was it? What should I do with the publication? Primarily, however, I am writing you about a matter that has become somewhat complicated in the meantime. But since I find it most sensible to discuss such matters openly, I am doing so here. It is about the English rug and the question of whether you need it urgently. I recently saw it lying, dear Walter, in all its glory in your room and once again happened to find it very lovely. Since I assume the same is true for you, I don't know whether you are capable of parting from it again or only with great difficulty? I wanted to give it to Christel for Leipzig.^[2] [17:124] In reality she has no sufficiently decent rug for her salon. I realized this recently when they had company there. On the other hand, they really need one and want to return the rug borrowed from the Schleichers, so that it won't be too ruined as part of a future trousseau. I told Christel that I would write to you. She wrote me yesterday and pleaded *urgently* with me not to do so. I am therefore doing so against her will, in the opinion that it is indeed possible to talk sensibly about this. I was of the opinion that a living-room rug is actually more necessary than a rug for a man's salon. That is why I ask you to consider this and perhaps, Susi, you will be so friendly as to call Christel while as she is still in Berlin and to talk it over with her. She will probably hesitate, in the opinion that she is robbing you. But I did want it to at least be discussed. Mama decided very quickly at the time when you were setting up house, and there was nothing then to say against it. Only the situation is changing now due to the move and one must reconsider it. Perhaps the rug in your office doesn't matter that much to you, Walter, at all, so that the matter is no problem at all. Therefore, I believe it is best if you, Susi, would telephone Christel sometime. Mama already knows about this consideration. How are things otherwise? When will the baptism be

[1.] Literary estate of Walter Dreß, in the personal possession of Ruprecht Dreß; handwritten letter, probably sent from Groß-Schlönwitz; previously unpublished.

[2.] Bonhoeffer's brother-in-law Hans von Dohnanyi had been appointed Reich judicial councilor in Leipzig and started his job there on October 1, 1938. [Christel was Bonhoeffer's sister Christine.—VB]

celebrated? At Christmas? Here everything is normal; only the province is in bad shape.^[3] All the best and warm greetings from your
Dietrich

33. From Sabine and Gerhard Leibholz^[1]

76

Dear Dietrich,

We've been here three days now. Since we traveled via Paris, we arrived in Dover. The ship was small, the sea stormy. I have never seen such waves. Unfortunately, I couldn't look out for long, because after ten minutes Gert was pale as a corpse and sick as a dog and only groaned about when we would be through it. Afterward in the train, too, he was still entirely useless. Mr. Böckheler^[2] picked us up very nicely and took us to Miss Sharp, where we are staying.^[3] Then we had supper at his house in the evening, and it was a great pleasure for me to see your old parsonage^[4] and everything again. Franz^[5] is traveling. Mr. Rieger^[6] is coming at the end of the week. We've been invited to the Kaufmanns'.^[7] They were very amicable. Otherwise nothing else. The distances are too enormous. The city takes my breath away. It must be hell to live here in the summer. It is a relief when in the evening one gets back out here to quiet again. Gert is still very self-conscious about speaking. He also doesn't yet want to visit Uncle G.^[8] I doubt that he will be able to speak much better in fourteen days. I'm in favor of making visits soon, also because we must be thinking about the trip home and we still have so many invitations from people.^[9] The weather is still reasonably

[3.] Pomerania, the church province of the Evangelical Church of the Old Prussian Union. See 1/14, ed. note 2, and 1/19.

[1.] *NL*, C 6; handwritten postcard addressed "To Pastor Berke Groß-Schlönwitz," postmarked Forest Hill [London], November 8, 1938; previously unpublished.

[2.] Martin Böckheler.

[3.] The owner of the guest house where the Leibholzes initially lived. Cf. Leibholz-Bonhoeffer, *Bonhoeffers*, 92.

[4.] After October 1933, during his work in the London congregations of Sydenham and St. Paul's, Bonhoeffer resided at the parsonage in the South London suburb of Forest Hill. See Bethge and Gremmels, *Life in Pictures*, centenary ed., 73; this period is covered in *DBWE* 13.

[5.] Franz Hildebrandt.

[6.] Julius Rieger.

[7.] Not identified.

[8.] George Bell.

[9.] Sentences such as this were written with an eye on the Gestapo's possible control of the mail, since in reality this was not just a visit, but the emigration of the Leibholz family to England.

warm, and we have not yet had fog. Gert's brother Hans^[10] is here in London on business for Königs.^[11] Please write us what else you would recommend to us. Warmly, your

Sabine

Dear Dietrich,

77 Well of course I want to visit Uncle G. and indeed soon. But I am still thinking of improving my English somewhat. And whether I will manage that is also a question for me, mind you. Boeckheler received us with true hospitality. And we will call on Rieger. The most important thing is to meet together with prominent English people or in any case with those who can give introductions to others. If you think of something else that could be of use for our mission, or if someone else occurs to you of whom it seems advisable to you that we should visit them, please let us know. Our address is Honor Oak Rd. 55 SE 23. Forest Hill, Tel. Forest Hill 14-45.

The accommodations are nice enough, and our intention is to stay here—unless the heating is insufficient, which is uncomfortable on cold days. Let us hear from you again, also about how you are doing. As always, warmly

Gert

34. To Sabine and Gerhard Leibholz^[1]

November 10, 1938

Dear Sabine, dear Gert,

Many thanks for your greetings from my former congregation.^[2] I'm pleased that you have been received well and already have your first invitations. Once you've gotten settled there somewhat, you'll like it better than in the first days. For example, the poorly heated rooms are an English evil

[10.] Hans Leibholz.

[11.] The Koenigs family were relatives of the Bonhoeffers in the Netherlands.

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (12); later typewritten copy (the original has been lost); no address given, but probably sent from Groß-Schlönwitz. Published in *GS* 6:446–47.

[2.] From October 1933 to January 1935, Bonhoeffer had been pastor of the Sydenham and St. Paul's parishes in London. Cf. *DB-ER*, 325–417, and *DBWE* 13.

that one can't escape anywhere. But for Gert perhaps this may not be so disagreeable? Please do give Miss Sharp my greetings. She has always been so sweet, and you will surely learn good English at her place. By the way, the Behrends^[3] lived with her back then. If you visit them sometime, they will certainly also be very nice. He is a terribly fat, good-humored Bavarian with a prospering antique shop. The wife is helpful and nice. I don't know whether they will be of much help to you, but perhaps there will be some occasion. You, dear Sabine, would have a thoughtful and warmhearted help in Mrs. Whitburn,^[4] née Lokies, a German, if you should need it. They live in straitened circumstances in the north of London. But I always enjoyed being together with the two of them. One can discuss everything with them, and they don't have many visitors. You will surely be going to visit George^[5] soon. His wife knows some German. Since he does have many friends, it would be good if you don't postpone it too long. He would also be the best one to bring you together with Sir Walter Moberly; otherwise I can write Moberly as well, only then you would have to write me his address. Please write me as well about Schröder.^[6] He is very ill, Parkinson's disease, but perhaps he can receive you nonetheless; he was always very friendly and helpful to me. If you want to call on him, then I will write him in advance. But then please let me know that. I would naturally be very happy to do it; I just don't want to do it unnecessarily if it's not important to you. And perhaps your time is already filled. Otherwise, please always let me know if you think that I can help you in any way.

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I wish you a good time with truly nice weather. That contributes significantly to well-being in London. Dreadful that you had such a nasty boat trip.

Every day I think of you often and wish you all the best! Greetings to you from your

Dietrich

[3.] Not identified.

[4.] Cf. *DB-ER*, 328. [Mrs. Whitburn was the sister of Hans Lokies, a Confessing pastor in Berlin who headed the mission work there.—VB]

[5.] George Bell.

[6.] Baron Bruno Schröder.

79 **35. From Albrecht Schönherr to the Participants
of the Theological Society in Pomerania^[1]**

November 14, 1938

Dear Brothers,

It is difficult to communicate the outcome of our first gathering^[2] to those brothers who were not there. It consists essentially of the questions listed below. I think, however, that next time we will arrive at visible developments—this time we had a more invisible achievement, namely, the fact that eight theologians could sit together in objectivity and *quiet* for a few days, simply in order to work together.

Brother Bonhoeffer and I had been commissioned to distribute the questions, which we posed to ourselves at the end, to the individual speakers for preparatory work. We thought of distributing them as follows: (the headings suggested for the presentations are to be understood as talking points for the respective questions)

Gollwitzer:^[3] *Jus divinum* and *jus humanum*^[4] in the church rules. Bonhoeffer: copresenter.

Traub:^[5] Emergency rules of order. [Notrecht]^[6]

Schönherr: *Exousia*^[7] in the New Testament.

Klapproth:^[8] The twofold call to the ministry.

Fischer:^[9] Position toward the consistories and the neutrals.

Perels:^[10] Leaving the church. Church taxes.

The following is once again the formulation of the questions, the response to which, it seems to us, matters in the question of the public and legal position of the church.

1. Under what conditions can the church make legal claims upon the state? (a) on which ground? (b) under what conditions? (c) to what extent? (concerning this: is the public role of the church confined to preaching?)

[1.] Literary estate of Albrecht Schönherr; typewritten mimeograph with handwritten signature, from Brüssow; previously unpublished.

[2.] Cf. Schönherr's October 7, 1938, letter to several Finkenwalde seminarians, 1/30.

[3.] Helmut Gollwitzer.

[4.] Divine law and human law.

[5.] Hellmut Traub.

[6.] [A reference to the emergency church law adopted at the Dahlem Confessing synod in October 1934.—VB]

[7.] Authority, power, lordship.

[8.] Erich Klapproth.

[9.] Martin Fischer.

[10.] Friedrich Justus Perels.

2. The legal claims of the state upon the church.
3. Is a twofold vocation essentially necessary for the pastoral ministry? (through worldly authority and congregation) 80
4. To what degree does the Confessing Church have the commission from God's word to exercise church leadership?
5. What is the meaning of emergency law [Not-Recht]?^[11]
6. What does the right suffering of injustice by the church consist of?
7. In our position toward authority, to what degree do we stand in continuity with the decisions of the Lutheran Reformation?
8. What possibilities exist for keeping up necessary forms of congregational life, independent of state recognition?
9. What paths are to be pursued (a) on principle? (b) in fact?
10. What possibilities are ruled out (a) on principle? (b) in fact?
11. What follows from this for the position (a) toward the consistories? (b) toward the undecided?
12. How can the danger be avoided that through the character of the Confessing Church as an organization the proclamation will be hindered?

We had agreed that the next meeting will be held on January 9–11 at the same location.^[12] Therefore, the theses for presentations must reach me by December 15 at the latest, those of the copresenters by January 1, 1939. I request to be told as soon as possible, should there be any objections against the distribution of the presentations or different wishes with regard to the date.

With friendly greetings, your
A. Schönherr

36. To the Finkenwalde Brothers^[1]

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Personal letter!

November 20, 1938

Dear Brothers,

At the end of the old and the beginning of the new church year, I greet you with the passage from the meditation text from last week: "May the God of

[11.] [Many of the issues listed here were the same ones that had led to tensions between different factions at the 1934 Dahlem synod, which was also the occasion for the establishment of *Notrecht* within the Confessing Church.—VB]

[12.] Cf. Schönherr's October 7, 1938, letter, 1/30.

[1.] *NL*, A 48,3 (6); typewritten mimeograph; no return address but probably from Groß-Schlönwitz. Partially reproduced in *GS* 2:541–44. This letter of Bonhoeffer was taken by the Pomeranian Council of Brethren and sent to all Pomeranian pastors as

patient endurance^[2] and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus” (Rom. 15:5). Recently here we have worked a great deal and reflected together on the New Testament concept of patient endurance. In the process, it has become quite clear to me that today we have arrived right there where in essence the only issue at stake is whether we are willing to learn from the gospel what patient endurance means. I believe we needn’t take the various questions, through which impatience sneaks in today, nearly as seriously as they want to be taken. The only very serious thing is that our impatience always wants to play such nasty tricks on us, in that it feigns itself to be a very special kind of obedience and diverts us to unfaithfulness. I don’t quite know how, but we have widely succumbed to a thinking that is nothing short of dangerous. We think that we are acting particularly responsibly when every few weeks we reconsider the question of whether the path on which we’ve started was the right one. Here it’s especially striking that such “responsible examination” always commences just when serious difficulties become evident. We then convince ourselves that we no longer have “the right gladness and certainty for this path” or, even worse, that God is no longer with us with his word in the old clarity, and with all this we essentially are only trying to circumvent that which the New Testament calls “patient endurance” and “probation.” In any case, Paul did not begin to reflect about whether his path was right when obstacles and suffering threatened, nor did Luther; instead, in the very midst of this they may have become completely certain and joyful, standing in discipleship and communion with their lord. Dear brothers, our real crisis is not at all the doubt about the path we have begun but rather our failure of patience, of remaining below. We are still unable to imagine that God today really wants nothing new of us but solely that we stand the test the old. That is too little for us, too monotonous, too modest. We still refuse to accept that God’s cause is not always the cause of success and that we could really be “unsuccessful” even following the right path. But it is precisely here that it will become decisive whether we have started out in faith or in Enthusiasm.

a “Pomeranian circular letter.” A mimeographed insertion (1 page) was added with excerpts from a September 1938 lecture by Johannes Hamel, “Obedience to Authority,” also in *NL*, A 48,3 (6). On the one hand, the obedience “owed to *every* authority” is emphasized; on the other “the distinction between good and evil authority, between justice and injustice for the Christian” is inculcated, recalling the “church-community’s public office of witness about injustice and violence,” with reference to Martin Luther and the confessional writings.

[2.] [The NRSV here reads “steadfastness.”—VB]

It is striking how much significance patience receives in the New Testament. Only those who endure^[3] receive the good news (Matt. 24:13), only the patient one brings forth good fruit (Luke 8:15). A faith that doesn't become patient endurance is not genuine, of no use. Faith must be proven. Probation comes only through suffering. Only from suffering, only from remaining below does the "fulfilled work"^[4] (James 1:3) emerge. If we remind ourselves that the word faith—πίστις—already contains the moment of loyalty, then the close connection between faith and patient endurance will not surprise us. There is patient endurance only "in Jesus" (Rev. 1:9), for Jesus practiced patient endurance as he bore the cross. Heb. 12:2 describes Jesus's way of the cross as remaining below, as patience. Remaining below for us means to stand in communion with the sufferings of Christ ([2]^[5] Cor. 1:6–7) and through that to win confidence. If we take part in the patient endurance of Jesus, we become patient ourselves, and in the end we will partake of Christ's kingdom (2 Tim. 2:12). The path to patience goes through discipline (2 Pet. 1:6). The freer we become from comfort and idleness, from personal demands, the more willing we become for patient endurance.

Our text^[6] tells us that we can remain one only if we remain in patience. Impatience causes division. And unfortunately it cannot be denied that all those who out of impatience go their own way or have already done so have made the struggle for probation and patience much more difficult for many a brother.^[7] Impatience destroys community. In the sense of the gospel, it is not merely a small pardonable bad habit but a failure of probation when faith is put to the test. "Yet the God of patient endurance"—the God who in Jesus Christ himself remained below and helps us remain below, may that God grant you to be "of one mind"—that in this hour of testing you stand by one another, indeed pull more closely and firmly together, strengthen and help one another. Terrible, when in such times one person withdraws. But our patience depends not only on people but on Jesus Christ and his patient endurance on the cross. Christ also bore the impatience of all human beings and thus can forgive it. "Being of one mind"—indeed, that means not choosing one way today and another tomorrow, but remaining

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[3.] [Bonhoeffer's word here is *Geduld*, thus those who are "patient."—VB]

[4.] [The NRSV here reads "full effect."—VB]

[5.] In the manuscript incorrectly written as "1."

[6.] Rom. 15:5.

[7.] The reference is to the problem of legalization; see *DB-ER*, 607–20, as well as Bonhoeffer's lecture of October 26, 1938, "Our Path according to the Testimony of Scripture"; see 2/5.

firm, being constant, proving oneself loyal, to what has once been acknowledged. How little value do we attach to firmness, constancy, and loyalty. In the Scriptures they stand at the very top. May God give them to us by making us patient and granting us his consolation in our remaining below. United in patience, united in consolation. We belong together in remaining below; we belong together as well in consolation and the final overcoming. No one fights the battle of probation alone. In the hour in which our patience is tested, those with whom we are of one mind are with us. Above all, however, we know that we are one in Jesus's patience and consolation. He is our patience and our consolation. So it will remain in the new church year as well.

84 If I may advise you, take the effort and work together with us on the concepts that we are dealing with at the moment: temptation, patience, probation, humility, thanksgiving, joy, peace, discipline.^[8] In these items we must learn to hear the gospel entirely new. We are being led through the Scriptures along little-traveled ways, but they offer indescribably broad and beautiful prospects. The meditation texts for the coming weeks should help us in this as well.

In the last few days, I have thought much about Ps. 74, Zech. 2:8, Rom. 9:4–5, and 11:11–15.^[9] That leads deeply into prayer.

I was very happy to hear from many of you and also to receive sermons from you. May I ask those brothers to whom I return the sermons to inform me at least with a postcard whether the sermons arrived and whether they are in agreement with the evaluation. Please don't think at all that I can't be reached by mail, but write and tell me more again. I believe that in recent months I have gotten better at replying; in any case I have made some efforts in this direction, for today one really should not let such fellowship be broken off through laziness. Above all, however, keep up the connection among yourselves, write and visit each other. That would be the most important thing.

I wish you from the heart a good Advent season. God bless your preaching and all your work. May God protect you and your homes. We think of you daily.

In brotherly fellowship greetings to you from your faithful
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

[8.] Cf. 2/2.

[9.] On the night of November 9, 1938, the so-called Reich *Kristallnacht*, the synagogue in Köslin was burned down as well; see Zimmermann, *I Knew Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 152–56. Regarding Bonhoeffer's situation and reaction, see E. Bethge, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Jews," 73–75, and E. Bethge, "One of the Silent Bystanders?"

Meditation texts:

Nov. 20–Nov. 26:	Matt. 24:1–14 (patience)
Nov. 27–Dec. 3:	Rev. 3:7–12 (patience)
Dec. 4–Dec. 10:	1 Pet. 5:1–11 (service and humility)
Dec. 11–Dec. 17:	Phil. 4:1–9 (joy)
Dec. 18–Dec. 24:	Isa. 9:5.6; Luke 2:14 and 19:12 (thankfulness)
Dec. 15–Dec. 31:	Ps. 75 (peace)
Jan. 1–Jan. 7:	Ps. 1
Jan. 8–Jan. 14:	1 Thess. 1
Jan. 15–Jan. 21:	1 Thess. 2
Jan. 22–Jan. 28:	1 Thess. 3
Jan. 29–Feb. 4:	1 Thess. 4
Feb. 5–Feb. 11:	1 Thess. 5

37. To Sabine and Gerhard Leibholz^[1]

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December 5, 1938

Dear Sabine, dear Gert,

Many thanks for the letter.^[2] One is happy for every sign of life when we are so far apart. How nice that your invitation there is so friendly and for such a long time. Hopefully, you are finding time to work in the British Museum library. It is very quiet and lovely there, don't you think?

I was really extraordinarily happy to hear that you are going to celebrate Christmas together with our parents and the children. You will certainly spend lovely days at the home of Mucki Koenigs-Kalckreuth.^[3] Mama just wrote me about it. So now you're meeting all my old friends and parishioners. Do give my greetings to Mr. Henne.^[4] I will write him for Christmas. He is a very loyal man and helpful in all matters when one needs him; his wife is also very sweet. Do go there sometimes; he is always pleased and is only somewhat awkward and embarrassed. Dear Gert, he should also get you together sometime with Mr. Seagell,^[5] who preaches every month at St.

[1.] Later typewritten copy in the literary estate of Eberhard Bethge (the original has been lost); no return address. Previously published in GS 6:447–49.

[2.] The Leibholzes' letter is not extant.

[3.] Anna Koenigs, née Countess von Kalckreuth, was a relative in the Netherlands; cf. Bonhoeffer's letter at Christmas 1938 to Christiane Leibholz, 1/45.

[4.] Gottlieb Henne was chair of the parish council at the Reformed St. Paul's parish in London.

[5.] Not identified.

Paul's and is also very nice and ready to help, an old bachelor who has given all his money to the needy and lives the life of an ascetic. He will certainly be very kind to you. Do call Henne sometime in this matter and please greet S[eagell] from me when you see him. Also the Cromwells^[6] should give you the names of those whom I helped during my time there.^[7] They still occasionally write a postcard, but I no longer have the addresses. I will write to George^[8] again tomorrow. He is indeed a true friend. I think that he will have impressed you favorably as well. Do ask him to invite you for a few days. Moreover, he should certainly bring you together with Sir Walter Moberly, who is a very cultured and fine man. I would really find that desirable. I will write to him as well and send both letters to Mama.^[9]

By the way, it is a very widespread experience that for a German everything moves too slowly. The Germans are prone to catch this, and people like us become accustomed to it very slowly. But there's no reason at all for impatience. Everything just moves more slowly but usually also surely. As a German over there, you have to tell yourself this every day—until you become like this yourself! This, however, won't agree very much with your disposition! Can't Mucki speak sometime with Mr. Schröder?^[10] I think that would be very nice. I can write him as well.

You asked about Tillich.^[11] I know him, that is, I got to know him during his work for two days here, and perhaps he thinks of it with pleasure if he is not too forgetful. He will certainly remember. Please mention me and tell him that I recall the conference with his friends in Wannsee with pleasure. Of course, I am willing to write myself, if you want me to! Niebuhr,^[12] of whom I've already told you, is of course better. I'm happy to write him; he was always very friendly to me and wanted to visit me here one year ago. But I would indeed like to know whether I should simply ask in general or already announce your visit. This would be more effective.

[6.] The family of the lawyer Philipp Cromwell in London.

[7.] Regarding Bonhoeffer's work with refugees in his London parishes, see *DB-ER*, 413–14, and *DBWE* 13:279–82 and 286–89.

[8.] George Bell.

[9.] Bonhoeffer means that he would send the letters not directly to England but rather via his mother in Berlin; this was a cautionary measure to avoid drawing the attention of police officials to his illegal training of seminarians in Pomerania. [The plan was that Paula Bonhoeffer would see the Leibholzes in Holland at Christmas; see 1/45, ed. note 2.—VB]

[10.] Baron Bruno Schröder.

[11.] Paul Tillich.

[12.] Reinhold Niebuhr.

I think of you both daily with all good wishes. If I can help in any way, I will do it, always with the greatest pleasure! Both of you must rely on that! Please just say the word! Till soon!

Heartfelt greetings to you and all the friends there, your faithful
Dietrich

Heartfelt greetings to Miss Sharp.

38. From Franz Ernst Pfisterer^[1]

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Neunkirchen, December 6, 1938

Dear Brother Bonhoeffer,

I thank you very warmly for your detailed letter of November 6.^[2] I gratefully confirm that I received your letter of November 20 as well.^[3] It is no small matter that such a personal exchange is still possible. Particularly now during the Christmas season my thoughts go back to the time two years ago—especially whenever I sing one of the hymns from *The Clear Tone*, perhaps “Christ we should praise indeed.”^[4]

But now I will try to give you a reply. I hope that I have understood your call to “person.” Put bluntly, one could perhaps express it this way: in no way may Christ for us become a means to an end. When the entire accent is put on the gifts of “grace, forgiveness of sins, righteousness,” then the human being does move back into the center, without our clearly realizing this. If I recall correctly, here the theology of the Middle Ages, and Luther too, warned of such an *uti deo = deum diligere propter bona*.^[5] Is not the recognition of this danger the moment of truth in the challenge of a *resignatio ad infernum*?^[6]

[1.] *NL*, C 25; handwritten letter; previously unpublished. Pfisterer was a candidate in the fourth Finkenwalde session in the winter of 1936–37.

[2.] Letter not extant. In this letter Bonhoeffer probably discussed a sermon that Pfisterer had sent him in a previous letter.

[3.] See Bonhoeffer’s November 20, 1938, letter to the Finkenwalde brothers, 1/36.

[4.] Hymn 18 in the hymnal *Der helle Ton* [a hymnal published by the Reich Association of Young Protestant Men]; see 1/165—VB]. Originally an early church hymn, “*A solis ortus cardine*,” it was translated by Martin Luther into German in 1524. [An English translation, “Now Praise We Christ, the Holy One,” is in *The Lutheran Hymnal*, 104.—VB]

[5.] The “use of God” as “loving God for the sake of God’s good gifts.” See the distinctions in Bernhard von Clairvaux’s work “On Loving God” (*De diligendo Deo*), in A. Adam, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte II*, 77.

[6.] “Resignation to hell.” This is a technical term in German mysticism, particularly in the work of Johannes Tauler, who describes the complete renunciation of salvation and

I completely agree with you that to receive Christ is much more than to receive some kind of gift—even the highest gift. Perhaps more should have been said about the Holy Spirit, which of course is not an object but the very spirit of God and of Christ. Perhaps, however, this would only be a shifting of the difficulty, unless the Holy Spirit is dissolved in some general human concept of spirit. I recall well the difficulty that I felt when I had to say something about what it means to receive *Christ*. And then I nonetheless spoke about the *bona*.^[7] I would, however, ask whether the New Testament does not often speak this way. Eph. 1:3–14, then especially in the gospel of John (3:16–36; 6:35; 7:38; 11:25–26, for example). On the other hand, I think it is very significant that the decisive confession of faith by the early Christian church-community was not: Christ the σωτήρ, but rather Christ the αὐριος.^[8] In that, the early church-community indeed asserted that the αὐριος is the σωτήρ, that the gifts of “grace, forgiveness of sins, life” come from him, and yet the confession demonstrates that Christ is more than a good fairy.

Unfortunately, I am not such a good expert on Luther as to be able to follow your reference to Luther. But I believe I recall from my reading of the Gollwitzer book^[9] that Luther considered the body and blood important as symbol rather than as gift in the Lord’s Supper. Perhaps this is all too schematized.

I didn’t spend too much effort on the χάριος ἀντὶ χάριτος,^[10] but followed W. Bauer here.^[11] Perhaps at this point some of the danger of freely choosing a text from a certain viewpoint becomes evident.

Up to now I have followed the practice of memorizing my sermons almost word for word. I have some difficulty in formulating and constructing sentences. Some things simply cannot be said in a few short sentences (or more correctly, I haven’t been able to up to now). Naturally it would be better to hold such a sermon on the preceding Sunday, but I was not scheduled for the service then.

the affirmation of the condemnation to hell. See A. Adam, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte II*, 185.

[7.] [(God’s) good gifts.—VB]

[8.] “The savior”; “the Lord.”

[9.] See Gollwitzer, *Coena Domini* (The Lord’s Supper), 54–65.

[10.] “Grace upon grace” (John 1:16).

[11.] Bauer, *Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*.

By the way, some time ago a woman who is affiliated with the community movement^[12] asked me whether no one had spoken to me about this sermon. That did not happen, but she seems to have thought that some community members had viewed it as too severe. A strange kind of liberalism concerning “free will” and the sacraments prevails here, at least among many.

My days here are now numbered. On November 18 a new pastor was elected who is a loyal member of the Confessing Church. He will probably come on January 1, 1939. It remains to be seen what will happen to me then. One can indeed be happy when one gets any kind of ministry. The Westphalian Confessing Church has rather an overflow of assistant pastors. And the possibilities for work are fewer and fewer. Previously I sometimes had the thought of going abroad for a while. But today that seems to be ruled out for people like us.

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Yesterday the district synod was held here, where most participants—but without enthusiasm!—accepted Essen III.^[13] Those in charge tried to make this palatable for us with the comment that hopefully this would lead to a coming together with the neutrals^[14] in the east. How do people there^[15] think about these matters? Is there a likelihood for an agreement with those neutrals who are “loyal to the confessions”?—Finally, a request: Do give me the number of an account where I can send you something for your work. Here and there we do receive gifts.

With brotherly greetings! Your grateful
Franz Ernst Pfisterer

[12.] [This was the *Gemeinschaftsbewegung*, a movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century within the Protestant churches strongly influenced by pietism. See also *DBWE* 1:231 and 277, Bonhoeffer’s note 139, as well as *DBW* 11:40, 122, 183, and 184 and *DBW* 14:88.—VB]

[13.] The reference is to the “Proposal for Regulation for the Appointment of a Church Administration in Old Prussia” (*Entwurf einer Ordnung zur Bestellung einer Kirchenleitung in Altpreu en*), which was passed on August 23, 1938, in the course of the negotiations in Essen for the reorganization of the GEC. Cf. Bonhoeffer’s September 10, 1938, letter to Karl Koch and Friedrich Müller, 1/26.

[14.] [In the German Church Struggle, the “neutrals” were those church leaders and clergy who didn’t align themselves with either the Confessing Church or the German Christians.—VB]

[15.] [I.e., with Bonhoeffer in eastern Pomerania.—VB]

39. To Werner Koch**39.1. Telegram^[1]**

In great rejoicing together greets = Dietrich.

39.2. Letter^[2]

December 9, 1938

Dear Brother Koch,

The joy is indescribable. That which we have hoped and prayed for from day to day has become real. It is still like a dream to me. And now you once more have your good bride-to-be,^[3] admired by us all. It must be as though
 90 you have been granted life anew. I'm now looking forward to only more one thing, namely, to see you as soon as possible, so that it will be entirely certain for me that you are once again among us. I will be in Berlin in January too; from the ninth to the eleventh in Stettin at the home of Mrs. von Kleist-Retzow (with Gollwitzer, Fischer, Schönherr, Traub, etc.) for the theological society.^[4] Couldn't you join us there? Or is that too much at present? Would you rather not see anyone now? I don't know; please do write about this. Only you must above all get some rest and get some rest again.—Here things are going well; how much longer, we don't know. There would be much to tell, but all that right now is not at all important in light of the joy that you are free! I truly don't know what else to say to you at the moment. You know better than I do what is of paramount importance. Give your fiancée heartfelt greetings.

Greetings to you in the old brotherly fellowship your
 Dietrich Bonhoeffer

[1.] Literary estate of Werner Koch; the telegram was dispatched at 6:00 p.m. on December 9, 1938, in Köslin. Cf. *NL*, A 45 (58); previously unpublished. Koch was released from the concentration camp in Sachsenhausen on December 2, 1938.

[2.] Literary estate of Werner Koch; handwritten; cf. later typewritten copy in *NL*, A 45 (50). Previously published in *GS* 2:545.

[3.] Gerritdina Stokmann; see the postcard of June 23, 1938, to her from the Finkenwalde brothers, 1/16.

[4.] Cf. Albrecht Schönherr's letters of October 7 and November 14, 1938 (1/30 and 1/35).

40. To Paul Lehmann^[1]

December 14, 1938

Dear Paul,

You wrote me last year at Christmas, and I was delighted to receive the greetings!^[2] But without an address I couldn't reply. Now I will simply ask R. Niebuhr^[3] to forward this card. Hopefully, this will now work. There would be so much to tell that one can't even begin. The best thing would be if you could visit us again^[4] or invite me over for a semester. That wouldn't be bad at all! After such a long time, I would so like to see the country and people again, and especially my friends. What might you be doing now? Are you already a professor? How is the *theologia sacra*^[5] doing? Probably you have long since written the most voluminous and revolutionary books, and here we know nothing about it. By the way I enjoy writing books as well, despite Eccl. 12:12.^[6] If you want, I will send you my *Discipleship* from last year. But I have no idea what interests you now. Do write me again! How are you doing personally? What are Joe Moor, Franklin Fisher, Klein, Dombrowski doing?^[7] I visited Baillie^[8] once in Edinburgh. How does Brunner^[9] come across in Princeton? I heard something about objections against critical

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[1.] *NL*, A 50,2 (1); later typewritten copy; no return address but probably from Groß-Schlönwitz. Previously published in *GS* 2:347–48. [A handwritten note at the top of the typewritten copy in the Nachla indicates that this is Bethge's transcription of a postcard found in a folder among Lehmann's papers that contained what Bethge described as "refugee correspondence." The original postcard is in German and is in the Paul Lehmann Collection, Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary, 67:11.—VB]

[2.] Letter not extant.

[3.] At the time Reinhold Niebuhr was staying for several months in London.

[4.] Lehmann had visited Bonhoeffer in Berlin in April 1933 (cf. *DB-ER*, 268–69). Regarding the friendship between Bonhoeffer and Lehmann at the beginning of the 1930s, see also Alston and Welker, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer." See also *DBWE* 10:299. [The letters published in Alston and Welker's article (the letter on this page is not among them) were then included in *DBW* 17 and have been incorporated according to date in *DBWE* vols. 11, 14, 15, and 16.—VB]

[5.] [Sacred theology.—VB]

[6.] ["Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of flesh."—VB]

[7.] These were all fellow students of Bonhoeffer at Union Theological Seminary, New York, in 1930–31.

[8.] John Baillie.

[9.] Emil Brunner; see also Bonhoeffer's September 18, 1938, letter to Erwin Sutz, 1/29.

research on the Bible! What noteworthy books are being published at present over there? As you see, there's a great deal I would like to know from you!—I enjoying recalling our time together. I am still in touch with Sutz. Jean Lasserre has gotten married. People like us cannot yet afford to do so. Life is too nomadlike for it. There's much joy in the work, however. Very heartfelt greetings to you and your wife with all good wishes for the new year, yours truly

Dietrich B.

Berlin-Charlottenburg, Marienburger Allee 43.^[10]

92 **41. To Walter Moberly^[1]**

Dec 14th 1938

Dear Sir,

although I am afraid that you will not remember that we met in August 1936 at Chamby on the meeting of the ecumenic council—I was a delegate with D. Koch and D. Dibelius^[2]—, I dare to ask a great favour from you and I hope, you will forgive me. My close friend and brother-in-law, Professor Dr. Gerhard Leibholz (Ordinarius für Staats- und Kirchenrecht)^[3] with my sister and her little children is in London. The Bishop of Chichester is in contact with him and has been very kind to him. I have asked the Bishop to introduce him to you. He will be able to tell you all about him personally. Would you be good enough to give my brother-in-law a possibility of seeing you? I should be very grateful indeed for everything you would do for him. Please, excuse this question and all trouble I am causing to you. You know,

[10.] Bonhoeffer had to figure that the German authorities would check his correspondence abroad, in this case to the United States. For that reason he gave his parents' address as the return address, so as not to draw the officials' attention to his illegal training activities in Pomerania.

[1.] *NL*, A 46,3 (9); later typewritten copy. No return address, but probably from Groß-Schlönwitz, with enclosed visiting card: "Sir Walter Moberly, London-Lic. Theol. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Pastor-Berlin-Charlottenburg 9, Marienburger Allee 43—introduce my brother-in-law, Professor Dr. Leibholz, London.—With kindest regards and thanks—D.B.—Dec 14th 1938." Previously published in *GS* 6:449–50. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

[2.] The references are to Karl Koch and Otto Dibelius. Regarding the course of the August 1936 ecumenical conference in Chamby, see *DB-ER*, 551–54, and *DBW* 14, 1/114.

[3.] [Full professor of political and ecclesiastical law.—VB]

at present we can [do] nothing but ask. But I am sure, you will understand and forgive.

With many thanks I am, dear Sir, Yours very sincerely
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

42. To Martin Boeckheler^[1]

Dear Brother Boeckheler,

I send heartfelt greetings to you and your parish for Christmas. May God give you all much joy, much peace, and much love, as we all ask in this season. It becomes clearer year by year what it means that the glory of God was revealed in the manger, his wealth was revealed in poverty, that God was revealed in the flesh. May you all and your congregations partake of the great Christmas joy in which we may stand again as those who are poor and yet rich, as those who have been deserted and yet are loved. If you wish, please pass along to your congregations our sincere wishes and our intercessory prayers for you all.—I want to give my heartfelt thanks personally for all that you and your sister are doing so *very* kindly for my relatives.^[2] They are very grateful for this, and all of us with them.—Please continue to take my relatives to heart and help them through troubled hours!—I would like to come soon myself to meet you all again! Warm greetings to you and your sister and in gratitude yours truly

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D. Bonhoeffer

43. To Martin Boeckheler^[1]

Dear Brother Boeckheler,

In the other postcard I forgot to ask you to kindly forward the card to Mr. Henne. I don't know his new address. I also wanted to ask you in any case to send me an invitation from the parish for Christmas and New Year, since I have made up my mind that if I indeed want to carry out the plan, I could

[1.] *NL*, A 45 (61); handwritten postcard; no return address or date; certainly Advent 1938. Previously published in *GS* 6:451–52.

[2.] The Leibholz couple in London.

[1.] *NL*, A 45 (62); handwritten postcard; no return address or date; certainly in Advent 1938. Previously published in *GS* 6:452.

best do so during the Christmas holiday.^[2] I don't yet know exactly whether I can do this. But in case it is possible—I will let you know in time—it will be good to get the invitation in time. Just a few words are sufficient. The prospect of seeing and talking to you all again is very attractive. Cordial greetings and thanks your

D[ietrich] B[onhoeffer]

- 94 Would you please call J. Rieger and ask him to request such a brief invitation for me from Georg^[3] as well. That is also better to have. My parents' address!^[4]

44. To Julius Rieger^[1]

Dear Brother Rieger,

In these Christmas weeks my thoughts go especially to you all. It is difficult for me to think that I could have been over there right now. You will understand that. It is a comfort to me to know that you and your wife are there. I wish you much joy in your work, which certainly is becoming greater and more demanding with each year. You will be burdened with many things. I am all the more grateful to you for all the friendliness you have shown my sister and her family.^[2] She will often need advice and support when the children arrive.^[3] I shall be grateful to you then for each kind word that keeps her from impatience and worry. I would gladly come myself soon. I have a genuine longing for it.—My work is going normally. But I sometimes have rather enough of the nomadic life and would like to become somewhat more domestic and settled. That just comes with time. But it isn't possible now, and I am happy that I may be here in this work.—Please greet all my

[2.] [Bonhoeffer hoped to come to London. See 1/42.—VB]

[3.] George Bell.

[4.] In this letter to London, Bonhoeffer refers explicitly to the return address of his parents' home in Berlin. See his December 14, 1938, letter to Paul Lehmann, 1/40, ed. note 10.

[1.] *NL*, Anh. D 1,1 (3); handwritten postcard; no return address or date, certainly Advent 1938. Cf. also *NL*, A 45 (60); later typewritten copy. Previously published in *GS* 6:450–51.

[2.] The Leibholz family.

[3.] See 1/45, ed. note 2.

friends, especially Büsing^[4] and his fiancée; I don't know his [address]. What is he doing? I would like to know; since I'm often asked. Tell him that Werner has returned back home.^[5]—How is the οἰαουμένη^[6] doing? Pass my greetings on to people there too.—Wishes for a joyous blessed Christmas season to you, your wife, and your children from yours truly

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Dietrich Bonhoeffer

45. To Christiane Leibholz^[1]

Dear little Christiane,

Now you are celebrating Christmas and quite differently than usual.^[2] That will certainly be very lovely. And until now Grandpapa and Grandmama have never spent Christmas together with you all. That is something very special indeed. You can hang the two pictures in your room. Don't you have them in Göttingen as well?^[3]

Now give much joy to your parents and grandparents and celebrate a merry Christmas. Until I see you again! Your uncle

Dietrich

[4.] Wolfgang Büsing, a member of the second Finkenwalde session in the winter of 1935–36, emigrated in 1936 with his fiancée Erika, who was affected by the “non-Aryan” laws of 1935. Bonhoeffer and the Council of Brethren of the Old Prussian Union helped him go to London, where he became assistant pastor in Julius Rieger’s congregation. See *DBW* 14, 1/132.

[5.] The reference is to Werner Koch’s release at the beginning of December 1938 from the Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

[6.] [Ecumenical group.—VB]

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (14); later typewritten copy; probably from Groß-Schlönwitz, undated; picture postcard sent for Christmas 1938 to Haarlem, the Netherlands; previously unpublished.

[2.] On their way into exile in England, the Leibholz couple had parted for a time from their two children in Switzerland. Ursula Schleicher had taken them back to stay temporarily with their Bonhoeffer grandparents in Berlin. At Christmas 1938, Paula and Karl Bonhoeffer, the Leibholz children, and their parents met at the home of their relatives, the Koenigs, in Haarlem, Holland. See Leibholz-Bonhoeffer, *Bonhoeffers*, 88 and 99–101.

[3.] [Göttingen may have been mentioned to give possible censors the impression that the Leibholz family was only temporarily away from home.—VB]

46. From Otto-Karl Lerche and Paul Henheik^[1]

Dear Brother Bonhoeffer, dear Eberhard,

Please forgive us, dear Brother Bonhoeffer, if the tone and address of this letter seems more directed toward Eberhard; you are always meant too.

96 Well, now a package is really on its way from Lagendorf, not as impressive and hefty as the previous one (from [19]35), but our living memories stand behind it.

Dear Brother Bonhoeffer, even if you hear very little from me, my gratitude does accompany you, and in these days I may be allowed to say it out loud: you are a spiritual father to me (I said this a few days ago to a brother—not from Finkenwalde—whom I told how much I enjoy using your *Discipleship*—how good that it has an index^[2]—for sermon preparation, and he replied with surprise: you know, I do exactly the same. Pardon me for this awkward sentence. I said to him: Bonhoeffer would laugh at me if I told him that, and then say quietly, “Now, at most a brother in the spirit”—and yet you are more than that). It is essential to me that I know of you—simply that you are there (and that it is still day^[3] for you—what a mercy).

You see, Eberhard, the package is not as festive as in the past. That, too, I think, is connected with the path (certainly with me as well: I can no longer muster the degree of belligerence).^[4] The donors are Kruseberg^[5] 10.–; Lüder: bacon, sausage, cookies; Kirndorf: bacon and juice (we knew we had to send that along too); Klaas: 1 tin; Mrs. Bölke: a tin and cookies and a letter; Bekes:^[6] bacon and sausage; Mrs. Vahlke: 1 liverwurst; Pastors: sausage and cookies; Miss R. Lange 1.–.

What should I write you about myself? I attempt to do my work—and sometimes also to shirk it; I pray for one revival of our church-community (oh, how much patience is needed for this and how impatient we are, how we want this to be granted us instantly); at present I go along—often it is otherwise—my way quite confidently. How good that you and that I as well may continue to

[1.] *NL*, C 25; handwritten, from Lagendorf, undated, but very likely before Christmas 1938; previously unpublished. Lerche was a candidate in the third Finkenwalde session in the summer of 1936.

[2.] [Bonhoeffer prepared the index for the 1937 edition of *Discipleship* himself; it is reproduced in facsimile on p. 305 of the German *DBW* 4 edition.—VB]

[N3.] [Cf. John 9:4: “We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work.”—VB]

[4.] [Lerche is referring to the continuing tensions within the Confessing Church.—VB]

[5.] Difficult to decipher; may be “Krisebog.”

[6.] Difficult to decipher, may be “Jakes.”

work.—Forgive me that I don't write more, but I believe that whatever I "have" I need for the days to come.

Wishing that you both may grow ever more deeply—or rather, will have grown more deeply—into the great joy with which God leads us to him, your

Otto-Karl

Please give warmest greetings to Fritz^[7] and Mrs. Struwe^[8] and the church province of Saxony.^[9]

I just read H.'s^[10] lines: then I will just add "as dying, and see—we are alive!"^[11]

Dear Finkenwaldians,

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Morituri vos salutant.^[12] And yet it is always so hard to have to proceed into dying. One does indeed hang onto life. That is what makes the wretchedness of these times so bitter. If only out of this the blessing would grow that, despite everything and above everything, the heart learns jubilation without ceasing: Indeed I still have Christ. Who will take him from me?^[13] That is my Christmas wish for you as well. And my Christmas wish for us is that you both might have time to care about us and come to see us.

Very affectionately yours

Paul Henheik

47. From His Parents^[1]

December 22, 1938

Dear Dietrich,

We will of course speak^[2] the day after tomorrow, but we want to send you a written Christmas greeting as well. It would be nice if we could see you early on

[7.] Friedrich Onnasch [the younger—VB].

[8.] Erna Struwe.

[9.] [This was Bethge's home church.—VB]

[10.] Paul Henheik's comment at the end of this letter.

[11.] 2 Cor. 6:9.

[12.] "We who are about to die salute you," a reference to the gladiators' greeting as they entered the arena, addressing the emperor Claudius.

[13.] From the first stanza of the Passion hymn, "Warum sollt ich mich denn grämen?" by Paul Gerhardt, in *EG*, 370. [The English translation is "Why Should Cross and Trial Grieve Me?" in *Lutheran Hymnal*, 523.—VB]

[1.] *NL*, C 1; handwritten postcard from Haarlem, the Netherlands; previously unpublished.

[2.] [On the phone.—VB]

the third day of the holidays. Your greeting from Groß-Schlönwitz has already arrived.^[3] That is really something, that you had temperatures down to minus-20 degrees.^[4] It didn't go below minus-10 here. Now everything is under deep snow. Mama is doing better with her catarrh. Gert, Sabine, and the children are cheerful. My pen is making many lucky piglets.^[5] Because of that I will close. Affectionate greetings from us

Father

Thinking of you in deep affection

Mother

98 **48. From Paula Bonhoeffer**^[1]

Dear Dietrich,

I assume that when this card arrives, Christmas Eve will already be behind you. Mucki^[2] will send a little tree over to our room. Your greetings have already arrived. But I put them aside for Sabine and Gerd.^[3] Papa was in Utrecht today because of Kramer.^[4] We have [minus-]12 degrees and are all snowed in; it was all supposedly very lovely, but instead of a half hour the ride took two hours! We hope to arrive early on the twenty-seventh without too much delay. I fear that I will bring my catarrh back home with me. So we will not immediately travel on, and Papa, if there are urgent cases, will hold his consultation^[5] hours. Please tell that to Miss Käte.^[6] We hope to still see you before your departure. Please do tell Klaus that I would love to have him with us on the evening of the twenty-seventh, naturally with Emmi. Sabine had several more wishes. Could Mr. Bethge pick up the car with the baggage and sell them in Berlin? Perhaps not? Affectionately

Mother

[3.] This probably refers to Bonhoeffer's card to Christiane Leibholz. See 1/45.

[4.] [Minus 4 degrees Fahrenheit.—VB]

[5.] I.e., his fountain pen was making inkblots.

[1.] *NL*, C 1; handwritten postcard from Haarlem, the Netherlands, postmarked December 23, 1938; previously unpublished.

[2.] Anna Koenigs.

[3.] This mailing is not extant. [Bonhoeffer obviously sent two pictures for the Leibholz daughters. Cf. 1/45.—VB]

[4.] Franz Kramer, an emigrant who lived in the Netherlands after 1938.

[5.] [Medical office hours.—VB]

[6.] The Bonhoeffers' housekeeper in Berlin.

49. To Sabine and Gerhard Leibholz^[1]January 6, 1939^[2]

Dear Sabine, dear Gert,

I thank you greatly for your Christmas present, which made a very lovely ski trip possible for me. It was once again utterly wonderful in the snow. We are now thinking about installing light and central heating in the cottage,^[3] so that it will also be suitable for a longer winter stay for our parents—but I find that this is much more important now than setting myself up well. That can indeed come later; so I gladly wanted to help the parents somewhat through giving this up. Unfortunately, it is rather expensive, since everything in the cottage is very primitive;^[4] and it will also be very agreeable for the children and for you yourselves. Otherwise it is always rather raw up there in the winter. Our parents, despite their plans, have not traveled, since the weather was somewhat too unpleasant for them. They preferred to stay home. And that was certainly better. I'm sure that you will be longing to finally travel back home. But under no circumstances may you, dear Gert, simply break off your work; the others must simply adapt themselves to that. I am somewhat familiar with the arrangements at the library of the British Museum and know that it is always difficult to get the books back out once you have handed them in. So, despite all the yearnings for a quiet time at home, you must definitely hold out, and moreover you can depend entirely on old Lina,^[5] who will give the best care to your home. As a postscript to the expenses for you I am to tell you—the notes for this were not immediately at hand recently; you have already received the receipts—food for the children 50, tailor 23.5, church tax 70, underclothes for the children 10, Aunt Elisabeth's^[6] trip to Göttingen 10, the garden 1.0, telephone 17, private lessons for the children 16, massage 2, x-ray 2, shoe inserts 2. Just to keep you informed about everything. I will still be visiting here for a few more days until work resumes.

By the way I have written to Cromwell.^[7] Perhaps you can call him sometime as well. I found Mama and Papa rather in need of relaxation. I hope

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[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (13); photocopy of a handwritten letter; no return address, but probably from Berlin; previously unpublished.

[2.] It was actually mailed on January 11; see the postscript.

[3.] The Bonhoeffers' vacation home in Friedrichsbrunn in the Harz Mountains.

[4.] The passage "but I find . . . is very primitive" is written in the margin.

[5.] The Leibholz family's cook in Göttingen.

[6.] Elisabeth von Hase.

[7.] Philipp Cromwell; letter not extant.

they will still travel, maybe a little later. Papa has much on his mind and seems somewhat overstrained, and I would also wish some quiet for Mama for Papa's sake as well. I haven't seen her for ten weeks, but I believe that she always undertakes too much. She always wants to do everything herself, and it does often become too much for her. We think often of you all, and I was so happy to finally hear something from you personally. I was especially pleased to hear that the children had such a merry Christmas. How are they liking it now?^[8] The sea air will certainly be very good for them.

I hope to see you soon. I have received a very nice invitation.^[9] And woe to you if you spoil my trip by leaving too early!

Everyone sends affectionate greetings with me. Once again, many thanks for everything!

Yours truly
Dietrich

The letter unfortunately has been sitting here. Today is January 11. Forgive me! I think of all of you always! Affectionately D.^[10]

50. From Herbert Liedtke^[1]

Marienwalde, January 7, 1939

Dear Brother Bonhoeffer,

First, accept my heartfelt thanks for sending me such brotherly greetings at Christmas. It is almost as if you had selected the saying on your card,^[2] "Lord, you are my strength and power and refuge in need,"^[3] to correspond to my particular circumstances so that it could serve as warning and consolation for me.

I have sometimes thought in recent days of writing the letter that I now write to you, but only the earnest advice of my mother has led me to do so now. It is no easy thing for me to write to you now, for it will certainly not become a

[8.] [I.e., life in England.—VB]

[9.] This probably refers to the official invitation to London that Bonhoeffer requested in his Advent 1938 letter to Martin Boeckheler, 1/43.

[10.] Postscript written on the letterhead.

[1.] *NL*, C 25; handwritten; previously unpublished. Liedtke was a member of the fifth Finkenwalde session in the summer of 1937.

[2.] Card not extant.

[3.] See Ps. 59:17.

normal letter. I have confidence in you, however, that you know me somewhat and therefore I will dare to tell you everything that in recent weeks has almost robbed me of my clear senses and continues daily to be a burden upon my heart and soul. I know that you will receive in the face of God even that which I tell you, and that you will help me, if God intends that I be helped at all.

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You wrote me that I had many reasons to be thankful. This is true, as true as anything on earth can be true. God has showered me with gifts. I have parents who pray for me; I have a dear bride-to-be who belongs to me not only in the chastity of her love but who prays for me; I have here a fine possibility to work and lack nothing of the external amenities of life; I have a young brother here in the house with whom I may share daily fellowship in prayer—I have all that. Is that not grounds enough for gratitude? And nonetheless recently I have become a person for whom gratitude does not come from the heart—oh, sometimes it happens, but then it suffocates once more under a paralyzing fear that at times attacks me so strongly that my entire body trembles. This fear does not come from outside, is not connected to any recollection, nor is it because my thoughts are too worried about the future of our church. This frequent dreadful fear is the fear for my own existence as a living person, or to put it differently, the fear of my own death.

It is hard for me to have to say this to you in writing, I would much rather sit in front of you so that you could see me and then kneel down with me before God our savior, of whom I know that he alone can help here. That is also the request of my letter, that you might stand by me through your prayer and your advice. I have prayed much for this and have also been allowed to hear how the young brother here prayed for me, in the worst hours of such a misery of the heart that I can do nothing besides cry to the Lord, but I am still not free. It accompanies me like a shadow and occasionally, sometimes in the middle of a happy good thought, it strikes so that I at times can scarcely come to myself.

I have previously sometimes experienced such doubts, but it is only in the past few weeks that the experience has come with such intensity. During the day, when my thoughts are diverted through some kind of work, I can remain quiet for a long time; but I seldom succeed in the evenings while I'm trying to go to sleep. It is not at all a vague general fear but manifests itself strangely in clear comprehensible thoughts. I then stand under a barely surmountable compulsion to await the moment when my heart will beat its last beat and I must be dead. My heart beats then in a racing tempo and an enormous unrest is in me, so that I must stand up and wander around in the lit room. My thoughts are completely clear; I can even reflect on myself and my situation. Sedatives help little. I know exactly that when in such a state I would be able to concentrate my thoughts entirely on the image of Christ, then the fear would be gone, but my thoughts are repeatedly driven by a demonic force to think these thoughts of mine of

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death. Then there is nothing of the certainty of salvation, nothing of the joy to be allowed to be with Christ, but only the dreadful foreboding of a terrible end toward nothingness.

These thoughts are so strong that they have seeped into my subconscious and in thinking of something in the future, perhaps in thinking that I may see my fiancée again in several months, a hot terror comes over me: it will no longer be. Or as it happened in the first hour of the new year, as the housefather spoke the prayer before the gathered household community here and then said: “. . . and if it must be, that we die blessed,” then suddenly this dreadful fear was there again: this year will be your last.

I try to tear myself loose from these thoughts, for they rob me of all joy, and even of all serious sense of responsibility toward the work commissioned to me here. It is almost as if the everyday life here murmurs around me like a dream; I sometimes don't stand in reality and then find no relation to the things that concern me.

But above all this, I am completely and irrefutably certain that there would be joy upon joy and jubilant gratitude if I could come free from this fear, if my thoughts would become free from this demonic shackle, if I could believe completely like a child: all that which tortures me now so severely, Jesus Christ has borne it for me, if I could accept out of whole faith: my life and my dying rest in Christ's hands. Sometimes it occurs to me that I must tell myself in astonishment: you are still alive. But I do know through all of this, yes, I know: if Christ did not hold his hands over me, then I would already be gone and have died in dreadful fear. That alone lifts me up again. But I do not find the strength to throw all these thoughts of death as my worry onto Christ; they come again and again, and sometimes it even seems to me frivolous to shake everything off and take the day joyfully and without worry from God's hand.

103 I have thought a great deal about why I have to suffer such hard tribulations, why I cannot be like a child, who stands with Christ in utterly simple faith and confidence. Tell me please, can this be God's school that wants to test me? In all and certainly unfeigned seriousness, I have taken up my work in Bernsee but have regarded this in my deepest heart only as a transition to a time that seemed more important to me, namely, the time when I might live with my bride as a happy man in the state of marriage. My thoughts did not go first in the direction of how I would have to work as a laborer in the vineyard of God but instead toward a time of yearned-for happiness. Now I am being so brutally pulled into the present that seemed so worthless to me.

But then one more thing: the burial services I must hold cause a great deal of inner misery for me. Not because I would not know what I have to say to the mourners, but because I must almost always put myself in the place of the deceased, that is I stand once more before my own death.

I am very certain that I will not hold out much longer if the power of Christ's resurrection does not rescue me. It is as if I no longer had the strength to believe all the glorious and, as it appears even to me, saving words of promise. I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the Lord^[4]—and all the other sayings that I seek again and again. I would like to seize these sayings with whole faith, but repeatedly the other thoughts come through.

In pondering these tribulations the question has come to me, whether in some point I had behaved disobediently to God, but I have no answer. Certainty was bestowed on me that I may have my bride according to God's will. But for the very sake of this bride and of all the other people for whom I am supposed to be there, all the unbelief, the result of which is this anxiety, seems to me to be like disobedience.

Certainly the question can't be entirely dismissed as to whether an enormous nervousness simply leaves me physically without the strength to steer my thoughts so that they are disciplined before God and hear God's word. But it is unfortunately true that I am indeed rather nervous. Sometimes I already begin to tremble during a conversation that stimulates me greatly, even when it moves me to great joy. Yet is it not indeed the case that the thoughts of our hearts influence our bodies and not the reverse?

How quiet and full of great joy so many times in my life have been. I do want to return to the gratitude that I truly owe to God, want to be free from having to think of the fear of death that could overwhelm me, want to be directed in my thoughts toward Christ alone, want to be able to go to bed and fall into a good sleep, which I so lack now, free from the fearful expectation of what will happen, I want to be able again to look freely to the time to come, especially in thinking of my bride-to-be.

I almost feel as if I could already know what you will now reply, but I will send this letter off nonetheless, for it is truly for me a matter of finding a brother before Christ who prays with me, prays for me, and who can help me in the power of the Holy Spirit. Do take my situation on, for I am no longer ashamed of saying what the truth is, that I am a beaten man who has experienced Satan's power with great fear, but who wants to become free through the blood of Jesus Christ, confidently hoping for his salvation and for joyous obedience in daily service. I want to become free from my fear, that is, from myself, and become a slave to Jesus Christ, for this is certain to me: without him there is no life for me. Jesus Christ himself, of whom I have so often spoken and preached and surely not as a liar, he must now himself come alive in my life, and as the one who has taken away the power of death.^[5]

[4.] Ps. 118:17.

[5.] [Cf. 2 Tim. 1:10.—VB]

I have written many words, but I don't know how otherwise I should speak to you. Insofar as it is really Christ's will to be your and my Lord—that almost sounds like a blasphemy, but it is really now a matter of the ultimate decision—he will hear us, yes, he will hear us.

With heartfelt greetings from your
Herbert Liedtke

Address: Marienwalde Kreis Arnswalde

51. From Otto Dudzus^[1]

Michendorf, January 11, 1939

Esteemed, dear Brother Bonhoeffer,

105 Unfortunately, I left you without any greetings for Christmas and the new year. Naturally not because of laziness. I thought a great deal about you during the entire time and often intended to write. But in the last Christmas week work piled up so high that I would have found time for a card at most, and it was supposed to become somewhat more than that. Then right after Christmas our big move began. After searching for a half year, we have finally found a decent apartment here in Michendorf, three rooms for a reasonable price. We took care of the move ourselves, and that takes more time than one thinks and than one is happy with, in terms of the parish work. But now all that is behind us. Through the move, in any case, I didn't even get around to writing for New Year's. Your Christmas card^[2] brought us great joy and fortified us greatly for the proclamation. It does indeed mean a great deal, greatly noticeable for preaching, when one can know that the brothers are praying. And I thank you very much for this. This year for the first time I was allowed to preach on Christmas. What a great joy it is indeed, that the Lord Christ has come to us in our poor, confused life and now wants to enter our lives each day anew. Hopefully, you experienced rich days with the brothers. I was with you all in my thoughts. Brother Emmerich^[3] is with you, isn't he? It would be nice if we here in the countryside knew who is with you up there. One thinks differently of the brothers who are with you

[1.] *NL*, C 25; handwritten; previously unpublished. Dudzus was a candidate in the fifth Finkenwalde session in the summer of 1937.

[2.] Card not extant.

[3.] Heinz Emmerich [who was a member of the collective pastorate at Gro-Schlönwitz in the winter session of 1938–39.—VB]

when one knows the names. Often one knows something more than the names. And even when one knows only the names, one knows more than a little. Or is there some difficulty in informing us of the names?^[4]

The work in the parish brings me much joy, particularly preaching and the encounters here and there in the homes, when they happen. One often unexpectedly finds open doors. The Lord Christ is doing his work. There are no major events here. We can work in peace. Any kind of events and disturbances has—since I have been here—not happened. But that would of course not have been a “major thing.” The truly major things usually happen quietly, in the encounter with the Word. I wrote you back then something about the internal circumstances of our congregations, about their relationship to the CC, that through the resolution of the parish council, no public intercessions naming names and no announcements were to be made.^[5] This unholy resolution unfortunately has not yet come down,^[6] and I notice how horribly dangerous it will become for us, how much one enjoys the quiet one has externally through this. And yet it is not the quiet of Christ. The circular letter has just reached me on its second journey.^[7] One can be shocked by the uncertainty of many brothers. How suddenly the path of the CC takes away “certainty” when it stops short and becomes dangerous.^[8] Oh, if it all depended upon our courage, it would be desolate! If only we don’t demonstrate for the congregations with our own bodies that things also work without faith.

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In October we had a mission week [Volksmismissionswoche] in Rudi Kühn’s congregation. R. Kühn, Br. Lerche, Br. Veckenstedt, and I were there.^[9] It brought us all a great deal of joy. Perhaps we sense the blessing of such a thing best in ourselves, in how we proceed with our work in our own parishes. I have never before preached so gladly as after this week. Brother Veckenstedt, who has exactly the same kind of motorcycle as Fritz Onnasch, often comes the forty kilometers over to us. He is a great gift to me from Finkenwalde.

[4.] Because of the possible examination of the mail, it was dangerous to give the names of the participants of the illegal collective pastorates.

[5.] Behind this resolution were the conflicts within the congregation after local pastor Bruno Haese had placed himself under the state-controlled church committees and demanded that the parish council, the majority of which belonged to the Confessing Church, recall its “illegal” assistant pastor Dudzus.

[6.] He means “been rescinded” (revised).

[7.] Bonhoeffer’s “personal circular letters” were circulated among the former Finkenwaldians from one to the next.

[8.] See Bonhoeffer’s November 11, 1938, circular letter to the Finkenwalde brothers, 1/36.

[9.] Rudolf Kühn, Otto-Karl Lerche, and Eberhard Veckenstedt; see *DB-ER*, 543–45.

As I was straightening up some time ago, I found your lecture about the hymn^[10] here after all. Hopefully, you have not missed it too much. Br. Stähler wanted to have it back then. In the meantime he was here and did attempt—but without success—to read through the manuscript.^[11] I must in the coming days at any rate send something to Fritz;^[12] then the lecture will go along.

Healthwise, recently I've been doing quite well. The dizzy spells still come occasionally, but haven't at all for several weeks, although I stopped taking medicine.^[13] Perhaps—hopefully—they will cease completely some day.

Now I wish you, dear Brother Bonhoeffer, God's blessing for your work. Please give my greetings to Eberhard, Fritz, and Br. Emmerich. My wife sends greetings to you as well.

With heartfelt, brotherly greetings your grateful
Otto Dudzus

107 **52. To His Parents**^[1]

January 16, 1939

My dear Parents,

There was much to do and discuss in the last few days; that's why I have not gotten to writing. There is not much to report either. All is going well, and I am trying to find a place for the summer.^[2] I have a letter from the Leibholzes; I have also written them.^[3] It was just before the departure there, and for that reason was somewhat muddled. What do you hear otherwise from them? Dear Mama, I wanted to ask you to take a look into the little cupboard where I put my files during the vacation, to see whether you can

[10.] Cf. the lecture, "The Inner Life of the German Protestant Church," which Bonhoeffer gave on August 5, 1936, during a series of public lectures organized by the Confessing Church during the Olympic games in Berlin; see *DBW* 14, 2/21, and *DB-ER*, 538–39.

[11.] [Bonhoeffer's handwriting was notoriously difficult to read.—VB]

[12.] Friedrich Onnasch [the younger.—VB]

[13.] Bonhoeffer had witnessed a particularly bad attack of dizziness in Finkenwalde, which led him to send Dudzus to be treated by his father in the Berlin Charité hospital for three to four weeks. (Personal letter from Dudzus to the German editor, February 20, 1994).

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (15); handwritten; no return address but probably from Groß-Schlönwitz; previously unpublished.

[2.] [The Gro -Schlönwitz pastorate was no longer available.—VB]

[3.] This correspondence with the Leibholzes, who at this point were probably still with their relatives in Haarlem, the Netherlands, has not been found.

find a folder in which there is an address list. Those are the names of the Finkenwalde members, which I would like to have back. Would you then please send them to Eberhard? Hopefully, this is not too much trouble for you. Are things now somewhat quieter with you or not yet? I would like to know some news. Are you still traveling?

Greetings to you from your grateful
Dietrich

53. From Herbert Liedtke^[1]

At present Bernsee, January 18, 1939

Dear Brother Bonhoeffer,

God in his mercy has certainly spread much more in terms of help and gracious mercy over my life than my dulled and anxious senses are aware of. Perhaps I may say it this way, that your letter^[2] and another experience in the last few days have become visible signs to me, compelling me to realize, with deep shame for all unbelief and lack of gratitude, that God's hand has been lifted for me.

I thank you very warmly for your letter. It did not come too late for me, and perhaps a few days of despondent waiting were necessary for God to help me arrive at an understanding of what you had to say to me. Admittedly, this is not that easy for me. I will admit to you that I felt bitter misery when I first read your letter and only gradually do I grasp that really here a path to salvation is being shown me.

Such thoughts have tormented me terribly, that we must find a clear Yes to dying. Perhaps this was due to the fact that I could no longer think at all of death other than by placing myself momentarily in the situation of dying and indeed entirely without being able to resist. For days I repeatedly felt as if I suddenly and, so it seemed, quite unavoidably now faced the end from which there can be no reawakening to this life. But I then sometimes was simply shocked when I nonetheless noticed that life had not yet left me. I don't know whether a person can empathize with such situations without having lived through them himself. It is as if one were terrified of remaining in this life and not by having to leave it, as if one had a fear of life and not a fear of death. Both, however, are so closely connected, the sudden coming of the horrible fear: now you must go and your life is cut like a thread, and then that horrible reawakening to life. This was actually the most desolate period. Some days I had a direct physical sensation of despair.

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[1.] *NL*, C 25; handwritten; previously unpublished.

[2.] Letter not extant.

This pushed me so far that one morning the mere recollection of my fiancée and my brother, who had written me a cheerful letter, brought me to unrestrained weeping. I could not help myself—and yet afterward it was enough for my pride that no one had found me in this state.

It was simply total chaos, so that sometimes only the presence of other people brought me to the comprehensible consideration that I was indeed still on this earth. I did not stop praying, I also read the Scriptures, but everything was dead. My prayer was spoken as though no one were there to hear it, even when I had my young brother with me, who has meant a great deal to me through his honest intercession and the love with which he has borne me. Everything that was not directly connected to the question of death was utterly, truly utterly, irrelevant to me. Even the confirmation class one week ago today was an hour full of unreality. It is surely not only a change in mood that today I am out of this despair.

109 But this will indeed be very difficult to learn, that I also find a joyful Yes to my dying. For that which has been so dreadful in the last few days has not yet faded away. This momentary sense of attack by the horror of death happens often, even now. It often occurs that a necessary consideration, whether it concerns the ministry or is one that affects my own life and my future, is suddenly interrupted by one thought: it makes no sense, since you must go. Above all, this thought plagues me again and again in the evening before falling asleep. It may happen, as it did last night, that I am startled more than ten times and sleep escapes me.

It is strange. I am not so horrified in this by the thoughts of the coming judgment or hell, but rather by the thoughts that I must lie in a coffin and be placed under the earth. It is almost as if I had to become an observer at my own burial. I don't know whether you will understand me. But it is a fact that sometimes the mere sight of a coffin puts me for a moment in great shock. It is as though my eyes and all my thoughts were only directed and pulled downward. The glory of Christ is then utterly invisible to me. For that reason the ministry for a burial is so difficult for me. For days I am haunted by how the coffin is sunk into the earth. It is almost as if a psychologist would have to speak here of a mania—but is not Christ the liberator, even from such manic states? Can he not make it so that even for me the coffin and the grave become nothing other than what they really are? Must this remain so for my entire life, that I shudder so before a coffin and an open grave?

Dear Brother Bonhoeffer, it becomes difficult indeed for me to speak with you this way, for there are still other things in connection with what I have related here that have tormented me. Perhaps a genuine conversation will be necessary sometime in these matters as well, so that I don't keep carrying this in seclusion, finally ending up as a person who mocks all the goodness and mercy of

God through his desperation. You kindly offered to visit me sometime. Several days ago I would have very cordially asked you to do so. Now I feel as if I were recovering, and for that reason I don't really know whether I should bring such a wish to you that certainly means no small sacrifice in time and energy for you.

Here I had to let my letter sit for a few hours. During this period I repeatedly thought about whether I should not indeed ask you to visit and give me the possibility to say all that is in me and which comes up again at times out of the momentary seclusion. May I express my request in this way: that in this period that has grown a tiny bit quieter, I would like to leave it up to your brotherly decision, whether you come to visit me. One thing is certain, that you will not travel for nothing when you come to me; you are not coming to someone healthy.

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It is almost as if all courage to live has collapsed in me. Today again, as we started making major plans, I could not cheerfully participate in them. What I see before me are only short distances, and sometimes it appears to me to be reckless to disregard the possibility of dying soon by making a major plan. I don't know whether you can understand me here. A prayer that was spoken at midnight, as the old year passed into the new, froze my thoughts. The host said—which was certainly proper to pray before God—let us also be prepared, if it must be, to die. Then it shot through my soul with hot horror: this year will be your last. I have not gotten rid of this dreadful thought; it has tormented me incessantly, and perhaps it was the cause that so often during the day and also at night when I lay sleepless on my bed, my soul had to face the anxiety of immediate death. Now several days ago it came to me like an inspiration: God did not intend this prayer for me as a prediction, for God does not give such predictions, and surely he does give them in such a terribly tormenting manner. This filled me with great joy. Is it correct to think so?

Regarding your other offer, to be counseled by your father about what I could do to strengthen my nerves, I can say nothing other than my heartfelt thanks. I have always meant to ask a doctor whom I could trust, but I didn't know anyone. In my case it is not only a matter of a general nervousness, but that this nervousness manifests itself in a nervous heart. It reaches the point where I have an irregular heartbeat, at times am conscious of missing a beat and then afterward feel that much more powerful a throb. I already believed that I had a real heart problem, but the doctor has told me that the heart is fine, I have no heart problem and also have normal blood pressure, that everything was a symptom of nervousness. I obediently took the medicine he prescribed but have not felt any improvement. If only I could really experience something that would help me, I would be very grateful for it. Above all, I would really like to know in all truth whether bicycling—which simply is part of my ministry, sometimes over twenty kilometers over sodden paths—can hurt. After such trips, I indeed note

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discomfort and a pressing pain around the heart, but I am not certain whether they could be imagined and whether one can actually feel heart trouble as pain. Sleep is difficult. Usually I fall asleep quickly, but then awaken very soon with a jolt and fall into a great restlessness that can intensify into fear. Sedatives like valerian drops are unsuccessful. The pastor's wife here recommended valerian extract pills, but I don't really feel confident either. But I do notice that I cannot really perform my ministry much longer if a strengthening of my nerves isn't possible. Is it even possible for willpower to suffer under weakened nerves as well?

I must, however, give heartfelt thanks to God for yesterday and today, for I was able to be much more at peace.

I will close for today, gladly awaiting your reply. God will surely bless such pleading and such brotherly aid.

With warm greetings I am your grateful
Herbert Liedtke

54. From Herbert Liedtke^[1]

January 19, 1939

Dear Brother Bonhoeffer,

As a postscript to yesterday's letter, I still have to say this today. In the midst of the worst misery, it was always entirely certain to me: if help can be brought to me, then it must come through Christ alone; Christ's resurrecting power must assert itself in my life. Now in these days, which have made me so much quieter, an apprehensive concern has come to me despite all praying, whether the turn from such despair toward a joyful and dutiful life doesn't simply occur like a natural awakening. If I now can think so much more peacefully, then it did not come about because I had received a clearer vision of Christ's glory and because death had become a joyful Yes, but I simply stand at some distance from all the misery of recent days, and that which surrounds me and affects my life has become so much more natural again. Because of that my concern is now whether the devil is not once again using a new trick, by allowing me a breather so that I can enjoy my life once more, in order to bring me back into the darkness even stronger than before. Yet my plea was that I only wanted to live in Christ. I did not want to feel such a natural naive partaking in life but wanted to accept everything daily and hourly only as a gift from God. Please tell me, when I now think that I could not view this turnaround out of despair that I have experienced as the genuine

[1.] *NL*, C 25; handwritten; no return address but probably from Bernsee; previously unpublished.

help of the Lord Christ, are these thoughts of unbelief? Should I wait further? Sometimes it seems to me that I may not speak in Bible studies with such certain words about the power of Christ, because I have not yet become a completely certain witness for it myself.

I still had to say this to you today, all the misery of the past night drove me to it.

With cordial greetings your
Herbert Liedtke

55. To Theodor Litt^[1]

Pastor Dr. Bonhoeffer
At present Schlawe in Pomerania
Office of the Superintendent

January 22, 1939

Esteemed Professor:

We theologians must be very grateful to you for your two recent publications.^[2] They truly render the service of clarification for which they are intended. Your text on “Protestant Historical Consciousness” bears so strongly the form of a conversation that I would like to view it as your permission to join this conversation with a brief peripheral comment. I speak as a theologian, but you will of course know the language of theologians. You refrained, presumably intentionally, from expressing the ultimate reason for the relationship of Christian faith to the world as we must express it, namely, with the name Jesus Christ. The objective fact of the “constant uniformity of human aberrations”^[3] [Immergleichheit der menschlichen Verirrungen] as such is insufficient for Christian faith to be given its commission for the work in this world from the hereafter. According to Protestant thought, the refusal to work within the world could rather be grounded with the same right in this anthropology alone, were it not that a single fact would expose this refusal peremptorily as guilt, namely, the fact of God’s becoming human. Solely because God became a poor, wretched, unknown, unsuccessful human being, and because God wants to be found from now

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[1.] *NL*, A 45 (63); carbon copy, initialed by hand. Previously published in *GS* 3:31–33.

[2.] Litt, *Der deutsche Geist und das Christentum* (1938) and *Protestantisches Geschichtsbewußtsein* (1939).

[3.] Litt, *Protestantisches Geschichtsbewußtsein*, 37.

on solely in this poverty, in the cross, it is for this reason that we cannot get away from the human being and from the world, for this reason that we love our neighbors. Because the Christian faith is such that indeed the “unconditional is included in the conditional” (page 53), the “hereafter” has entered the “this-worldliness” out of a sovereign freedom of grace, for that reason the believer is not torn apart, but rather finds in this single place in this world God and human being in one, and from now on the love of God and love for one’s human neighbor are indissolubly united. Here also lies, then, the relative right of the idealistic, particularly the Hegelian system: for what else does it mean that the Hegelian philosophy of religion comes to its point in the doctrine of Christ’s real presence [Realpräsenz] in the Lord’s Supper^[4] other than the greatest secularization precisely of *this* Christian truth? And is not in turn the neglect of this origin of all Christian thought, namely, of the Word become flesh, the relative wrong of Pestalozzi’s anthropology that you have presented?^[5] That is, is it not manifest here that ultimately it simply does not work to express in unambiguous and clear terms the Protestant historical consciousness or the Christian understanding of the world without naming the name of Jesus Christ, the name that bursts asunder both Pestalozzian as well as Hegelian anthropology?

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Finally, does it not become understandable only from this point—a fact that you do not mention at all—that the Christian, for all his dedication to his brothers and all his devotion to the earth, nonetheless knows of and longs for the destruction of this earth and the future of a new earth and a new heaven,^[6] for the sake of the presence of God in Christ? Indeed, that the present earth can be taken so seriously in its dignity, its glory, and its curse for the [sake of] the unity of the original, the present and the future earth as the earth of God, as the earth upon which the cross of Jesus Christ stood?

I thank you once again for the work that you have done for us up to now and will hopefully continue to do.

Respectfully, I remain your servant,
D[ietrich] B[onhoeffer]

[4.] See Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 20815.

[5.] See Litt, *Protestantisches Geschichtsbewußtsein*, 25–30.

[6.] Cf. Rev. 21 and 22.

56. From Paula Bonhoeffer^[1]

January 23, 1939

Dear Dietrich,

I hope that the papers I sent are the ones you wanted and that you have received them.—It took a little long because I first had to search for them. We were very happy that you are doing well. The letters coming from dear Sabine still sound quite depressed. Because of the complicated settlement of matters here, he^[2] doesn't have his mind clear for things there. Dr. Groote^[3] has taken the matter on fabulously and with great success. Now it's essential that the papers in G[öttingen] are safeguarded, and then G[erd] will make a new list of his assets and then apply for a declaration of no reservations [Unbedenklichkeitserklärung],^[4] which I think is right. All this, however, is very tedious and a long way to go.—She writes that she has a lot to do because she doesn't want to cause her landlords too much work and often can't sleep at night because of the joint pain due to the damp beds. The children now are kept busy in the mornings, and that is certainly good. Naturally Gerd and Sabine will also often think of us over here with concern.—Recently they were invited for a weekend with Uncle George;^[5] there was a festive meal with all kinds of people. and the old uncle, to the delight of everyone, chose little Christiane as his dinner partner. I often think about how and whether anything at all will come of your trip?!^[6] That would truly be a shame. On our nearby display kiosks, the military conscription was announced for those born in 6 and 7.^[7] The young people would be summoned, and whoever had not been summoned by February 15 would then have to report. I don't know, however, if this is only for Berlin. Probably one can still get permission to travel in spite of this. Tomorrow Hans^[8] is coming; we will

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[1.] *NL*, C 1; handwritten; no return address, probably from Berlin; previously unpublished.

[2.] Gerhard Leibholz.

[3.] Wolfgang Grote was Leibholz's former assistant in Göttingen.

[4.] This is a declaration submitted by the account holder to the bank holding the account, authorizing a third person to make payments into the holder's account. [Ise Tödt notes that Dietrich Bonhoeffer continued to receive RM 170 each month from the Leibholz account at the Commerzbank in Göttingen; cf. Bonhoeffer, *Zettelnotizen*, 74, note for Nr. 54.—VB]

[5.] George Bell.

[6.] Bonhoeffer's planned trip to England; see his letters of Advent 1938 to Martin Boeckheler and of January 6, 1939, to Sabine and Gerhard Leibholz, 1/42, 1/43, and 1/49.

[7.] The conscription into the army of men born in 1906 and 1907. [Bonhoeffer was born in 1906.—VB]

hardly see him, because he will have too much to do. He will be very sorry about the transfer of his friend.^[9] He was already quite depressed last time. What are the chances of seeing you again here?—I had already considered whether we could meet again in Stettin if necessary. Perhaps on the evening of the third, and you could then be back again on the evening of the fourth, like before.^[10] We could then call Sabine on her birthday from there.—What do you think of that? We were in Leipzig for Karl Friedrich's fortieth birthday, which was very pleasant. In the evening we were all together with Heisenberg^[11] and his wife. I have lost Miss Henne's address; if I cannot find it, I would request that you ask about it. What will happen with Uncle Rudi^[12] is truly very worrisome. Georg Konrad^[13] has now lost his job as well. Ninne^[14] was here; she was very interested in the portrait of Mucki^[15] at the Schönes'.^[16] They are prepared to exchange it, but it isn't easy to find an equivalent for it.—*The Barn*^[17] is too unfinished.

116 At Ursel's^[18] there were recently three social evenings one after another. The last one was for thirty people with "performances and dance."—Now she is happy that it's all behind her. The car is still in the garage in G[öttingen]. Sabine writes that they want to sell the car right after the house. For that, though, the mortgage approval^[19] has to be completed. I must be off for supper. Give my best greetings to Mr. Bethge and let us hear from you both. Papa sends warm greeting with me. Your

Mother

[8.] Hans von Dohnanyi.

[9.] Regarding the contact to Fritz Wiedemann, the adjutant in the Reich Chancellery, and his transfer to San Francisco, see *DB-ER*, 626–27.

[10.] This refers to Bonhoeffer's meeting with his parents in Stettin in February 1938.

[11.] Werner Heisenberg.

[12.] "Uncle Rudi" was the Bonhoeffer family's code name for the potential beginning of war.

[13.] Georg Konrad Count von der Goltz [who was an attorney—VB].

[14.] Christine Countess Kalckreuth.

[15.] Anna Koenigs.

[16.] Regarding the friendship to the Schöne family, see *DBWE* 9:19–20.

[17.] A painting by Leopold von Kalckreuth.

[18.] Ursula Schleicher.

[19.] [I.e., for the buyer.—VB]

57. To Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer^[1]

January 28, 1939

Dear Karl Friedrich,

This is the second attempt at a letter to you. First, I wanted to thank you very much for your Christmas letter,^[2] second, to congratulate you on your fortieth birthday.^[3] In some ways, I envy you for having reached this number! I wish you and all your family a good new year and in any case no more unrest than in the past one. That I didn't write in time is due to the fact that a lot is happening here at present. It has been at times very depressing in the last few weeks, when one must see how many people are seeking quiet and security at all costs and using all kinds of pretexts and reasons.^[4] In such times, which come again and again, there is always a great deal to do with visits, lectures, etc. It is entirely certain to me that for the church it all depends upon whether we now hold on, even with great sacrifices. The greatest sacrifices are now small compared to what we would lose by wrongly giving in. I wouldn't know anything worth a full commitment today if not this. It matters not how many there are but rather only that there are still some who are steadfast. Of course, some things are more difficult for the married people, but I think sometimes much is also easier.^[5] I admire greatly the courage of the pastors' wives, who are willing to take everything on rather than to advise their husbands to give in. Often, too, the parishioners are much clearer and more resolved than their pastors. Right now in these days, some

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[1.] Handwritten; no return address, but probably from Groß-Schlönwitz. Cf. also the later typewritten copy in *NL*, A 44,1 (16). Partially reproduced in *GS* 2:345–46.

[2.] Letter not extant.

[3.] January 13, 1939.

[4.] Bonhoeffer is referring to the struggle over legalization by the regional church consistory.

[5.] [The primary lure of legalization, especially as it became clear that war was imminent, was the financial and professional security offered to the young "illegals" by the official consistory; those who stayed within the Confessing Church had very little security. Married clergy, especially those with children, were very tempted to go through legalization. For a case of one of Bonhoeffer's students who did become legalized for this reason, see Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 94–98.—VB]

very important decisions are being made.^[6]—I am doing well. I would like to visit Sabine in March if that is still possible.^[7]

With best wishes to all of you, your
Dietrich

58. From Sabine Leibholz^[1]

Dear Dietrich,

I don't know exactly where this letter on our birthday^[2] will reach you. I wish you everything conceivably good for the next year, and thank you for all your help and thoughts for us. You wouldn't believe how much this means for Gert too. We are already looking forward to seeing you again, which hopefully will be for a very long time. I think Gert wrote you yesterday about where you will stay.^[3] I would like you to stay with Hennes. The old man is a dear soul, and his wife is very sweet as well. They are doing very well and have built a lovely house equipped for German "comfortable living." I find this Lady-housekeeper^[4] at the Crüsemanns'^[5] not nearly as nice. She said to me, "If you can't put your brother up anywhere else, then he can come to us." Since she is German, she ought to be able express herself better. I found it very uninviting. She seems to be an idle goose. Hopefully, we can find a place to put up Mr. Bet.,^[6] whom we of course would also very much like to see again. Yesterday my brother-in-law Peter arrived from Zurich. His wife is coming a month later. Then they will travel at the beginning of May to Australia. They are leaving the child for two to three years with the mother-in-law in Zurich. Also a sad thought, given these distances.

The children unfortunately are in bed with the flu. I already saw it coming. The heating conditions in the school are utterly miserable, so that I frequently

[6.] The seventh synod of the Confessing Church of the Old Prussian Union (the "Epiphany Synod") was meeting in Berlin-Nikolassee on January 29–31, 1939. Regarding the resolutions of this synod, see Niesel, *Um Verkündigung und Ordnung der Kirche*, 70–76, and *DB-ER*, 614–15.

[7.] Bonhoeffer's hoped-for visit to England was overshadowed by the fear that war would break out.

[1.] *NL*, C 6; handwritten; undated, but probably the end of January 1939; return address: "London SE 23, Honor Oak Rd. 55"; previously unpublished.

[2.] February 4, 1939.

[3.] Letter not extant.

[4.] ["Lady-housekeeper" in English in original.—VB]

[5.] The Edward Crüsemann family in London-Sydenham.

[6.] Eberhard Bethge.

kept them at home during heavy storms, which blow through all the windows. But even in our rooms we don't get over 9-10 degrees Celsius. Everyone is freezing here at the moment, and the northeast wind with clear, cold weather continues. Gert and I just had an English lesson. Marianne is making the best progress. Since she is already very fond of talking in German and is very quick to speak up, her lack of inhibition serves her well. Christiane was quite obstinate for a while and didn't want to hear or learn English. She thought this was a dumb quirk of ours and somehow felt left out of things. In school she now is slowly beginning to realize that it won't work otherwise, and she is picking up some English. But when we are back in Germany again, she may quickly forget all that. Farewell and many greetings from all of us, your

Sabine

Of course, I am to pass on very many greetings to you from our weekend with the uncle.^[8] I felt very well there. That is a very decent humane way of living. I also liked Aunt G.^[9] very much. The children, thank God, behaved very well. Uncle and Aunt let them sing a great deal and praised Marianne's pronunciation.^[10] Children simply learn this much better.

59. From Gerhard Hellmann^[1]

Wustermark, January 31

My dear Brothers Dietrich, Fritz, and Eberhard,^[2]

Believe me, the only reason that I have not written you for so long was the lack of time, since for a letter to you one needs time. This is certainly one of the most murderous weapons of Satan, the sigh: "I don't have any time!" It hinders us pastors from performing our ministry as we should; it hinders many parishioners from coming under the Word.

Today I am finally stealing some time, although a flood of Aryans are waiting for the documenting official in me,^[3] although the church tax certifications that

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[7.] ["Very fond of talking" in English in original.—VB]

[8.] George Bell.

[9.] Henrietta Bell.

[10.] ["Pronunciation" in English in original.—VB]

[1.] *NL*, C 25; handwritten; certainly from 1939; previously unpublished. Hellmann was a candidate in the first course in Zingst and Finkenwalde in the summer of 1935.

[2.] Fritz Onnasch and Eberhard Bethge.

[3.] According to the orders of implementation of Paragraph 3 (the "Aryan paragraph") of the Law for the Reconstitution of the Civil Service of April 7, 1933, and the

need to be written up are also waiting for the administrator in me, although, although . . . spare me from giving a comprehensive list!

It has unfortunately now become a rule that I only find quiet for meditation and preparing my sermon on Saturday evenings around 8:00 p.m., under my desk lamp, and then half the night is spent on it regularly. Nonetheless I may experience repeatedly that out of broken vessels I may distribute God's priceless treasure,^[4] which is received gratefully and gladly by the church-community. I have the hearts of the children in the Sunday school and youth meeting, and the older people forget their whining when I can testify to them what the monthly verse for January^[5] says. When people visit me personally because of rent, church tax, or other reasons, I draw them into conversation, and it is astonishing how they sometimes thaw. Dear brothers, I do not want to boast, but I must boast and do it as Paul says in I Cor. 1:31.^[6] One year ago I performed a wedding for a couple in their second marriage; after a half year they separated because living together was impossible. Now the woman has asked me in a letter for advice and help, and above all, to listen to her. I sometimes hear things where I ask myself, how have these people simply come to say all this to me? I am simply another weak, oh so fallible—Dietrich, you know!—human being! It must simply be that

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Reich Citizen Law (Reichsbürgergesetz) of September 15, 1935, the decisive criterion for establishing a person's "race" was religious affiliation or that of his ancestors. One means to exclude Jews from the professional and economic spheres during the Third Reich consisted of requiring proof of ancestry that confirmed "racial purity." In many cases this could be established only by referring to the church records that were kept by ministers in the individual local congregations (see Hofer, *Der Nationalsozialismus*, 269–71). Former Finkenwaldian Gerhard Vibrans frequently reported in his letters about the burden of "Aryanics"; he also discussed with Bonhoeffer whether by manipulating the issuing of "proof of Aryan identity," the "gate of Aryanism" ought to be opened for people of so-called impure blood who were deprived of their rights. Andersen et al., *So ist es gewesen*, esp. 240 and 291–92. [Beginning in 1933, enforcement of the Nazi racial laws was possible only because the vast majority of Germans filled out the state-required Aryan certifications, and these were effectively notarized by German parishes throughout the country (which held these kinds of records). As this letter and the corresponding material in the Vibrans letters (*So ist es gewesen*) indicates, Bonhoeffer's students were uncomfortable with meeting this requirement—yet as late as January 1939 they continued to do so. Bonhoeffer's reply to Vibrans's inquiry (about filling out false papers to offer some protection) is both disturbing and revealing. He wrote Vibrans: "[In my opinion,] the certificates are state matters. I believe that it is not permitted to do something about this on our own. At any rate one should consider this very carefully and discuss it with someone who has the exact information. At first I thought the plan was excellent and intended to carry it out right away. But then someone told me of this difficulty" (Andersen et al., *So ist es gewesen*, 291–92. Translation by Victoria Barnett).—VB]

[4.] Cf. 2 Cor. 4:7.

[5.] Ps. 36:9: "For with you is the foundation of life; in your light we see light."

[6.] ["Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."—VB]

in me they sense a person who truly means what he says, who also has strength and help at his disposal that come from above. This drives me to boast that I can and may say: "By the grace of God I am what I am!"^[7] This makes me so blissful, that in the midst of all melancholy and insecurity I have become and am becoming naively cheerful like a child; this being blissful (in) God in all insecurity, indeed in spite of it, is certainly that great power that has its effect upon people. Sometimes the anxious feeling sneaks in that I speak to people in a foreign, incomprehensible language, but that only comes because I come from the other side with the good news, and we have all gone much too far astray into the cold and darkness of distance from God, so that such news seems foreign to us. How I thank God! that I may be his witness!

I am still sitting here in Wustermark as an unconfirmed assistant pastor, paid by the Confessing Church, not any more insecure than my colleagues in firm positions. The EOK^[8] has planned for a year and a day to set up a superintendent's office here, but until now nothing has come of it. Only God knows, however, whether the congregation, which doesn't want to have a superintendent, will stand up for its pastor when things get tough.

Dear Brother Dietrich! I thank you for your card in December.^[9] It is my special joy that until now I have always had a deaconess by my side who pulls together with me.

Dear Fritz! I thank you especially for the courageous letter that you, along with the other provincial representatives of the candidates' group, sent us on the question of the extra exam.^[10] On February 3 we will again hold a large meeting in Berlin with regard to this.

[7.] 1 Cor. 15:10.

[8.] [Evangelischer Oberkirchenrat, or High Church Council.—VB]

[9.] Card not extant.

[10.] One of the controversial questions related to the legalization of illegal Confessing Church theologians and pastors by state-conformist church authorities was the consistories' demand that the Confessing Church exams, which in their eyes were illegal and invalid, be repeated. On this, see the comment in Bernhard Riemer's letter of February 3, 1939 (NL, C 25) to Bonhoeffer: "It will also interest you that a vicar here [in Erfurt] upon sending the records of his university exam received a reply from the consistory that will be symptomatic enough. The faculty exam is recognized without ado, as is the period served as vicar. That's what the consistory *gives*. And then it *takes*: it is assumed that the candidate recognizes the existing church ordinance in the church of the Old Prussian Union (a signature under this declaration is not required). Further the candidate, who henceforth is on the list of candidates, must sign an attached regulation of theological training. The consistory assigns the candidate to a vicar's post as well as to a preachers' seminary. 'If the candidate leaves his vicar's post of his own accord (should of course read: to another vicar's post or preachers' seminary by the Council of Brethren) he must repay [RM] 60 per month.' The candidate is obligated to sign to obey this regulation.

121 Dear Eberhard! Where may I send you another donation? To an account or personally?

Please don't laugh at the little enthusiast who has allowed his little ego to be the subject of every sentence of this letter. But "my heart leaps and cannot be sad,"^[11] and you want to know, don't you, how each one of us feels.

Remembering you in prayer, greetings from your
Gerhard Hellmann

60. From Otto Kistner^[1]

End of January 1939

My dear Brother Bonhoeffer,

I had written you already once in the meantime, but burned the letter—indeed a strange manner of correspondence. But this letter will probably reach you. Several days ago I was together with the confidential council advisors^[2] in the province. Occasion: Westphalia.^[3] Only now do I understand your words in the circular letter correctly; I knew hardly anything about all these things.^[4] We are so far removed from things up here, so overburdened with work, that these things play hardly any role. You can imagine what it meant for me to hear suddenly about Westphalia, also be told about both the Krauses.^[5] This must all be very painful for you. We have tried to understand *how* it is possible for someone to take such a step. "For the sake of the congregation." How shortsighted. Fifty years from now, won't there be any congregations that still need preachers? Isn't it the case, perhaps entirely unconsciously (surely also consciously for some), that the thought sneaked in: financially impossible! For all the arguments

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This means in plain terms: we recognize you on the condition that you dissociate yourself from the Council of Brethren and place yourselves under us."

[11.] The beginning of the thirteenth stanza of the hymn "Ist Gott für mich, so trete gleich alles wider mich," by Paul Gerhardt, in *EG*, 351. [The English version of this hymn (though the beginning of stanza 13 does not correspond to the German) is "If God Himself Be for Me," in *Lutheran Hymnal*, 528.—VB]

[1.] *NL*, C 25; handwritten; no return address; previously unpublished. Kistner was a candidate in the fifth Finkenwalde session in the summer of 1937.

[2.] [Literally, *Vertrauens-Männer*, probably the members of the Geistlicher Vertrauensrat, the Confidential Council of Clerical Advisors for the Confessing Church.—VB]

[3.] [The reference is to Westphalian church president Karl Koch's recommendation supporting legalization. See ed. note 6.—VB]

[4.] See Bonhoeffer's November 20, 1938, letter to the Finkenwalde brothers, 1/36. Regarding the problem of legalization, see *DB-ER*, 607–20.

[5.] The brothers Gerhard and Winfried Krause; see 1/76. [Both decided to become legalized. See also Kistner's mention of Winfried Krause's letter later in this one.—VB]

with which this step is cloaked are so untenable. It is heartening that this viewpoint of Koch's^[6] hasn't penetrated here in the Rhineland; that is occasion to be grateful. Of course, I am often concerned here about what will come of it, and who wouldn't have this worry. And yet this is also the place to apply the saying about not worrying.^[7] How your *Discipleship* now becomes so valuable and ever clearer to me. One must step out onto the water like Peter to experience the miracles of Christ.^[8] Recently a parishioner said to me: will the young pastors remain firm? I answered: when the church-community stays firm, yes. I should have said, better: when God remains firm. But indeed, that is then no longer an irrational or conditional statement. According to the reports around forty brothers in Westphalia did remain steadfast.

It was so urgent for me to write this letter to you; perhaps you will gather from this that your work in Finkenwalde has not been for nothing. I could imagine that because of the events in Pomerania your spirits are low. If it would be possible for you to write me, I should be so very grateful. I have to struggle so much with myself; that is the hardest thing. When is the meeting? Or can I simply arrive sometime during my vacation?

In the last few weeks, I have been given to experience that, amid the overflow of work where I might have simply lost heart and failed completely, a great gladness has come over me. This evening the text for Bible study is Matt. 9:35–38.^[9] The harvest is plentiful.^[10] Even when we think that everything has been smashed to pieces. The harvest is plentiful. May God give us work and himself make us capable of doing the work. In every respect. In speaking and in living.

Very affectionately yours
Kistner

I just saw that your birthday is on February 4. Please accept already my warmest wishes. I would like to say much more to you, but perhaps it would be better to do this when I can come up sometime. Please say hello to Mrs. Struwe^[11] and send me your new address.

[6.] Westphalian church president Karl Koch advised all the illegal pastors of the Confessing Church there to register with the consistory for the reexamination. See Niel, *Kirche unter dem Wort*, 171–72.

[7.] Cf. Matt. 6:25–34.

[8.] On this, see Bonhoeffer's exegesis, *DBWE* 4:62–69.

[9.] ["Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages . . . proclaiming the good news of the kingdom. . . . He said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.'"—VB]

[10.] Cf. Bonhoeffer's exegesis in *DBWE* 4:183–85.

[11.] Erna Struwe.

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II.

Just as I wanted to send my letter, a letter arrives from W. Krause.^[12] He writes: [“] I am very concerned about what to do if the CC, when really at the end of its path, at least here in Pomerania. Should I look around for another profession? Or should I declare: Against my better judgment, against my understanding of the church I go to the consistory because otherwise I cannot pursue this profession any longer.” I don’t know at all how he will now decide and with him the other colleagues. I have the letter that Fritz,^[13] among others, has signed. Does Krause support that? If so, then he certainly cannot “against better judgment” take a step that in truth would make the continuation of his profession all the more impossible. I know from his letter that he is often together with you. Please tell him this, and if I am mistaken, he should forgive me. I am so very concerned.

What will happen when the CC is finished (is it really? can it really be or become so, if it is obedient?) I do not know either. But I know this, that under no circumstances can the path to the consistory be taken. To silently tolerate that the gospel is confused with the false gospel!^[14] To tolerate the restriction of Christ’s lordship in his church to the “inner life” and with that the de facto removal of Christ! Impossible. Are we to suffer this? Genuine suffering leads us someplace else. But enough of that. I wish so greatly—and say it again—to receive a personal letter from you. Perhaps Fritz will be so good as to write me an objective, purely statistical report on the situation in Pomerania.

Our brother Schreiber,^[15] who was imprisoned before Christmas, is free again. Reason for arrest?

I greet you and all the brothers very warmly. Your
Kistner

124 **61. To Sabine Leibholz**^[1]

February 1, 1939

Dear Sabine,

I just realized that I forgot my fountain pen. That is very inappropriate for a birthday^[2] letter. But if I want to be punctual, the letter must go out today.

[12.] See ed. note 5.

[13.] Fritz Onnasch.

[14.] Cf. Gal. 1:6–7.

[15.] Not identified.

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (17); later typewritten copy; from Köslin. Previously published in *GS* 6:453–54.

[2.] February 4, 1939.

I am thinking in these days especially of you and your family and would like to celebrate with you. How often have we intended to celebrate our birthday together once more. Now everything has changed. Recently it occurred to me that there are some laws in the research on twins—I believe only that they do not apply in our case—that certain twins often have the same life experiences, even when they don't even live near each other. I must say that to a certain degree that appears to be true, in particular when we compare ourselves with our siblings. In any case the lives of both of us have recently been different from what one had expected, even when each life has its own path. In this respect perhaps we can understand our present paths through life particularly well. It is basically one and the same thing that has so decisively determined our life and given it this unexpected turn. However that may be, in any case we will think of each other a great deal on the fourth and expect less from all kinds of good wishes than from the genuine advocacy on behalf of each other. I am already looking forward greatly to seeing you again.^[3] The children will certainly help you both celebrate the fourth in a lovely and festive way. Unfortunately, I will have to do without a phone call. I have had frequent visits lately and that makes this phone business, as you will understand, unnecessarily costly.^[4] Otherwise I am doing well, and there is nothing new to report. I am going to send you—from me and Eberhard Bethge together—the book by Ludwig Richter,^[5] which you perhaps will enjoy having for the children as well. It is a piece of sentimental past that one must preserve. With Christel^[6] we also gave it to Mama for her birthday. Hopefully, it will arrive in time.

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Now be well and greet everyone! Affectionate greetings from your
Dietrich

[3.] The reference is to Bonhoeffer's plan to travel to England; he set off together with Eberhard Bethge on March 10, 1939. [See *DB-ER*, 638.—VB]

[4.] This is an allusion to the Gestapo's possible surveillance of his phone calls.

[5.] Probably a reference to the book *Die Gemälde Ludwig Richters* (1937), by K. J. Friedrich about [Adrian] Ludwig Richter.

[6.] Christine von Dohnanyi.

62. To Wilhelm Rott^[1]

February 1, 1939

Dear Willi,

It is just terrible that with you I always arrive too late with my birthday greetings.^[2] I wish you a good, work-filled, and not too restless new year. I heard about your skiing accident. If only for once you had not climbed into the high mountains but had come to the lower mountains of the Harz. People like us who are getting older should stay away from such undertakings. I had intended to give you my new booklet,^[3] but it is not ready yet. I would like to have more free time for my greater work, such as a half year's vacation! The work is proceeding well, but at the moment one cannot be sure for how much longer. On the seventh I will come visit my parents for one evening. Could we see each other then? All the best and cordial greetings, your faithful

Dietrich

126 **63. From Paula Bonhoeffer**^[1]

February 2, 1939

Dear Dietrich,

Your birthday will certainly be celebrated again very pleasantly, and you will not miss us, but our greetings should not be missing! For this new year of life, I want to entrust you entirely to our dear God, that he may give you strength to pursue your path in good spirits despite all the heavy pressure.—I just wrote to Sabine. She asked whether you were still there. Mr. Grote^[2] will be flying there^[3] on the fourth with greetings from us and with all kinds of other matters to discuss that aren't particularly related to birthdays. They are apparently totally preoccupied with their problems here, and he^[4] is not getting farther in his work at all and that is indeed sad.—I thought you might need a new house

[1.] *NL*, A 45 (64); later typewritten copy; return address, postmarked Köslin. Previously published in *GS* 6:443.

[2.] Rott's birthday was January 25, 1908.

[3.] *Life Together* appeared in 1939 as number 61 of the monograph series *Theologische Existenz heute*. See *DBWE* 5:6.

[1.] *NL*, C 1; handwritten; from Berlin; previously unpublished.

[2.] Wolfgang Grote; see 1/56.

[3.] [To London.—VB]

[4.] Gerhard Leibholz.

jacket; if that is not the case or if it doesn't fit, please send it back or rather bring it with you. I hope that you like the book by Wolfgang Schöne; I found some lovely things in it.^[5] I also sent it to Sabine. How is it with your visit on Tuesday? Mrs. von Kleist,^[6] who very sweetly telephoned me, said that you would be in Stettin from the sixth to the eighth. Hans^[7] recently inquired by telephone and was puzzled. I guess you had written each other. I did not see him this time on Tuesday. *Everyone*^[8] is in bed next door.—Hans Walter,^[9] who started it, has started to get up. They all have the flu. Exchanging paintings with Schönes is not so easy, but I still hope to achieve something.^[10] I am greatly looking forward to your arrival; there is indeed much to talk about. How do you like our photos? I think they are rather good. If at all possible, please go sometime to such a photo automatic. Sabine very *much* asked for a picture of you. She has the whole series, like Papa in the cottage, and it's precisely *your* picture that's missing.

Now enjoy the cake and have a pleasant evening with one another. Affectionately,

Your mother

We will call Saturday evening around 8.

64. From Karl Bonhoeffer^[1]

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February 2, 1939

Dear Dietrich,

It is too bad that you cannot be here on the fourth so that we could give you a preview of a celebration and tell you in person that we have many good wishes for you and that all of us hope for their fulfillment. So your candidates will probably give you a big celebration, and that will certainly be pleasant for you. Tomorrow evening we will call Sabine, whom we are naturally thinking of especially this time. It is good that the children are there.

When we see you on Tuesday, we can of course have a bit of a late celebration and tell each other what we did and thought about in the meantime. Here nothing essentially new has happened. Mama still has her head full of many

[5.] Schöne, *Die großen Meister der Niederländischen Malerei*.

[6.] Ruth von Kleist.

[7.] Hans von Dohnanyi.

[8.] [In the Schleicher family, who lived next door.—VB]

[9.] Hans-Walter von Schleicher.

[10.] See Paula Bonhoeffer's January 23, 1939, letter to Bonhoeffer, 1/56.

[1.] *NL*, C 1; handwritten from Berlin; previously unpublished.

things. She wears herself out, and I wish that we could seclude ourselves on a warm island. But that isn't possible at present, and one doesn't know at all how things will be later. It may just be utopian to believe that one can live idyllically with a large family in times of revolution. In actual fact my retirement does not exist. I have much to do, very many consultations, and am bothered constantly to write up expert opinions, so that I still am not getting around to that which at my age would be my due, to reflect peacefully and with no haste about what I have experienced in life. I just have to see to it that I manage things somewhat differently as time goes on. At the moment I am still needed; at least it is good when I can help somewhat, and that is indeed something for which one must be thankful.

Mama will write you about our practical birthday wishes and greetings. I myself was only part of this by serving as the model for your house jacket. I hope it is not too narrow for you. Your charity case^[2] will call me tomorrow, and I will be glad to give him advice.

So, may the new year of life pass peacefully for you and may you be allowed to enjoy your duties that bring you joy without disturbance. Affectionate greetings to you and to Mr. Bethge as well. Your faithful
Father

128 65. From the Schleicher Family^[1]

Berolinae, February 2, 1939

Rüdiger juris consultus Theodorico abbae salutem!

Quamquam influenza dejectus tibi optime gratulor. Spero te novo anno et studiis et vita generali progressurum et valetudine numquam affecta fructurum esse. Quando huc redibis animo musicali plenus et manibus bene praeparatis ad commune exercendam musicam? Ego quamquam officio absens lectionem praeparare studeo pro cursu quodam iudicum militarium. Qua de causa finem factio.^[2]

Rüdiger

[2.] Not identified; this may be a reference to Herbert Liedtke; see 1/53 and 1/54.

[1.] *NL*, C 4; handwritten; previously unpublished.

[2.] ["From Rüdiger, the legal expert, to Dietrich, the abbot, a greeting! Although laid flat with the flu, I send you best greetings. I hope that in the new year you make headway in your studies and in life in general and that you enjoy unaffected health. When will you be coming here again, filled with a musical spirit and with hands well prepared for making music together? I am trying, although I am absent from the office, to prepare a selection of military court decisions for a session. Because of that I will close."—VB]

Dear Dietrich,

I want to [join in]^[3] congratulating you, for a good new year, to this lovely letter from Rüdiger. After the Führer's speech,^[4] one wishes this for you in a special sense. Unfortunately, we are all in bed with the flu; I only have a mild case and was the last to decide to go to bed, whereas Rüdiger has not been to the office for a week. Because of that you won't get a package, but it will still come when we are all back on our feet. I will close so that the letter at least reaches your hands in time, since I have no one who can go later to the mailbox. So, may things go well for you, and celebrate a nice day. Affectionately

Your Ursula

Dear Uncle Dietrich,

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I too send warm congratulations on your birthday and wish you all the best for the new year. I still think back with pleasure on the lovely winter days in the Harz. Since I was sick and cannot yet go back to school, I have a lot of time to practice cello. Since the letter has to go off, I must close. Affectionate greetings from your

Hans-Walter, Renate and Dorothee, Christine

66. From Gerhard Lehne^[1]

Esteemed, dear Brother Bonhoeffer,

Now I want to finally write you the letter that I have been carrying around with me, unborn, for a year. If until now I have only let you hear from me occasionally on short postcards,^[2] this was an incomplete expression of very faithful remembrance. Perhaps you know this without my having to write it.

I did not come to Schlönwitz gladly and full of hope.^[3] Back then I wrote to a good lady friend: "The boundless expanse of the plains, the laughter of friends,

[3.] In the original erroneously written "wish."

[4.] This refers to Hitler's speech to the Reichstag on January 30, 1939, in which he defended his aggressive foreign policies of 1938, warned England and the United States against intervening, strongly attacked the Jewish people, and prophesied "the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe." [See Arad, Gutman, and Margalot, *Documents on the Holocaust*, 132–35.—VB]

[1.] *NL*, C 25; typewritten with handwritten corrections and signature; from Berlin-Lichterfelde, February 2, 1939. Excerpted in *DB-ER*, 592–93.

[2.] Postcards not extant.

[3.] Lehne was a member of the collective pastorate in Groß-Schlönwitz in the winter of 1937–38.

and wild songs by a burning fire are more important to me than the spiritual breath of a Prussian preachers' seminary and being together with theological brothers." I looked toward this period of physical and spiritual confinement with a shudder. To me it was a necessary evil, into which one had to enter with good grace and for the sake of self-discipline had to get through with good grace. At the same time, it was clear to me that I could only gain theologically and—devoid of all theology—should live in a circle of people each of whom would have "his theology" and would already be rich in insights and decisive in judgments. Probably the thought of being a raven among a flock of white chickens contributed to my lack of desire. Especially unpleasant were the reports that Schröder^[4] had given from Finkenwalde and the impression we had of him during our short visit there: he crawled around like a beaten dog. Today I realize that all this was essentially his fault.

130 It all turned out quite differently than I had feared. Instead of coming into the stuffy air of theological bigotry, I entered a world that united many things that I love and need: accurate theological work on the common ground of fellowship, in which one's own inabilities were never noticed in a hurtful fashion, but rather which turned work into pleasure; true fellowship under the Word that united all "without respect to person"^[5]—and nonetheless with open-mindedness and love for everything that makes even this fallen creation still worthy of love: music, literature, sports, and the beauty of the earth; a generous style of life that favorably combined the culture of old homes with the uninhibited forms of a community of young men—last, not least,^[6] a man in charge whom one can indeed admire without reservation.

When I look back on this time today, it lies before me like a beautiful clear picture. I see myself roaming across the spring-green fields with Bluhm.^[7]—I slip my long figure, head bent, through the squeaking door of the house. The doorbell rings, and after some scraping with much ado we enter the semidark dining room. Schröder^[8] has turned on the radio, and the brothers are already having their afternoon coffee and bread with marmalade.—The chief has returned after a somewhat extended absence. The floor lamp throws its yellow glow on the blue plush and the copper teakettle. The tea water is boiling. And now we get the latest news; the world breaks into the stillness and simplicity of life on a Pomeranian estate.

[4.] Alfred Schröder was a member of the fifth Finkenwalde session in the summer of 1937.

[5.] Cf. 1 Pet. 1:17.

[6.] ["Last not least" in English in original.—VB]

[7.] Heinz Bluhm.

[8.] Hermann Schröder.

Dear Brother Bonhoeffer, you know that I am a romantic, so far as my reason doesn't prescribe a different attitude; that I am often more open to sensuous pleasures than to theological arguments. Does it spoil the objectivity of your theological view, when I write that it was the peripheral things that enhanced my delight in what is central? Does it perhaps spoil your opinion of me that one corner of my nature can still be grasped in terms of the psychological truth about youth: the young person believes the *bearer* of the Word?

I am very grateful that despite this^[9] or even because of it, I am growing into my ministry; that the hours become fewer in which I ask myself whether the Germanic person is not broken by the Christian intellectual heritage, whether it might be my destiny to live "vitaly," whether I ought to travel the path toward the beauty of the earth instead of to the cross, because on the latter path many "treasures" in me will not be dug out. There are indeed enough good and bad attempts to make Christendom palatable for idealism. Basically all they do is play down the fact that the best roots of a Christian are simply not in this world, and that a Christian simply *does not* think thus: I don't know how brightly the suns will shine over there / but one day in God's eternal brightness / I will in all my blessedness / weep in longing for the dark earth.^[10]—The strange thing is that I have never felt this to be a trial. I take the decade of my boyhood and youth, which awakened and encouraged this attitude, as the most beautiful gift of God, and even today hardly anything makes me happier than lying in my old leather breeches in the heat of the sun, oblivious to time, by the side of a highway in northern Sweden, and a little later roaring northward on a truck transporting ore. Romanticism? More than that! I know that however God leads me, it is good for me. And if previously I complained about many a detour that I took, today I know that it was necessary. This limitless confidence, trusting that wherever I may yet fall, I shall never fall from God's hand; the certainty that all paths lead to God's goal, whichever of them may be destined for me to travel, allows me to look confidently even into this darkness.

I must close this letter so that it doesn't arrive too late. Today is already February 2. Furthermore, I must conclude my written catechesis so that I can hand it over in Spandau^[11] next week at the latest.

I am very grateful to you for everything, and I also believe that you will understand this letter correctly. After all, not everyone is called to write *Discipleship*. Please greet brother Bethge. I think of him with great pleasure. He was a good comrade and could laugh so heartily. Say hello to Mrs. Struwe as well and to

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[9.] [I.e., despite his youthful belief in Bonhoeffer.—VB]

[10.] No source for this quotation is given.

[11.] This was an assignment for the second theological exam, to be turned in to Confessing Church superintendent Martin Albertz in Berlin-Spandau.

Schutz^[12] and Götz Maltusch. One year ago today, I had just returned with the Fra Angelico from Berlin; in the evening we had a great dinner. Now today you will have the latter as well, but the means for Fra Angelico were no longer possible. But Chinese war poems are worth reading too, if only for the sake of gaining insight into other people and worlds. Those are verses that I might have written if only I had been granted mastery of the lyrical form. Perhaps you sometimes read the little book^[13] in memory of the tall fellow from the first Schlönwitz collective pastorate who occasionally played the harmonica in bed at night.

Greetings to you in gratitude and faithfulness as your little brother
Gerhard Lehne

132 **67. From Karl-Heinz Corbach^[1]**

Göhlsdorf, February 3, 1939

Dear Brother Bonhoeffer,

Your friendly warning to return the books borrowed from you as quickly as possible gave me a mild shock, and yet nonetheless it is only being followed today. I beg your pardon, but cannot myself find any reason that would excuse me. It would be interesting to hear a man like Max Weber talk about the CC.^[2]

I am doing quite well. I am grateful and happy that I do not need to live alone here in this small heathen village.^[3] Some things look different when there are two of us. We live from day to day and are not suffering any want, although stupidly we are listed on the intercession list^[4] [Fürbittenliste] as being without a salary. We have never received a salary from the state.

At the moment there is a strange mood in the CC. It almost looks as though people want to capitulate. And it is not surprising that this is the case. For to

[12.] Erwin Schutz.

[13.] Lehne's birthday present to Bonhoeffer was Klabund, *Dummpfe Trommel und beraushtes Gong* [a book about Chinese literature; "Klabund" was the pen name for Alfred Henschke—VB], with the inscription: "To his big brother! February 2, 1939. G. L."

[1.] *NL*, C 25; handwritten; previously unpublished. Corbach was a candidate in the fifth Finkenwalde session in the summer of 1937.

[2.] Possibly Marianne Weber's biography of her husband, *Max Weber: Ein Lebensbild*, was one of the books that had been borrowed. See Bonhoeffer's August 23, 1938, letter to the Finkenwalde brothers, 1/24.

[3.] Corbach had just married the theologian Ursula Duckstein. Göhlsdorf is around 20 kilometers west of Potsdam.

[4.] Regarding the Confessing Church's intercession lists, see the enclosure with the circular letter of July 18, 1938, 1/21.2, ed. note 11.

a great extent the brothers in the province—let alone in Berlin—are not prepared at all to take the simplest measures against the attacks. So much distrust among themselves, so many loveless condemnations, so much isolation, and so much church politics! I have the impression as though we in the CC have only now arrived at the point where we don't know any other way but to practice "Dahlem."^[5] Until now in general it could hardly be said that we followed the way that was indicated there. Today in Berlin there is a meeting of the young brothers.^[6] Unfortunately, I am prevented from going there by a cold. I think it is very good that Brother Klapproth is our representative. People will listen to some things from him. He is untiring in his service and lacking all vanity. In general we Brandenburg brothers can be pleased with our leadership. President Scharf^[7] is very great, and a large group depends on him and is still steadfast because of him.

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I had pondered for some time about whether it might be possible for you to call together all the Finkenwalde brothers in Brandenburg somewhere in Brandenburg. It seems to me that everyone would welcome it, if they could be together again without a major journey. Buckow^[8] would be the suitable location. There one could be together undisturbed for two days. Such a gathering could do us good and give us new courage. One could arrive Sunday evening and leave on Tuesday evening. Perhaps there will be a possibility. For twenty-five brothers there are two possibilities for lodging. More than twenty-five would have to meet then in "Wilhelmshöhe."^[9] Naturally a retreat on the Baltic is a fine thing, but quite time and money consuming.

Hopefully, you and all the brothers there^[10] are well. I think a great deal about you all. May God help you in your work and bless you daily.

With warm greetings, your grateful
K. H. Corbach

[5.] The reference is to the second confessional synod of the German Evangelical Church in Dahlem on October 19–20, 1934, with its declaration of church emergency law. See Schmidt, *Bekenntnisse*, 2:157–62. [See also Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 65–67 and 95–96.—VB]

[6.] A meeting of young illegal theologians.

[7.] Kurt Scharf.

[8.] A town in the Märkische Schweiz, [a region in the Brandenburg province—VB] about forty kilometers east of Berlin.

[9.] This suggested retreat never took place.

[10.] At the two locations of the collective pastorates.

68. From Hartmut Gadow^[1]

February 3, 1939

Dear Brother Bonhoeffer,

May God preserve for you in this new year of life the possibility, here and there to point the proclaimers of His message toward Him. May He let you not tire of admonishing us, on the grounds of an interpretation of His word, to travel the path of a true church and at the same time to lead a personal life out of discipline through the Word. Your greeting^[2] was a help to me in a time of questioning. With brotherly greetings in faithful remembrance your

H. Gadow

134 **69. From Hans Hofmann**^[1]

Lupow, February 3, 1939

Esteemed, dear Brother Bonhoeffer,

We only seem to notice how quickly a year goes by whenever certain days draw our attention to it once more. So please allow me to take your birthday as such a reminder.

Accept with the enclosed card and its biblical word my heartfelt congratulations.^[2] This has become my favorite psalm, and Calvin with his sermons helps to make it even more! I ferreted the book out of our old church library and am in the process of comparing the sermons with Luther's brief comments on this psalm. A pity that I cannot look into the WA.^[3] It would indeed be a worthwhile task to find out sometime from this how both reformers after this unique witness to the "Word" think about its relation to the "Law." (At the moment I don't recall whether Luther said anything elsewhere about this psalm outside of his "To usefully pray the 119th Psalm, to raise the Word of God against his foe, the

[1.] *NL*, C 25; handwritten; from Berlin-Friedrichsfelde; previously unpublished. Gadow was a candidate in the fifth Finkenwalde session in the summer of 1937.

[2.] Correspondence not extant. However, it possibly refers to Bonhoeffer's November 20, 1938, circular letter to the Finkenwalde brothers, 1/36.

[1.] *NL*, C 25; handwritten; previously unpublished. Hofmann was a candidate in the fourth Finkenwalde session in the winter of 1936–37.

[2.] This card with a verse from Ps. 119 is not extant.

[3.] The Weimarer Ausgabe, or Weimar edition, of Luther's works.

Pope and anthropology . . . ,”^[4] which appeared in 1521. If so, please write me when and where. Calvin’s sermons come from the year 1553.)^[5]

But now I have gotten away from the original purpose of this letter! Or should it be more than mere “coincidence” when we as the servants of this Word let it determine even the most personal matters and wishes of our lives?

Another year has passed, in which you, dear Brother Bonhoeffer, sheltered as if by a miracle of God, could work with brothers who are preparing themselves for the ministry. Is that not a reason each and every day to thank the one who watched over you and the brothers! Oh, this then makes you forget even all the wretchedness and the numerous shifts back and forth with all their troubles.

Things are indeed quite similar for every one of us. We yearn for full responsibility in our ministry. Here, in my estimation, lies the deep reason for all the “keeping an eye on” the consistory. It is simply more or less the case that we have enough work and do it gladly, but the ministry of the Word does want more from us! I mean that now in opposition to the statement by the synod,^[6] where it is stated that the brothers in office should share their ministry and house with us. Precisely here lies the difficulty: perhaps (?) they can share the house with us, but the office is simply indivisible, because there is only *one* responsibility for it.

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At the end of April, my year as assistant pastor will end. Then I would like to marry. I simply cannot here in Lupow, because two parsonages in one parish are simply an absurdity. Until now I have not yet discussed this with Brother Gehlhoff,^[7] but I can imagine that he will not see the matter any differently. What will then happen: the “keeping an eye on” the consistory will gain new momentum; or now to see it from the other side: I will have to request that the Council of Brethren help me somehow, after granting consent for my marriage. With that, however, the council’s trouble will grow, for I will hardly be the only one in the coming months who comes with such a request! I fear the worst in this respect for Pomerania! In Brandenburg these matters seem to go better, at least judging by what Brother Giese^[8] wrote me. Perhaps during the upcoming Pomeranian discussions, you will think especially about this particular Pomeranian question! Br. Dufft^[9] rightfully suggested lowering the pension prices a bit in order to effect

[4.] Cf. WA 8:186–204. [“Der 119. Psalm nützlich zu beten, das Wort Gottes zu heben wider seinen Feind, den Papst und Menschenlehre . . . —VB]

[5.] See Calvin, *Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift*, vol. 5, 2nd half, 425–510.

[6.] The seventh Confessing synod of the Old Prussian Union (the “Epiphany synod”) on January 28–31, 1939, in Berlin-Nikolassee. For the decisions of the synod, see Niesel, *Um Verkündigung und Ordnung der Kirche*, 70–76.

[7.] Gerhard Gehlhoff.

[8.] Kurt Giese.

a little (or perhaps essential?) financial relief for the Council of Brethren. He was notified by the Council of Brethren that no brother in office could be expected to provide food etc. for a young brother (or vicar) for [RM] 40. Yes, that is in fact the question I would ask the synod, what they then understand the sharing of ministry and house to be?! I would like to emphasize explicitly that Br. Dufft spoke out of his situation, that is, out of his own housekeeping. Dr. Burgwitz^[10] had signed the reply! Please use this only with reservations, since it is certainly not Brother Dufft's wish to spread this around! But how typical for Pomerania!

Kierkegaard: “. . . He not only has (something most pastors have, and most often in proportion to their rank) an impartial eye for earthly gain . . . [“]^[11]

136 I rather like it here in Lupow, and so sometimes the thought has occurred to me: you could perhaps stay here in case Br. Gehlhoff leaves. (Which because of his Pomeranian work for the CC would not be too welcome!) And immediately the temptation to “cast an eye”^[12] comes up again! From February 19 to 24, Br. Maechler^[13] has requested me for his parish evangelization [Volksmission]. I'm looking forward to it.

Now I wish you, dear Brother Bonhoeffer, that your work be blessed and protected in your new year of life through our Lord.

With many greetings your

Hans Hofmann

70. From Erich Klapproth^[1]

Berlin, February 3, 1939

Dear Brother Bonhoeffer,

I think of you on your birthday with the warmest wishes and blessings and in ever-increasing gratitude and solidarity. May God continue to enlighten and console you so that you can continue to guide and console your brothers.

Your faithful

Erich Klapproth

[9.] Heinz Dufft.

[10.] Martin Burgwitz, deputy chair of the Confessing Church Council of Brethren in Pomerania since 1938.

[11.] From Kierkegaard, “First the Kingdom of God,” 234.

[12.] [Toward the consistory.—VB]

[13.] Winfried Maechler.

[1.] *NL*, C 25; handwritten postcard; unpublished. Klapproth was a candidate in the fourth Finkenwalde session in the winter of 1936–37.

PS: Brother Ebeling^[2] is unfortunately not in the best of health, so that his coming to St[ettin]^[3] is questionable. Whether I myself can take time off in these weeks of difficult decisions is not yet foreseeable. T[he] a[bove].

71. From Rudolf Lynker^[1]

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Hälver, February 3, 1939

Dear esteemed Brother Bonhoeffer,

I just want to let you know that I received the “Reflection” about our path.^[2] Along with the declarations from the beginning of this week,^[3] which until now I have only been told about, this has helped me to see the whole matter differently now. I hope that I receive the declarations soon in writing. As soon as I come to be completely clear about this, I will reverse my decision.^[4] Think very especially of me during these days and of the many, many Westphalian brothers!^[5] Your

Rudi Lynker

72. From Friedrich Onnasch^[1]

Köslin, Eisenstrasse 3, February 3, 1939

Dear Brother Bonhoeffer,

For your birthday I wish you with all my heart that God may give you also in this new year of life the ways and possibilities to serve His church with your gifts, and

[2.] Gerhard Ebeling.

[3.] Probably to a planned meeting of the “theological society.” [Cf. 1/30, 1/35, and 1/39.—VB]

[1.] *NL*, C 25; handwritten postcard; return address: “R. Lynker, Schalksmühle/Westfalen, Hälver”; previously unpublished. Lynker was a candidate in the collective pastorate at Groß-Schlönwitz in summer 1938.

[2.] See Bonhoeffer’s lecture, “Our Path according to the Testimony of Scripture,” 2/5.

[3.] See the resolutions of the seventh Confessing synod of the Old Prussian Union in Berlin-Nikolassee in January 1939, which concerned solidarity with the young illegals in the Confessing Church, in Niesel, *Um Verkündigung und Ordnung der Kirche*, 70–76.

[4.] Lynker had registered with the regional church consistory to take the required post-exam, that is, to become legalized. This is mentioned in a postcard (not reproduced here) to Bonhoeffer from Erwin Sander of February 4, 1939, *NL*, C 25.

[5.] Cf. the letter from Otto Kistner, end of January 1939 (1/60), with ed. note 4.

[1.] *NL*, C 25; handwritten card from Superintendent Friedrich Onnasch; previously unpublished.

that He may richly bless this service. May He watch over you, that your heart not become bitter, not even through grim experiences, but instead remain cheerful and confident in discipleship. The day will certainly come when His wondrous ways will be so evident that we can only give praise and thanks.

Hoping and already rejoicing today in this day with you, your
F. Onnasch

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Greifenberg, February 4, 1939

My dear Dietrich,

This year's watchword is to greet you on your birthday. Even if my greeting arrives too late, you know that I remember you and your work daily, and that is more than all the warm greetings and blessings can give us. I am leaving Greifenberg in the coming week and moving to Batzwitz. I will send you another letter from there. I have placed in this text all my wishes for your life and your work and your salvation. Greet all the brothers. Commending you to God with affection in brotherly solidarity your

Jakob

**74. From Werner de Boor and Gerhard Saß
to the "Brotherhood of Young Theologians" in Pomerania^[1]**

Stolp, February 13, 1939

Dear Brothers,

I want to add a personal word to the circular letter to the brotherhood.

We all know about the weighty tensions that are running through our brotherhood. They are so hard and so dangerous precisely because they don't remain theoretical opposite points of view but are becoming practical separations of the

[1.] *NL*, C 25; handwritten postcard with the devotional text drawn for the year 1939: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine" (Isa. 43:1); previously unpublished. Büchsel was a candidate in the second Finkenwalde session in the winter of 1935–36.

[1.] *NL*, C 25; later typewritten copy; previously unpublished. In the debate about legalization, the conflicts among the assistant pastors and vicars in the Confessing Church in Pomerania intensified in the winter of 1938–39. A division among them between way "A" (consistent rejection of subordination to the consistories) and way "B" (subordination under certain conditions) had occurred. Both sides again presented

paths. But in many hearts these tensions are countered by a conviction that is just as deep, of our ongoing belonging together and by the will to stay together for the very sake of the Confessing Church. The advice: “Let your brotherhood collapse only if certain measures necessary for the church are carried through!” finds no echo in our hearts. And this is not out of any sentimentality. It is much more the knowledge in all of us that precisely “brotherhood” is the essential living beginning of “church.” Thus we have attempted a church administration through a “council of brethren,” in conscious contrast to all church “governments” that conform to the world. (What does it matter if, after centuries of the secularization of the church, this attempt has not yet penetrated and seized the entire “church.?”) Thus the knowledge is growing in us that things can only go forward in the individual congregations if there is at least a beginning of a brotherhood around the minister. (Local council of brethren, Confessing church-community as a brotherhood under the word. How can we lead the entire church through councils of brethren if this new nature of the church doesn’t first begin in the parishes!) Thus in clergy circles it has long been felt that a renewal of the ministry can succeed only when the secularized forms of separation from one another in the official church [Amtskirche] are overcome by a brotherly with-one-another. And thus many of us see our “brotherhood of young theologians” as a gift from God of which we cannot let go. Perhaps here we will be given to grow beyond the great attempt of the churches of the Reformation, to win unity through the same knowledge and unanimous teaching, to a unity that admittedly, in human terms, is inconspicuous and insecure and for that reason uncanny, but nonetheless is real and powerful in the Lord and in the community of the Holy Spirit.

With this, admittedly, we stand at the beginning of questions and tasks that none of us today can easily answer and solve. Here the Prussian outcome^[2] in no way means a full stop: *Roma locuta, causa finita*.^[3] Here our discussion must continue, even if not with the previously narrow focus upon the one practical question. The elaboration by Brother Saß offers us all a piece of this discussion; for that reason I would like to send it to all the brothers.

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their respective positions before the decisive meetings of the various ministeriums (*Pfarrkonvente*) in February 1939 were held. Werner de Boor, chair of the “Brotherhood of Young Theologians” in Pomerania, and Gerhard Sass advocated way “B.” See *DB-ER*, 615–20, and Klän, *An der Wegscheide*.

[2.] The seventh Confessing synod of the Old Prussian Union in January 1939 in Berlin-Nikolassee took a clear position against the consistories’ attempts toward legalization and warned the young pastors “of upholding a false church government.” See *DB-ER*, 614, and Niesel, *Kirche unter dem Wort*, 196–99.

[3.] “Rome has spoken, the matter is decided.”

Dear colleagues, “make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). Your
de Boor

Stolp, February 13, 1939

Dear Brothers,

The resolutions of the Prussian synod, which have reached us in the meantime, compel us once again—like any synodal resolution—to a thorough examination of their outcomes and theological presuppositions and with that to reconsider our personal decision about the question of our path.

I submit to you the following reservations against the foundations of the synodal resolution, which have only strengthened my position, which I have held for months, of rejecting “Way A”^[4] and have freed me internally to take a position against the synod, because I feel obligated to inform my brothers about the reasons that will soon compel me to leave Way A.

I. The theological rationale for Way A on the basis of the question of *vocatio*,^[5] which appears to deliver such a mathematically unequivocal outcome, is questionable because the discussion about the Protestant understanding of the essence of vocation, ordination, ministry, church government [Kirchenregiment]^[6] cannot be seen as concluded. Certainly church action cannot always wait for theologically uncontradictory definitions. Nonetheless a church policy resolution that rests on controversial theological assumptions can never be binding as absolutely as this synodal resolution claims to be. (I only remind you of the controversies about ministry and church regime, between the opinion that the office of ministry rests within the congregation and is bestowed by the congregation on individuals [according to Thomasius,^[7] v. Hofmann,^[8] see Theodosius Harnack, *The Church, Its Office, Its Regime: Fundamental Propositions*, new edition 1934!]^[9]

[4.] See ed. note 1.

[5.] “Vocation”; cf. Augsburg Confession, Article 14 (*Book of Concord*, 47). On this issue see the documentation from Bonhoeffer’s 1935 lecture on church constitution, *DBW* 14, 2/1.

[6.] [*Kirchenregiment* is a somewhat unusual term to describe the church governing structures (the more usual term is *Kirchenleitung*). Bonhoeffer sometime used *Kirchenregiment* in a pejorative fashion to describe the church authorities (see, for example, a 1933 letter to his grandmother, *DBWE* 13, 1/31, p. 59), and in such instances it has been translated as “church regime.” In this report by Werner de Boor, however, it does appear that he is using the term to describe the standard church governing bodies—albeit perhaps ironically—and so it is translated here as “church government.”—VB]

[7.] Gottfried Thomasius.

[8.] Johann Christian Konrad von Hofmann.

[9.] [See T. Harnack, *Die Kirche, ihr Amt, ihr Regiment: Grundlegende Sätze*.—VB]

and that other understanding that only the office of ministry first creates the congregation and has to continue by itself [*successio*]^[10] [according to Löhe,^[11] and above all Vilmar].^[12]—Furthermore: does ordination signify a sacramental (Vilmar) or only a juridical act? What is decisive for an ordination, the one who ordains, or the one who commissions him [Auftraggeber], the formulation of obligation or the “holiness” of the one who ordains or the congregation of the entire church-community? Does an ordination lack God’s blessing if, while it is correctly carried out, those who ordain are not *only* in church office? What does *rite vocatus*^[13] really mean? The commission that a church-community bestows to carry out a ministry within it, following the examination of the individual’s capability and preparatory training? Or, *successio*—in due order—from Christ? Is the church government called for by Christian faith and the presence of a church-community of Christ in the world, or is the church government only a useful form of human-ecclesial order (*de jure humano oder divino?*)^[14]—With these questions I want only to indicate several points that show how unclarified even today the presuppositions that underlie the synod’s resolution remain. Preceding the resolution is a reference to Rom. 10:15 and Eph. 4:10–11. The necessity of *vocatio* through a proper church government cannot, however, be proven from Rom. 10:15 (only the one who is sent can proclaim). Here the sending of all believers through the word of God (Rom. 10:17) is confused with the commission, to be bestowed by the congregation, to administer the word and sacrament in the congregation. (Cf., e.g., also what O. Riecker, *The Evangelical Word*,^[15] 1935, pages 87ff., says about the sending as a pneumatic fact over against the *vocatio* according to human order. From Eph. 4:11: “He has set,” only the Catholic Church might derive a reference to its church government.)

2. The singling out of one theological insight that is recognized as being correct out of the *fullness* of insights given with the gospel and the attempt to build the church upon *one* such, perhaps correct insight (here about the church government), has a destructive effect upon the church. (The mistake of all sects is their one-sided point of departure, their too narrow theological foundation.)

Over against the narrowness of the slogan: struggle for a church government, which can in due order call and send preachers of the gospel, what is far more

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[10.] “Succession (in the ministry).”

[11.] Wilhelm Löhe.

[12.] August Friedrich Christian Vilmar. The doctrinal development in the neo-Lutheran ecclesiology with the controversy between advocates of the “transference theory” and advocates of the “institutional theory” of the office of ministry is presented in Andresen, *Handbuch der Dogmen- und Theologiegeschichte*, 3:184–88.

[13.] “Properly called”; see ed. note 5.

[14.] “According to human law or divine law”

[15.] [See Riecker, *Das evangelische Wort*—VB]

central for me—particularly in the present situation of the church—is Jesus’s command: Matt: 28:18ff.

The historical situation of our established church as a church of the people [Volkskirche] makes it still necessary today to be obedient to this command of Jesus in the congregation (in the visible, more external congregation), that is, under the consistory. Practice shows that even the CC in Pomerania is not doing anything different, in that it must fill pastorates doubly, as it were, and tell the pastors who are retained in office by the consistory to share “office and house” with the illegal brothers. The CC, however, must leave to the middle way or to the GC those congregations in which these illegal brothers could preach.^[16] However, the congregations that have understood exactly what is at stake so that they want in any event to have and support an “illegal” pastor are few.

Therefore, for the sake of a theologically theoretically clean *vocatio* (on the dubiousness of this see above), I believe that I cannot offer support for the struggle for a pure church government, as long as congregations still want to elect and call proper preachers of the gospel and the consistories are prepared to assign such preachers to the parish. It would be more supportive for the commission given us by the Word if the number of illegal theologians *in the imprisonment* of the state-connected consistorial “church” would proclaim the Word unanimously with the CC pastors in office and the preachers of the gospel from the middle path—so long as it is still possible—in order to bear together the need and tribulation that grows out of such imprisonment.

3. The reality of the church is more extensive and greater than can be portrayed by a theoretical system about pure church government and pure church. This is evident, first, in that the system disregards the fact that even outside the CC there is proper preaching and that outside the CC there is church. Furthermore, it seems to me that the fact that the church schism practically (i.e., in our church actions) troubles us so little or warns us is an indication that we stand in the same damnation as the church-community in Corinth: We have fine knowledge. But this knowledge “puffs up” and murders love instead of edifying the congregation and creating unity of spirit. “Let all things be done for building up” (I Cor. 14:26). Where there is no building up but instead new separation and divorce and destruction of community, there we can hardly act out of the unity with the spirit of Christ. Even when marching separately it ought to be possible to maintain brotherly unity in the *proper* church of the Lord (cf. the example of Paul in his relation to Jerusalem).

4. Making the intention to preach the gospel and assume the office of a preaching ministry in a congregation dependent upon authorization that has

[16.] [“GC” refers to the German Christians (in original, DC, i.e., Deutsche Christen).—VB]

been conferred by a legitimate church government overlooks the fact that the church exists in this era in the form of servant, and that its “pure” and “glorious” form, that is, the same form of the exalted Lord, can only be *believed* (3rd article).^[17] The illusion of the “pure church” is always in the background wherever there is church schism instead of unity of spirit, love, and knowledge (Phil. 2:1–4). (Cf. also the Enthusiast movement;^[18] parable of the weeds among the wheat.^[19] That’s why the question of the earthly order of a pure church government must indeed be discussed theologically, again and again, but it can never be practiced satisfactorily, and certainly not in our era. (Certainly the realization of theological insights must be attempted ever anew, but is not the church’s situation at present so serious that other tasks have become more urgent for us?) The pure church government can only be realized today in a free church (which is of course illusory for the CC), but this is the very thing that the synod obviously didn’t want. For basically it is only once again giving the old slogan: wait and see! We will continue to insist on your legalization! And in this waiting period the congregation[s] are also waiting for the proper preachers of the gospel, which as things stand they can receive only via the consistories. The struggle on the frontlines for the governance of the church has long been decided, namely, it was lost by the CC.^[20] The front of the Church Struggle, however, is much broader. And the decision no longer concerns the church government. Nonetheless, the synod wants to continue to fight about this and thus ties down the forces that are needed so urgently in other places and surrenders these places to the enemies in our ranks. This situation does not justify the greatness of the sacrifices being made. Way A means continually starting a new charge (with ever-diminishing strength and reasons) against a locked door. Yet according to Paul’s principle we should seek the place where God—in the form of the *Volkskirche* (from which the CC too still lives with us) that has been handed down to us historically as a task and at the same time as a trouble—presently still leaves a door open for the preaching of the gospel (1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3). What should be done when the previous form of the church has been

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[17.] See the third article of the Apostles’ Creed (*Book of Concord*, 21–22). [“I believe in the Holy Spirit, one holy Christian church, the community of saints, forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the flesh, and eternal life.”—VB]

[18.] “Enthusiasts,” or “enthusiast spirits,” was Martin Luther’s verdict on some of those who did not share his faith convictions, such as Andreas Bodenstein (named Karlstadt), Thomas Müntzer, and others. In more recent research, these groups are characterized more neutrally as the “left wing of the Reformation” or the “radical Reformation.” See the description in Andresen, *Handbuch der Dogmen- und Theologiegeschichte*, 2:27–33 and 568–81.

[19.] Matt. 13:24–30.

[20.] [See *DB-ER*, 616.—VB]

completely destroyed—which for the time being one cannot yet say, above all in Pomerania—remains to be seen. Indeed, we can proceed into the darkness only step by step, rather than making great plans for the building up of a future new church organization.

5. The path of the church in history does not follow natural laws that one can calculate in advance. The course established in Dahlem^[21] was still right at the time and had to be maintained as a claim upon the entire church as long as the possibility of and hope for a unanimous merger of congregations and pastors of the GEC existed. Today this hope—above all in Pomerania—should be buried as utterly absurd.

Therefore I am incapable of seeing the situation other than that for which we are commanded, that for the sake of the unity of the church and the command of Jesus and the congregations (which are not yet mature enough to make their own decisions), to take the path that leads into the organization: GEC, that is, into various external forms of servitude and internal torment, which the CC pastors in office have borne already for a long time.

It is not possible for me to overlook these reasons and still be convinced that Way A is correct and demanded by faith as a necessity. I once went along this path cheerfully and surely and am even now convinced that at the time such action was correct, but today I am just as convinced that further insistence on this course would be wrong for me.

The brothers who share this conviction with me—and apparently that are quite a few—would have to see two decisive questions resolved before taking the step to the consistory:

The brothers in that part of the brotherhood who for reasons of conscience have adhered to the previous path,^[22] and the new Council of Brethren, which has been restructured and extended according to the Prussian resolution, must not be allowed again—as happened in many cases to brothers who joined the consistory earlier—to incur the guilt of a further destruction of brotherly community, namely, by simply “letting the renegades leave,” thus forcing them into an isolation that is felt doubly harshly by one who comes from the CC and knows personally that he will always belong to the CC. Therefore, it would be necessary for the sake of the community of the CC that those brothers who now for reasons of conscience find it necessary to take the path to the consistory, be led by their spiritual leadership, that is, the Council of Brethren (or the director of the examination office?) to the consistory, in order to document simultaneously

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[21.] The second Confessing synod in Dahlem on October 19–20, 1934, with its declaration of church emergency law. See Schmidt, *Bekenntnisse*, 2:157–62.

[22.] [I.e., Way A.—VB]

that the brothers under the consistory—like the CC pastors in established parishes—belong and should belong to the CC.

The other question that we will have to ponder concerns our brotherhood. It will have to become clear whether the brotherhood was only a community formed in the church-political struggle, a community that stands or falls with the decision for or against a certain path, or a brotherhood in Christ. From such a brotherhood, only those who separate themselves from Christ, the one Word of God that we have to hear,^[23] exclude themselves. We must prevent a repeated destruction and diminishment of the brotherhood, simply in view of the time when the common brotherhood will have to prove itself. Certainly a withdrawal from the CC list of candidates would be necessary, but the brotherhood ought to prove itself as the bond that transcends all external contradictions in a deeper unity.

In light of the fact that some of the older brothers in our brotherhood have also been tormented by similar reservations against Way A, I deeply deplore that not one of those who has followed Way A much longer than I myself has spoken to the brothers about these troubles, in order to challenge them to seriously examine our course, to weigh anew which questions in the current situation of the church are to be seen as central or peripheral. Since I, however, now see it as unavoidably necessary that all brothers receive knowledge of the questions that have caused me and others to advocate Way B, I have attempted here to present the arguments that seem most important to me. I would be grateful if the brothers who fundamentally agree with me could let me know this as soon as possible, and if those who have understandable reasons for their opposing position would tell me this as well. Your

G. Saß

[23.] A reference to the first thesis of the Barmen theological declaration. ["We reject the false doctrine that the church could and should recognize as a source of its proclamation, beyond and besides this one Word of God, yet other events, powers, historic figures, and truths as God's revelation." Cited in Hockenos, *Church Divided*, 179.—VB]

146 **75. To the Finkenwalde Brothers**^[1]

Personal letter!

February 14, 1939

Dear Brothers,

Above all I must thank you that you responded so kindly to my brief Christmas greeting^[2] with detailed letters. I am pleased to know again about you, how you are doing, about your work, and of your confidence in our cause. Your letters at the same time brought such a great number of sermons that I have not yet gotten through all of them. I thank you for these as well and have learned from this how good and valuable this kind of connection is. I would in fact even like to suggest immediately that in the letters you write to one another you also enclose sermons. That is a genuine gain for both sides, personally and objectively. Finally, I still have to thank you for the birthday greetings that I received last week. Such signs give one much new energy and joy for the work.

In my last letter I wrote to you about patient endurance in the New Testament^[3] as we had worked through this concept here. I was very happy to read in many of your letters that this admonition through Scripture also appeared important to you in our time. Allow me then today to attempt to communicate to you from the same work,^[4] once again as an invitation to join us in the work on another great concept from the New Testament, which we must penetrate in order to live in it: about joy.

The new beginning that has recently been given to us through God's goodness against all expectations has liberated us from a dull pressure.
147 ^[5] We have been called once more to the full joy in Jesus Christ our Lord. It is truly nothing but the grace of God, that he has once again allowed us to hear the witness to Christ's lordship so purely and without adulteration, for with our unjoyful, resigned, and stubborn nature, we were no longer deserving of it. Now, however, we are challenged to really grasp this gift of God anew and to be led to the full joy of Christ.

[1.] *NL*, A 48,3 (7); typewritten mimeograph with handwritten signature; probably from Groß-Schlönwitz. Previously published in *GS* 2:546–50.

[2.] Correspondence not extant.

[3.] See Bonhoeffer's November 20, 1938, circular letter, 1/36.

[4.] [A study of New Testament concepts.—VB]

[5.] The reference is to the seventh Confessing synod of the Old Prussian Union in Berlin-Nikolassee, on January 28–31, 1939; see 1/74, ed. note 2.

The first thing that Scripture tells us about joy can be summarized with the beginning of the song: “Jesus, my joy . . .”^[6] This is the *continuo* of the biblical proclamation of the birth of Christ, of the dawning of God’s kingdom in Christ’s fellowship with the disciples, of Christ’s resurrection and ascension (Luke 2:10; Mark 2:19; Luke 24:41, 52; John 20:20). God wants to make us joyful through Jesus Christ. God wants neither to oppress us nor confront us with insoluble problems, but rather wishes us to delight in Jesus Christ and in Christ’s lordship. This again is among the simplest things, which the more difficult ones make us forget, namely, that we learn to delight in Jesus Christ like children. Is it not the worst kind of ingratitude and stubbornness of our heart, when the one who came to us for the sake of salvation, of rescue, now becomes a burden? When the joy in Christ is lost for us, so too is the love for Christ and the faith in Christ. Without the joy in the Son of God, who became human and was resurrected, we fall into grumbling, into contradiction, into sadness. Where, however, do we find such joy? Solely through the firm belief: Jesus lives! When it is really true that Jesus lives, that Jesus bears witness to us, leads and helps us, how then should we not be just as joyful as the disciples were when they saw him on Easter morning? (John 20:20).

Second: Whoever has found Jesus Christ goes along Christ’s path with joy, goes there with joy, and sells everything he possesses and purchases the precious pearl (Matt. 13:44). Whoever does not follow the path of Jesus will become sad like the rich young man (Matt. 19:22). Whoever entrusts himself entirely to the path of Jesus will rejoice in this. This joy also proves true in the suffering that this path can bring upon us (Matt. 5:12; 1 Pet. 4:13ff; 2 Cor. 6:10; Phil. 2:17; Col. 1:24; Heb. 10:32, etc.). The reason for all such joy is the fact that Jesus is near (Phil. 4:4). “Oh, my lord Jesus, your nearness . . .”^[7] At the same time here is the certainty that in this very way Jesus Christ’s work on earth is fulfilled and completed (2 Tim. 2:10!). Thus that which should bring us sorrow and destruction must, through God’s wondrous grace, only strengthen our joy. If we stand in true joy, then it is really so: “no one will take your joy from you” (John 16:22), for it remains eternally (1 Pet. 1:8).

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[6.] See the chorale “Jesu, meine Freude,” by Johann Franck, in *EG*, 396. [An English translation is “Jesus, Priceless Treasure,” in *Lutheran Hymnal*, 347.—VB]

[7.] From the hymn “Ach mein Herr Jesu, dein Nahesein,” by Christian Gregor (1767), in *Evangelisches Gesangbuch für Brandenburg und Pommern*, 206. [This was the hymnal used in Finkenwalde. This hymn is not included in the later *Evangelisches Gesangbuch*, and no English translation appears to exist.—VB]

Third: the church-community is a community of joy. All partake joyfully of the special grace that befalls one of them (1 Cor. 12:26). John knows of no greater joy than when he sees his children walking in the truth (2 John 4; 3 John 4; cf. 1 Cor. 13:6). Paul asks his church-community to participate in the joy of his suffering for the sake of Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:17). Jesus, however, calls for rejoicing together there, where someone who has been lost is found again, where a sinner repents. The entire chapter of Luke 15 stands under this call (15:6, 9, 23, 32; cf. 2 Cor. 7:9–10). Christians are an unceasing reason for joy for one another daily (1 Thess. 2:19; Phil. 4:1). Whoever has his eyes open for Christian neighbors can never lack occasion for joy. It is truly astounding to know that not only is “Jesus our joy” but our fellow Christians as well. Do we not have reason enough today to be filled with this joy?

149 Fourth: the origin of all true joy is God’s joy in us. With God in heaven, there is joy when God’s work on earth finds fulfillment, when the sinner returns to his father’s house (Luke 15). Jesus is filled with joy, and it is Jesus’s joy that is in us and that gives us perfect and lasting joy (John 15:11; 17:13). We are called to participate in God’s joy in God’s work, in the joy of Jesus over the love of God. It is our consummate joy that our prayers henceforth are heard (John 16:24). We should not distress the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30), rather it is our goal to enter into the joy of our Lord—Matt. 25:21.^[8] For the exegesis of this verse we listen to Augustine: “Enter into everlasting joy, into the house of the Lord your God, where there are great, inscrutable, and marvelous things without number. Enter into joy without sadness, a joy that contains eternal happiness, where there will be every good and no evil, where there will be whatever you will wish for and nothing that you would not want, where there will be a full life, sweet and lovely, and forever memorable. It will be a life where there will be no enemy attacking you, nor any temptation, but rather the utmost untroubled security, secure tranquility, and tranquil pleasure, and pleasurable happiness, and happy eternity, and eternal beatitude, and the Blessed Trinity, and the unity of the Trinity, and the Godhead of the Unity, and the blessed vision of the Godhead, which is the joy of my Lord. O joy beyond joy, surpassing every joy, outside of which there is no joy. O kingdom of everlasting happiness, where you, O Lord, the hope of the saints and the crown of glory, are seen face to face by the saints, making them rejoice everywhere in your peace, which surpasses every sensation. There will be infinite joy, happiness without sadness, health without pain, life without labor, light without darkness, life without death,

[8.] In the manuscript this is erroneously written as “25:11.”

every good with no evil. There youth never grows old, there life knows no end, where beauty never grows pale, where love never becomes tepid, where health never declines, where joy never decreases, where sorrow is never felt, where weeping is never heard, where no evil is feared because there the highest good is possessed, the good that is always to behold the face of the Lord of virtues.” (In the soliloquy Cap 35.^[9] Couldn’t one of you attempt sometime to do a nice translation of this hymn?)

I greet you with the quotation from the Ps. 100: “Serve the Lord with gladness!”^[10] God bless you, your homes, and your congregations to such service.

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In the fellowship of brotherly intercession, your faithful
Dietrich Bonhoeffer^[11]

[9.] “Intra in gaudium sempiternum, in domum Domini Dei tui, ubi sunt magna et inscrutabilia et mirabilia, quorum non est numerus; intra in gaudium sine tristitia, quod continet aeternum laetitiam, ubi erit omne bonum, et non erit aliquod malum; ubi erit quidquid vales, et non erit quidquid noles, ubi erit vita vitalis, dulcis et amabilis, semperque memorialis; ubi non erit hostis impugnans, nec ulla illecebra, sed summa et certa securitas, et secunda tranquillitas, et tranquilla iucunditas, et iucunda felicitas, et felix aeternitas, et aeterna beatitudo, et beata Trinitas, et Trinitatis unitas, et unitatis deitas, et deitatis beata visio, quae est gaudium Domini mei! O gaudium super gaudium, vincens omne gaudium, extra quod non est gaudium. . . . O regnum beatitudinis sempiternae, ubi tu, Domine, spes sanctorum et diadema gloriae, facie ad faciem videris a sanctis, lactificans eos undique in pace tua quae exsuperat omnem sensum! Ibi gaudium infinitum, laetitia sine tristitia, salus sine dolore, vita sine labore, lux sine tenebris, vita sine morte, omne bonum sine omni malo. Ibi iuventus nunquam senescit, ibi vita terminum nescit, ubi decor nunquam pallescit, ubi amor nunquam tepescit, ubi sanitas nunquam marcescit, ubi gaudium nunquam decrescit, ubi dolor nunquam sentitur, ubi gemitus nunquam auditur, . . . ubi malum nullum timetur; quoniam ibi summum bonum possidetur, quod est semper videre faciem Domini virtutum.” According to the person dealing with the Augustine lexicon at the University of Giessen, the text cited here cannot be found in the works of Augustine (letter from Dr. Christof Müller to the German editor, May 11, 1994). It concerns an excerpt from the “Soliloquiorum animae ad Deum” by an unknown author, printed in Migne, *Patrologiae Latinae*, 40 (Paris, 1841), 894–95. The editor thanks the publisher, Dr. Hubert Filser, Munich. The place where Bonhoeffer found this text could not be ascertained. The somewhat erroneous transcription has been corrected here according to the citation in PL 40:894–95. [The *DBWE* editor thanks Geoffrey Kelly for his translation of the Latin. Kelly notes: “Migne adds a caution before this soliloquy that what follows under the title of “From the Soliloquies about the Soul Going to God” is very different from Augustine’s soliloquies. It is likely that this soliloquy quoted by Bonhoeffer was put together by a later writer, using ideas derived from the earlier writings of Augustine.”—VB]

[10.] Ps. 100:2. NRSV: “Worship the Lord with gladness.”

[11.] In this circular letter the list of meditation texts is missing.

76. From Gerhard Krause^[1]

February 18, 1939

Dear Brother Bonhoeffer,

151 Now at long last I want to reply to your long and brotherly letter of December 15, 1938.^[2] You must not fear that you had somehow offended me, for I love straight talk and most particularly expect it from brothers and friends. Rather, I thank you that you have written to me as clearly as you felt necessary, and also that you have pointed out to me all kinds of theologically imprecise and unjustified judgments. That entire “draft” was but a quick compilation of thoughts that are in part not my own, which I submitted to friends for criticism. In the meantime, as far as possible I have followed your advice to remain silent until the church has spoken. Only at conferences and in some letters that could not be delayed did I have to convey my thoughts. In the meantime, the CC itself has moved on beyond those sketchy ideas.^[3] I have been listened to in many places, but the CC did not want and was perhaps not able to go along in the slightest degree with what I suggested; the presentation of the thinking behind “B” ought to have been more thoroughly grounded and shown more readiness to take responsibility than was the case.^[4] We were indeed of the opinion that we had suggested, not a good solution for us privately, but an aid to the entire CC. Since this has been rejected,^[5] there remains a conflict between the CC and me: I can neither consider the continuation of the previous path as theologically correct, nor can I take responsibility for it any longer, either for others or for myself. And this is why I now write you: up to now I have gladly listened to your advice and do not wish to do without it in the future. My question here is will the brotherly community that up to now bound me to you and the Finkenwaldians continue to exist—to be sure, in a now particularly necessary openness—or not? That for my part it will not and should not collapse is certain. But will you and all those who believe they must accuse us of destroying the church and of other guilt still want to have us in your hearts and in your midst?

[1.] *NL*, C 25; typewritten with handwritten salutation and signature, with the return address: “Greifswald, Lönstrasse 2.” Previously published in *GS* 6:439–42.

[2.] Letter not extant (per the letter of February 15, 1994, from Mrs. Sigrid Krause to the German editor).

[3.] See the resolutions of the seventh Confessing synod of the Old Prussian Union in Berlin-Nikolassee, January 28–31, 1939 (“Epiphany synod”), in Niesel, *Um Verkündigung und Ordnung der Kirche*, 70–76.

[4.] [The reference here is to “Way B,” the arrangement with provincial church consistories toward legalization. See 1/74, ed. note 1.—VB]

[5.] [The “Epiphany synod” (see ed. note 3) rejected “Way B” and the course of legalization.—VB]

The conflict^[6] began so to speak with “church-political” matters. But that was always secondary to me. At times it appeared as if, and I myself thought it possible, those brothers who propagated Way “B” in Pomerania would take the leadership of the Pomeranian CC in their hands. Now, however, it has become evident that, besides all the other obstacles, these brothers themselves obviously do not have the certainty and strength that would have been required. I myself did not think it necessary to promote this path, particularly because you also had warned me not to do so, referring to the responsibility toward others that had been placed upon me. Precisely because of this, I found it necessary to express a free theological opinion that would compel individuals always to reconsider the genuineness of their decisions. That may indeed confuse some. But that, I believe, must be accepted for the sake of the truth. Here the “church-political” side is already at its end. For I can look on reassured when others decide differently about the questions laid before us today, when I recognize that the decisions here have been made in faith and in certainty.

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But the conflict has, moreover, a theological side. It will compel me and all of you to question one another about the truth and necessity of our decisions. This questioning may not be allowed to stop—however much it be felt and characterized as a burden.—In preparation for the Prussian synod, I reread long passages from your *Discipleship*, because I wanted to leave open a reversal of my views. But you are quite right when you speak in your letter of an “abysmal theological disagreement between us.” It is there, even if I cannot yet formulate it (as Brother de Boor^[7] did in his letter to Fritz Onnasch: pneumatology). I simply sense errors in the doctrine of justification [Rechtfertigungslehre] and even more errors in the doctrine of the church (esp. in the “questions,” *Ev. Theol.* 36:10)^[8] that I otherwise know of only in Catholic theology. But such a general dictum is of no help to you, and no “heretic’s hat” should be handed out either. But it must nonetheless be stated where I see the difference, even if I do not now have the leisure to expound it thoroughly and at length.

Perhaps even more important than the theological conflict is the ethical one, which of course is connected to it.^[9] It is the practical question: how should Christians behave when faced by a tyrannical authority [Obrigkeit], where does

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[6.] [This refers to his mention in the previous paragraph of the “conflict” between him and the Confessing Church.—VB]

[7.] The reference is to Werner de Boor; the letter mentioned is not extant.

[8.] This refers to the debate that erupted over Bonhoeffer’s article “Zur Frage nach der Kirchengemeinschaft “ (On the Question of Church Communion) in *Evangelische Theologie*. 4 (1936): 214–33; in the October issue, Helmut Gollwitzer had raised “Comments and Reservations” (398–405), and Bonhoeffer had posed “Questions” (405–10). See *DBW* 14, 2/19.1.

[9.] [I.e., to the theological issues.—VB]

repudiation begin, where does the necessary resistance begin? That is the practical question that Christians in life today decide very differently. Unfortunately, they often turn this into a far-reaching dogmatic conflict, giving it an impact that splits the church. I am equally certain that this division, in which we are no longer at one with one another in the practical decisions, is just as much the devilish intent of our opponents as it is the personal fault of all of us. How is it possible that so many Christians who are at one in their faith draw away from one another so far that their love can only be platonic! Now I must fully acknowledge that you are right in stating that our concrete obedience in life must always have something to do with our faith and thus with our personal salvation. But I notice nonetheless that already the church of the earliest Christians very obviously set up rules of a more general kind for those life decisions for which no commandment from the Lord exists (I Cor. 7; Rom. 14), than where clear commandments exist. One says then that one should act ἐν κυρίῳ, or ἐν πίστει, and—it is then self-evident—ἐν ἀγάπῃ;^[10] one refrains from concrete objective demands, indeed relativizes them, if only to maintain the faith and the community of the Lord. Of these two everyone should be certain.

In my opinion, today it is the decisions at this level that are at stake. Thus the question remains open what then has moved me now to change a decision that supposedly was once made in faith.

1. Here the theological opposition alluded to above can be mentioned, which impresses me more strongly from day to day. Certainly the altered circumstances had their say as well, namely, the fact that many one-time GC^[11] today are fine preachers, that the church government, the consistory, today is less heretical than tyrannical, that our political situation is becoming ever more starkly conspicuous and that in my own case the stormy times have been followed by times of reflection.

2. A very decisive contribution to this is the “certainty of the others” from whom the CC had withdrawn or was withdrawing. The existence of “neutrals” who are faithful was a shock for me, and I could not comprehend the necessity of a break with them.

3. What finally gave me pause was the insight that on this path^[12] I would have to give up the established church, because my work would remain possible only within the circles of CC congregations. I believed, however, that the abandonment of the established church was not yet commanded, but rather

[10.] [“In the Lord, or in faith and . . . in love.”—VB]

[11.] [German Christians.—VB]

[12.] [I.e., “Way A,” which refused legalization.—VB]

that today the waiting of which Luke 13:6–9^[13] speaks must still hold true. For I know that I am called to serve in these congregations, for their admonition and edification, not only to serve CC circles.

4. Finally I had to see that the “path to the consistory” would not necessarily have to be a repudiation and an acting without faith. My personal negotiations in these weeks, which are not yet completely finished, have confirmed this. Certainly the men there are “tied down” and theologically poorly qualified for church leadership. But they require nothing for legalization that I would have to reject as “against the faith” or “against the truth.” If this is true, then the protest against the consistory at this point loses for me that necessity that it ought to have, if I were to renounce for its sake the ministry, the established church, the fellowship with many brothers who share my faith, etc., and to bear all the suffering. Conversely, however, it appears necessary to “preserve” these things (in the knowledge that the Lord preserves them) as long as I am hindered neither from proper preaching nor from confessing.

Added to this are various secondary considerations. In all of them, I am of good cheer and conscience, nor did I feel assailed in any way during my meditation on 2 Cor. 1:12 during this week. Thus I see—assuming that my negotiations with the consistory proceed unhindered—no more possibility of remaining on the previous path of the CC. Whether I remain *in* the CC is for the CC to decide; whether I remain in the Finkenwalde brotherhood, that is my request and question to you.

With warm brotherly greetings
Your Gerhard Krause

77. To Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer^[1]

Dear Karl Friedrich,

Many thanks for your letter.^[2] I am just getting ready to depart and am therefore in a hurry. I wanted to travel probably on the tenth or eleventh of March.^[3] In any case, I must be over there on the fifteenth. I have the

[13.] [This is the parable of gardener and the fig tree that took several years to bear fruit.—VB]

[1.] Letter not registered in the *NL*; handwritten postcard; postmarked Berlin-Marienburg/Westpreußen Train 24/28 [this means the card is presumably from Groß-Schlönwitz], February 19, 1939. Cf. also the later typewritten copy, previously unpublished, in *NL*, A 44,1 (18).

[2.] Letter not extant.

[3.] The reference is to the trip to London to visit the Leibholzes (see *DB-ER*, 635–48 and Rieger, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer in England*, 31–41).

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semester until the eighth. It would be very nice indeed if you could arrange to travel then as well. Let me know. Or would it perhaps be better if you went a month or so later, if you can do that at all? By the way, we planned perhaps to take the car to Aachen. Bethge is perhaps coming along over there.

Warm greetings

Dietrich

By the way, you hopefully did receive my *delayed* birthday letter?^[4]

78. From Christine von Dohnanyi^[1]

March 7, 1939

Dear Dietrich,

When you shortly travel to Sabine,^[2] I would like to request two things of you. I already wrote Sabine that I would take in an English girl for a quarter of a year. Just some young girl so that Bärbel^[3] learns English from her. She must only be a reasonable, not spoiled person. She will have nothing else to do. I thought that Sabine would be quite happy to see to it that someone is sent. Perhaps though she did not receive the letter. Could you take up this matter there, and if Sabine is not interested, perhaps Hildebrand^[4] knows someone? Otherwise I will turn to the official exchange office. It's just that the matter is somewhat urgent for me.

2. The young Harder has now finished his *Abitur*.^[5] Is only sixteen years old. Since he is too young for anything else, his parents would now like to place him in a decent home in England (or France), where he would be well taken care of and perhaps give tutoring (mathematics etc.) or make himself otherwise useful; just that he gets abroad. I believe you know the boy. He is a very well-behaved, dependable boy with good manners and a nice appearance. Would you know of anything or perhaps hear of something out there? If this worked, I would be

[4.] See Bonhoeffer's January 28, 1939, letter, 1/57.

[1.] *NL*, C 5; handwritten; no return address, probably from Leipzig; previously unpublished.

[2.] Sabine Leibholz in London.

[3.] The Dohnanyis' daughter Barbara.

[4.] Franz Hildebrandt.

[5.] Harmut Harder, son of the lawyer Dr. Hans Adolf Harder. [The *Abitur* is the concluding examination at the *Gymnasium* and the entrance examination for university study in Germany.—VB]

very grateful to you. For his parents it's very important that it's a home where he is truly in good hands, because he is simply still quite young to travel alone abroad. I am eager to hear what impressions you bring of Sabine. A pity that we could not see you again before your departure. Would it perhaps work on the return trip?

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Greetings to all! Warmly your
Christel

79. To Paula Bonhoeffer^[1]

Dear Mama,

The trip was fine again, the water was calm, the sleeper car comfortable in every respect. We slept well and arrived here so quickly that the trip was a pleasure. This just for today.

Greetings to you from your grateful

Dietrich^[1]

80. To George Bell^[1]

13th March 1939

My dear Lordbishop,

May I just let you know that I have arrived in London last night. I am so happy to be here once again for a short time and I am looking forward very much to seeing you soon. A friend of mine, Pastor Bethge, has come with me and wishes to bring you a special message from the Provisional Administration.^[2] There are so many things which I should like to discuss with you, that I should be very grateful, if you would let me know when and where I could see you. I have found the Leibholz' well and full of gratitude for all your goodness and help. It makes me so happy to know that.—I am

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[1.] *NL*, A 44,1; handwritten postcard; postmarked Forest Hill [London], March 11, 1939; previously unpublished.

[2.] Short greetings follow from Sabine, Marianne, and Christiane Leibholz and from Eberhard Bethge.

[1.] LPL, BP 42:65; handwritten letter card; return address 29 Manor Mount, SE 23, Tel. Forest Hill 14-45. Cf. also the later typewritten copy in *NL*, A 42,1 (27). Previously published in *GS* 1:279. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

[2.] Of the Confessing Church.

afraid the political situation is just now becoming more tense and precarious.^[3] In deep gratitude for all you are doing for us

Yours very sincerely
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

81. To Leonard Hodgson^[1]

Dear Dr. Hodgson,

I thank you very much indeed for your kind letter and your invitation.^[2] On Wednesday the 29th of March I shall come to Oxford and it would be indeed a great privilege to me if I could see you there. I have been looking forward to an occasion of seeing you ever since we had a short correspondence on the conference in Denmark two years ago,^[3] and I am very happy that I shall have the opportunity of a discussion with you in a few days. The question which I should most of all like to discuss with you is concerning the regular and close contact between the Confessional Church and the “Faith and Order” movement. The more we are becoming cut off from our foreign friends the more we feel it to be necessary to find a way of a permanent representation in the oecumenic movement and particularly in the department concerning “Faith and Order.” We need the theological help of other churches in order to be able to bear the burden of responsibilities which God has laid upon us, and we wish to give you a witness of the Christian insights, which God has given us anew during the last years. I feel strongly that something has to be done quickly practically and effectively in order to establish new relations between you and us. Would it, for instance, not be possible to have a permanent German secretary of the Confessional Church in Geneva or in London, and if not permanent then perhaps for one year or two? Those are the questions which I should like to discuss with you from the theological and practical point of view.^[4] The main difficulty might be the financial side of the matter. But I feel, there must be something wrong,

[3.] The reference is to the invasion of Czechoslovakia by German troops on March 14–15, 1939.

[1.] *NL*, A 46,3 (10); later typewritten copy; return address “Westbrook, Westwood Park, London, SE 23”; undated but certainly mid-March 1939. Previously published in *GS* 1:282–83. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

[2.] Letter not extant.

[3.] Cf. the correspondence between Bonhoeffer and Hodgson in June and July 1935 (nearly four years earlier) on the occasion of a Faith and Order conference in Hindsgavl, Denmark. See *DB-ER*, 480–82, and *DBW*14, 1/9, 1/11, and 1/14.

if a thing which is spiritually necessary should become impossible for financial reasons. Please excuse this long letter. I thought it better to let you know our questions and hopes before we meet.

With many thanks and best regards I am yours sincerely
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

82. To George Bell^[1]

25th of March 1939

My dear Lordbishop,

Dr. Rieger just tells me that Visser 't Hooft^[2] will come to London next week and stay with you at Chichester. I also understand that the next weekend does not suit you well for our visit to Chichester. May I now ask a great favour from you? Would you kindly tell Visser 't Hooft that I am very anxious to see him during his stay in London? Any time except Wednesday when I have to be at Oxford^[3] would suit me well. Would you also be so kind as to let me know any time when I could see you once more before I go back to Germany?

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In order not to take too much of your time when we meet, I should like to put before you the two questions which I am very anxious to discuss with you before my return to Germany. The first question concerns the Confessional Church, the second one is very personal. Please excuse my troubling you again and again and my placing one burden after another on your shoulders.

With regard to the position of the Confessional Church we feel strongly in Germany that—mainly owing to travelling difficulties—the relationship of our church to the churches abroad is not as it ought to be. The responsibility which is placed upon us makes it more and more necessary to have a

[4.] In connection with the Confessing Church's interest in Germany in cooperating as closely as possible with the ecumenical organizations, Bonhoeffer's idea was that his emigrated friend Franz Hildebrandt would be available for this task. See Bonhoeffer's March 25, 1939, letter to George Bell, 1/82, and *DB-ER*, 639–42.

[1.] LPL, BP 42:66–69; handwritten; return address "Dietrich Bonhoeffer, c/o Dr. Cruesemann, Westbrook, Westwood Park, Forest Hill, London SE 23. Telephone: Forest Hill 1810"; cf. also *NL*, A 42,1 (28); later typewritten copy. Previously published in *GS* 1:279–82. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

[2.] On the spontaneously arranged meeting between Bonhoeffer and Visser 't Hooft at the beginning of April 1939 at Paddington Station in London, see *DB-ER*, 645–47, and Visser 't Hooft, *Memoirs*, 107–9.

[3.] For a talk with Leonard Hodgson.

permanent exchange of opinion and the advice of other churches. We are fully aware of and gratefully appreciate what is continuously being done for us from individuals to individuals. But I think, we must try to go a step further and to come to some sort of regular cooperation with and to a better representation of the Confessional Church at the oecumenic movements. If we are not going to make a decisive step forward in this direction, I am afraid, we shall very soon be cut off entirely from our brethren abroad, and that would at any rate mean a tremendous loss to us. What I therefore think we should try to get, is a man, who could devote all his time to establish the necessary contacts, to cooperate in the oecumenic meetings and conferences, learning and contributing. I think we failed in earlier years to give our full assistance in advice and fellowship to the Russian Christians;^[4] now a similar situation is clearly developing in Germany. Do you not think, my Lordbishop, it is urgently necessary to avoid a similar failure? Frankly and with all due respect, the German representatives in Geneva simply cannot represent the cause of the Confessional Church. So there is a real vacancy
 160 which must be filled up sooner or later. This is the first question which I should like to raise and to discuss with you before I go home again to see the men of the Brethren Council. I have also an idea in my mind for the eventual financial difficulties.

The second point is of entirely personal character and I am not certain if I may bother you with it. Please, do take it quite apart from the first point. I am thinking of leaving Germany sometime. The main reason is the compulsory military service to which the men of my age (1906) will be called up this year. It seems to me conscientiously impossible to join in a war under the present circumstances. On the other hand, the Confessional Church as such has not taken any definite attitude in this respect and probably cannot take it as things are. So I should cause a tremendous damage to my brethren if I would make a stand on this point which would be regarded by the regime as typical of the hostility of our church towards the state. Perhaps the worst thing of all is the military oath which I should have to swear.^[5] So

[4.] The reference is to the persecution of Christians in the Soviet Union, particularly during the massive Stalinist purges in 1936–37.

[5.] Immediately after the death of Reich president Paul von Hindenburg on August 2, 1934, Adolf Hitler appointed himself “Führer and Reich chancellor,” assumed supreme command of the armed forces, and, with the help of Reich Minister of the Armed Forces Werner von Blomberg, required all officers and enlisted men to swear an oath to his person although it infringed on the Defense Law of December 1, 1933, and violated the constitution. The wording of the oath (from that point onward) was: “I swear by God this sacred oath, that I will yield unconditional obedience to the Führer of the German

I am rather puzzled in this situation, and perhaps even more, because I feel, it is really only on Christian grounds that I find it difficult to do military service under the present conditions, and yet there are only very few friends who would approve of my attitude. In spite of much reading and thinking concerning this matter I have not yet made up my mind what I would do under different circumstances. But actually as things are I should have to do violence to my Christian conviction, if I would take up arms "now and here." I have been thinking of going to the Missionfield, not as an escape out of the situation, but because I wish to serve somewhere where service is really wanted. But here also the German foreign exchange situation makes it impossible to send workers abroad. With respect to British Missionary Societies I have no idea of the possibilities there. On the other hand, I still have the great desire to serve the Confessional Church as long as I possibly could.

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My Lordbishop, I am very sorry to add trouble to your trouble. But I thought, I might speak freely to you and might ask your advice. You know the Confessional Church and you know me a bit. So I thought you could help me best. It was with regard to this matter that I wanted to see Visser 't Hooft too.

Please excuse this long letter. I hope to see you soon. Leibholz asks me to thank you for your letter to Dr. Lindsay.^[6]

In sincere gratitude I am, my Lordbishop, Yours sincerely,
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

83. From Leonard Hodgson^[1]

30th March 1939

Dear Pastor Bonhoeffer,

I was very glad indeed to have the pleasure of seeing you, and I now feel that I appreciate your situation in a manner which would have been impossible without our conversation. I had better try to put down in writing what I said yesterday.

Reich and *Volk*, Adolf Hitler, the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, and, as a brave soldier, will be ready at any time to lay down my life for this oath." Cited in Craig, *Germany 1866-1945*, 589. See also Fest, *Plotting Hitler's Death*, 55-57.

[6.] A. D. Lindsay.

[1.] *NL*, A 46,3 (11); later typewritten copy; sent from Oxford. Previously published in *GS* 1:283-86. See also *DB-ER*, 639-44. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

You had written to say that you wanted to discuss the possibility of maintaining contact between the Confessional Church in Germany and the Faith and Order Movement.^[2]

I. I began by pointing out the impossibility of our establishing official relations with the German Evangelical Church at the present moment, the reasons being as follows:

(i) By our constitution the Churches appoint the World Conference, and the Conference then appoints its Continuation Committee, which maintains its existence by cooption until the next Conference, when it ceases to exist. There is therefore no direct representation of churches on the Continuation Committee; the Committee derives its authority immediately from the churches through the Conference.

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(ii) The German Evangelical Church found itself unable to be represented at the Edinburgh Conference^[3] and therefore, when that Conference appointed its Continuation Committee, it could not appoint from among its members any representatives of that church. So what it did was to instruct the Committee to coopt eight representatives of that church when such action should become possible.

(iii) It is the custom of the Continuation Committee to coopt to membership those persons whom churches themselves wish to have as their representatives. For this purpose it is necessary to be able to have communication in each case with a central body having full confidence of the whole church, and able to nominate representatives in its name. We are advised that at the present time there is no such church, and that we must not attempt to treat the different groups within that church independently as if they were separate churches. Hence for the time being the filling of these places has to be left in abeyance.

2. I then told you that last summer I was approached by Dr. Wahl asking whether Dr. Krummacher and Dr. Gerstenmaier^[4] might attend the 1938 meeting of the Continuation Committee. I replied in a letter explaining the position exactly as I have just set it forth in the preceding paragraph of this letter. I then added that, if they wished to come as visitors, we should be very glad to welcome them, and that they would be given a full part in all proceedings, except that they would not be able to vote on questions which the Continuation Committee alone was competent to decide, and might possibly be unable to be present at any particular session, should the Committee wish to confine it strictly to its own members. I wrote individually to Dr. Krummacher and Dr. Gerstenmaier

[2.] Cf. Bonhoeffer's letter from mid-March 1939 to Hodgson, 1/81.

[3.] The second international conference of the ecumenical movement for Faith and Order, held in Edinburgh on August 3–18, 1937.

[4.] Hans Wahl, Friedrich Krummacher, and Eugen Gerstenmaier.

explaining the situation. They both came, were welcomed by the Committee, and took a full part in its proceedings, except that they had no responsibility for any of its decisions.

3. It is quite clear that the Committee would give an equal welcome on the same conditions to any representatives of the Confessional Church who should be commended to us in a similar way. I understand that for this purpose Dr. Boehm^[5] would correspond to Dr. Wahl. If therefore the names of two representatives could be communicated to me by Dr. Boehm, and those two representatives come to St. George's School, Clarens, on Monday, August 21st this year, they will be welcomed as visitors and given a full share in our proceedings.

4. I also asked whether it might not be possible for one or two younger men to come as members of our Youth Group, and I suggested your consulting with the Rev. Oliver Tomkins on this subject. We welcome as visitors to our meeting whatever persons are nominated to us by Oliver Tomkins, and therefore we should welcome any of your representatives whom he included in his list.

5. We then discussed the question of finance, and you put before me the difficulty your countrymen have in obtaining foreign currency. I said that if one or two visitors representing the Confessional Church, and one or two members of the Youth Group, could get as far as Montreux station, we would be responsible for their hospitality during the period of the meeting.

6. I then pointed out that in the next few years I expect the main work of the Movement to be done by the Commissions, and expressed the hope that we should be able to have the collaboration of members of the Confessional Church in that work.

I think this covers the ground of our discussion yesterday, and I hope that it gives a satisfactory answer to the questions you raised.

Yours sincerely,

Leonard Hodgson

copies to: Archbishop of York, Temple^[6]
 Dr. Böhm 13.5.39
 Bishop of Chichester^[7] 23.5.39
 Schönfeld^[8] 25.6.39

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[5.] Hans Böhm.

[6.] William Temple.

[7.] George Bell.

[8.] Hans Schönfeld.

84. To His Parents^[1]

April 8, 1939

My dear Parents,

164 It has now worked out so that I can celebrate Easter^[2] with the family,^[3] and I'm very happy about it. Toward the end of next week, I will come visit you again. If you are not in Berlin, I would also be happy to come somewhere else for several days if I know where you are going. I would actually enjoy having a few very quiet days, since it has been quite nice here but not particularly quiet. I was practically always on the move, and my hosts never go to bed before 1:30 a.m. There is much to tell, including all kinds of nice news.

Very much wishing you a few quiet days, your grateful
Dietrich

85. To George Bell^[1]

13th April 1939

My dear Lordbishop,

before returning to Germany I just wish to thank you once again for the great help you gave me in our talk at Chichester. I do not know what will be the outcome of it all, but it means much to me to realize that you see the great conscientious difficulties with which we are faced.^[2] I will let you know as soon as I see the situation clearly. Thank you for all sympathy for our cause.

In sincere gratitude I remain, my Lordbishop, Yours ever
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

[1.] *NL*, A 44, 1 (20); handwritten postcard, from London; previously unpublished.

[2.] April 9–10, 1939.

[3.] [The Leibholzes in London.—VB]

[1.] *LPL*, BP 42:64; handwritten; from London. Cf. *NL*, A 42,1 (29); later typewritten copy. Previously published in *GS* 1:286. On the matter discussed here, see Bell, "Die Kirche und die Widerstandsbewegung," in *Evangelische Theologie* 17 (1957), 289–305. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

[2.] Regarding the problem of conscientious objection, see Bonhoeffer's March 25, 1939, letter to Bell, 1/82.

86. To His Parents^[1]

April 13, 1939

My dear Parents,

I just wanted to send you one more greeting before my departure. In the meantime, here the most glorious spring has arrived, and we are often in the garden. Easter was quite lovely. The children were very lively and happy. Essentially, the main question that has postponed my departure somewhat is whether I should still wait for Uncle Rudi^[2] here. If, however, I don't hear anything more from him, I will leave here on Saturday or Monday^[3] at the latest. Where will I meet you? Aren't you going off again for a few days? Will you write this to Sabine? Until we meet again safely!

Your grateful
Dietrich

Perhaps I must go to Niebuhr already in June.^[4] If this only works?!

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87. Reinhold Niebuhr to Henry Smith Leiper^[1]

May 1

Dear Henry:

Sometime ago I wrote Roland Elliot and asked him to transmit the letter to you. It concerned Dr. Dietrich Bonhoeffer whom you know. My letter to Elliot wandered about and finally reached him over here in England. The proposition I wrote him about was this: Bonhoeffer is due for military service in July and will refuse to serve. The Bruederrat of the Confessional Church would like to have

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (21); handwritten; from London. Partially reproduced in *GS* 2:348 and *GS* 6:455.

[2.] This was the code word in letters to family and friends for the impending war and the status of Hitler's preparations for it (see *DB-ER*, 626); here the reference is to the international political tensions following the invasion of Czechoslovakia by German troops on March 15–16, 1939, and the British-French statement that followed, on March 31, 1939, regarding a guarantee for Poland's borders.

[3.] April 15 or April 17, 1939; Bonhoeffer left for Berlin on April 18 (*DB-ER*, 648).

[4.] This refers to Bonhoeffer's invitation to the United States, through Reinhold Niebuhr's mediation. See the formal invitation of May 10–11, 1939, from Henry S. Leiper, 1/89 and 1/90.

[1.] *NL*, A 50,2 (2); later typewritten copy; return address: "45, Dick Place, Edinburgh, 9, Tel. 44086." Previously published in *GS* 1:287–88. Niebuhr was in Edinburgh delivering the 1939 Gifford Lectures. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

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him evade the issue and at the same time tell American Christians about their situation. To get him out they need rather formal and formidable invitations from America. I suggested in this letter that the Student movement might use him in their June conferences and that afterward you might get him some engagements at church conferences and church camps during the summer. In the fall I would secure university engagements for him.

He speaks English so well and embodies the spirit of the struggle over there so well in his person that I believe his coming would be valuable for our sake as well as for his. I have also written to Dr. Coffin^[2] asking him to send a formidable invitation for a lecture at Union Seminary.

Much time has been lost because of the loss of my letter. Perhaps by this time the student people have gotten in touch with you. Today I received word from Bonhoeffer^[3] saying that time was short. If he is to make necessary arrangements he ought to have a cable as well as a confirming letter. If you think well of the idea of inviting him would you send him a cable if this has not been done. I shall provide a room for him at the seminary and I think nominal fees will take care of the rest.

Yours cordially,
R. Niebuhr

88. To His Parents^[1]

May 4, 1939

My dear Parents,

I have received the invitation. Actually, I am awaiting yet another one for an earlier date, although the date as such is not at all disagreeable for me. But vacation^[2] is not yet here! Block thought that v. K. should have passed the application on.^[3] Does it make sense for me to write again after fourteen days have passed (on Monday), or could you, dear Papa, make inquiries for

[2.] Henry Sloane Coffin, at that time president of Union Theological Seminary in New York.

[3.] Letter not extant.

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (22); handwritten postcard; from Sigurdshof. Partially reproduced in *GS*2:348.

[2.] Bonhoeffer had applied for a leave of absence and a statement [from the Schlawe military enlistment office—VB] certifying that there were no reservations against his spending a year in the United States. See *DB-ER*, 634. [See also 1/92, ed. note 3.—VB]

[3.] The references are to Superintendent Eduard Block and Major Dieter von Kleist at the district military enlistment office, both in Schlawe.

me in writing? I would prefer for the time being not to go there in person. That is not helpful. So everything is still uncertain. Today I am in the new house.^[4] Everything is very small and primitive, but wonderfully quiet up to now, and the setting is very beautiful.

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Warm greetings to you from your grateful
Dietrich

89. From Henry Smith Leiper^[1]

May 10, 1939

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Marienburger Allee 43, Berlin

Central Bureau Interchurch Aid urgently requests your coming New York immediately at latest by midjune to accept important combination Post theological Lectureship and Church Work at Summer Conferences and Universities.

Leiper

90. From Henry Smith Leiper^[1]

May 11, 1939

My dear Dr. Bonhoeffer:

It is my pleasure to transmit to you herewith formal invitation for you to come at once to America to undertake an important piece of service for the churches in the New York area under the general auspices of the Central Bureau of Interchurch Aid and Union Theological Seminary.

The nature of your duties would be a combination of pastoral service, preaching and lecturing in the theological summer school at Columbia and Union Seminary, to begin with, and later in the Seminary in the usual term.

[4.] The collective pastorate in Schlawe had moved into the forester's lodge in Sigurdshof because Erwin Schutz, who had the pastorate in Groß-Schlönwitz, needed the parsonage for himself and his family. See Bethge and Gremmels, *Life in Pictures*, centenary ed., 113.

[1.] *NL*, A 50,2 (3); telegram from New York. Previously published in *GS* 2:349. [Document is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

[1.] *NL*, A 50,2 (3); later typewritten copy; from New York. Previously published in *GS* 1:288. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

168 The term of service is not now fixed although we hope that it can be a permanent thing, and expect that it will occupy you for at least the next two or three years.

The Committee has thought it best not to enter into matters such as salary and other details, but can assure you that we are prepared to meet your reasonable request with respect to salary basis and other terms of service.

We should like to have you come, if possible, to begin service by the middle of June, which will mean your reaching this country at the earliest possible date for consultation and general preparation.

Dr. Samuel McCrea Cavert and Dean Henry P. Van Dusen are associated with me in this request and share with me the very great personal hope that you will find it possible to accept and to come in the very near future, as indicated above.

Henry Smith Leiper

copies to Dr. Van Dusen and Dr. Cavert

91. Reinhold Niebuhr to Paul Lehmann^[1]

May 11

Dear Paul:

I have finished eight of my ten lectures^[2] here and have done as well as could be expected I suppose. Had a good audience all through but don't know much about how my stuff has been received.

169 I will not bother you with personal news however. My concern is in regard to Bonhoeffer. He came to see me shortly upon our arrival^[3] and is anxious to come to America to evade for the time being a call to the colours. I secured an invitation for him for the Union Seminary summer school and also asked the Federal Council to arrange for meetings in church camps etc.^[4] He would like to stay through the fall and lecture in colleges and seminaries. As I will not be back until November I am wondering whether you would be willing to constitute a committee with me, call me the chairman and yourself the secretary and send out a mimeographed letter offering Bonhoeffer's services to colleges

[1.] *NL*, A 50,2 (4); carbon copy (without signature); from Edinburgh. Previously published in *GS* 2:349–50. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

[2.] In 1939 Niebuhr held the Gifford Lectures in Edinburgh, titled "The Nature and Destiny of Man," which was published in 1941.

[3.] Bonhoeffer met Niebuhr in Sussex on April 3, 1939, during his visit to England. See Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr*, 187–88, and *DB-ER*, 639.

[4.] Cf. Niebuhr's May 1, 1939, letter to Henry S. Leiper, 1/87.

and universities. Ask them for a nominal fee of \$25 to \$50 for his services. You could have him give you topics and a description of his activities in behalf of the confessional synod.

I don't like to through^[5] this work on you but I think you could do it best. Be sure and hire stenographers for the job and let me have the bill. Bonhoeffers present address is Marienburger Allee 43 Berlin-Charlottenburg 9. Don't write him too much but if you are willing to do this just tell him that you will get in touch with him as soon as he arrives at Union to work out plans which I have suggested. There will be some difficulty in getting him out and if he fails he will land in prison. He has done a great work for the church.

Edinburgh has been very kind to us and we have little time to ourselves. I am staying till May 23d and then will go to Oxford. After June 13 you can reach me at The Moat House, Wivelsfield, Sussex.

Love from all of us. Yours

[Reinhold Niebuhr]

92. To His Parents^[1]

Saturday evening. Köslin

My dear Parents,

I just received the summons for the physical for military service from the mayor for May 22. This has nothing to do per se with my application for vacation. The mayor's office handles the conscriptions simply according to the lists. Nonetheless, the matter of the permission for vacation is now urgent. Since I will not get to Schlawe during the next five days and (after consultation here) would rather not go there personally unless there is an emergency, I wanted to ask you, dear Papa, whether you could perhaps inquire of Major von Kleist per letter or, which might be even more effective, on the telephone, how the matter stands. I happen to be at present on the road and am urgently awaiting the decision, since I want to travel as soon as possible. The application was sent on April 23 and contained a request for vacation from May 1, 1939, to May 1, 1940. The recommendations were in a private communication to v. K.,^[2] and perhaps they have not been passed on to the other offices. The mail and telephone address is:

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[5.] Should be "throw."

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (23); handwritten; undated, but probably May 13, 1939. Previously published in *GS* 6:455–56.

[2.] Major Dieter von Kleist.

Schlawe, Enlistment Office, Major von Kleist. Kleist can surely be reached on Monday morning. I would be very grateful to you if you could find some way to bring the matter forward.^[3] If the suggestion doesn't seem good to you, please write to my Schlawe address; I must then see how I can get to it. If the permission comes in the meantime, will the arrangement in the telegram remain?—I have written Gert^[4] and Niebuhr.^[5]

Many thanks and many greetings from your

Dietrich

93. To the Finkenwalde Brothers^[1]

Personal letter!

Dear Brothers,

171 Since the last time I wrote,^[2] much has become better and clearer. In addition to the pain that several brothers have abandoned our cause, God has nonetheless also given the joy that after a long period we stand again in clear and firm community with [\[171\]](#) those who are committed to the same cause. The past months have been salutary for us all.^[3] When have we been able to be more certain than today that we have been held in God's church by God's grace? Let us thank God for that. It has become evident again in these decisive weeks that the possibility for discussion ends at a certain

[3.] Karl Bonhoeffer's intervention and that of Ruth von Kleist-Retzow were successful. The Schlawe military enlistment office withdrew the summons and immediately issued the certificate [declaring that there were no reasons why he might not travel—VB] approving Bonhoeffer's submitted application for vacation. The road to travel abroad was clear (cf. *DB-ER*, 633–35). [The process of Bonhoeffer's conscription resumed in spring 1940, and he was declared "fit for wartime service" in June 1940; at that point the efforts to have him declared "indispensable" for the military intelligence by Dohnanyi and others intensified (cf. *DBWE* 16:400–401). This was then one of the official charges against him after his arrest. Cf. *DBWE* 16:50–51, as well as the 1943 indictment against him for evading military service (*DBWE* 16, 1/230.2, p. 437).—VB]

[4.] Gerhard Leibholz; letter not extant.

[5.] Reinhold Niebuhr; letter not extant.

[1.] *NL*, A 48,3 (8); typewritten hectograph with handwritten initials of Eberhard Bethge; no return address, probably from Sigurdshof; undated, but certainly end of May 1939. Previously published in *GS* 2:550–51.

[2.] See Bonhoeffer's February 14, 1939, letter to the Finkenwalde brothers, 1/75.

[3.] Following the German Christians' "Godesberg Declaration" of April 4, 1939, and the founding of the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on

point. In the back and forth of the arguments, we would have become almost worn down. We have been preserved from this. Now everyone stands and falls before his own lord.^[4] But now we can also return to work in full force, and that is the most important thing. The tasks are immeasurably great, and the field is truly ripe. Gather with new courage the Christians around the Word and the sacrament! Use the time that is still given to us! Do not cease to carry the Word and prayer into the homes! Christ is back on the scene with all his promises. Let them be fulfilled in your church-communities through CHRIST. Let us continue to pray for one another, that our work be protected and blessed, that we ourselves grow in every way into Jesus Christ, our Lord.^[5]

Our work goes on. I will now travel for several months to the seminary where I formerly studied for one year.^[6] After that, I will return to this same work. But Eberhard and Fritz will take care of the meditation texts and all that is most necessary.^[7]

God bless you, your work and your homes. Your devoted D. B.
For Dietrich B: Eb.^[8]

Meditation texts:

June 11–June 17:	John 16:16–33
June 18–June 24:	John 17:1–13
June 25–July 1:	John 17:14–26

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German Church Life in the Wartburg [the castle overlooking the city of Eisenach where Luther stayed following his excommunication; it is where he translated the Bible into German—VB] on May 6, 1939, there were theological and church-political quarrels, culminating in the “Exaudi synod” of the Confessing Church in the Old Prussian Union on May 20–22, 1939, in Berlin-Steglitz, where these measures were decisively rejected. See Niesel, *Um Verkündigung und Ordnung der Kirche*, 77–80; cf. Beckmann, *Kirchliches Jahrbuch 1933–1944*, 284–89, and Niesel, *Kirche unter dem Wort*, 199–203. [The German Christian “Godesberg Declaration” completely denied any relationship between Judaism and Christianity and called for a thorough revision of all texts and liturgies to eliminate all such references; this led to the establishment of the institute. See also Susannah Heschel’s study of the institute, *Aryan Jesus*.—VB]

[4.] Cf. Rom. 14:4.

[5.] Cf. Eph. 4:15.

[6.] Union Theological Seminary, New York.

[7.] Fritz Onnasch.

[8.] Eberhard Bethge.

Cantica minora ecclesiae:^[9]

July 2–July 8: Exod. 15:1–18

July 9–July 15: Deut. 32:1–14

July 16–July 22: Deut. 32:15–47

July 23–July 29: 1 Sam. 2:1–10

July 30–August 5: Isa. 12

August 6–August 12: Isa. 38:9–20

August 13–August 19: Hab. 3

(after this probably the Letter to the Hebrews)

94. To Master Builder [Baumeister] Korporal^[1]

P. Bonhoeffer
Schlawe, Koppelstr. 9
May 22, 1939

Dear Master Builder Korporal:

173 Permit me, as the teacher of your son for the time being, to direct a request to you. However differently we may think about the present church situation, we do share one thing, don't we, namely, the wish, indeed the prayer to God, that your son will become a faithful and joyful witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Your son stands in a firm community of brothers who stand up for one another; he is glad and certain of his cause; he has an abundance of work before him; he is a clear and independent-thinking theologian whom we regard highly—let us allow him to travel fully the path along which God is leading him and let us be careful [not] to take away from him the inner certainty of his ministry! Given the way your son thinks, he must not follow any other path without offending his conscience. We will stand by his side. Furthermore, the path to the consistory today is more a path of even greater uncertainty than the path of the Council of Brethren. Everything at this

[9.] "The little songs of the church." Over the course of the Middle Ages, there was a liturgical development in which a series of seven (or eight) Old Testament chants (*cantica minora*) was established, which like the three New Testament chants (*cantica majora*) were regularly sung in addition to the book of 150 psalms.

[1.] *NL*, A 45 (65); handwritten. Previously published in *GS* 6:444–45. A builder, Korporal was the father of Hinrich Korporal, a member of the collective pastorate in Sigurdshof. Korporal had pressed his son to leave Sigurdshof in the summer of 1939 and place himself under the Magdeburg consistory [i.e., to become legalized—VB] .

time indicates that the consistories will collapse faster than the Council of Brethren. Who of us wants to risk forcing another person onto a path that he himself cannot survey.

I commend the matter to God, the Lord. God will make everything good,^[2] and God alone.

With respectful greetings your
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

95. Henry Smith Leiper to Reinhold Niebuhr^[1]

May 22, 1939

Dear Reinie:

I acted at once upon receipt of your letter about Dietrich Bonhoeffer,^[2] and was able to cable him a genuine offer of a job with the American Committee for Christian German Refugees in the City of New York,^[3] where we hope very much to be able to finance a pastoral service for Germans living here which Bonhoeffer could render superbly. I know him well and am keen about him. I shall certainly be glad to do anything I can to help him.

I hope you are having a good time and that I shall see you soon. Yours fraternally

Henry Smith Leiper

Copies to Van Dusen and Cavert

[2.] Cf. Ps. 37:5.

[1.] *NL*, A 50,2 (5); later typewritten copy; from New York. Previously published in *GS* 2:350. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

[2.] See Niebuhr's May 1, 1939, letter to Leiper, 1/87.

[3.] See Leiper's May 11, 1939, letter to Bonhoeffer, 1/90:000. [For a more detailed study of this committee and the U.S. churches' involvement in refugee work, see Genizi, *American Apathy*, and Nawyn, *American Protestantism's Response to Germany's Jews and Refugees, 1933–1941*.—VB]

174 **96. To Ursula Schleicher**^[1]

May 23, 1939

Dear Ursel,

In the haste of events I have not even congratulated you on your birthday. ^[2] But hopefully Mama placed the Vials wine^[3] on your birthday table to strengthen you in these rather too turbulent days. Now one more suggestion: wouldn't you find it pleasant if we could take a day trip on Whitmonday early at 8:00 a.m. to Wiesenburg or somewhere else, with three or four cars (the two Fords, ours and Walter's);^[4] everyone could be seated in them, and it would surely be quite lovely. In that case I would come already on Sunday evening. Please talk it over and let me know soon, so that I can arrange my plans accordingly. Address is E. Bethge, Sigurdshof via Zollbrück, Schlawe District.

All the best for the new year of your life. Cordial greetings your
Dietrich

97. From Paul Lehmann^[1]

May 27, 1939

Dear Dietrich:

The word that you have been invited to lecture in the summer session of Union Theological Seminary, New York, encourages me to make this urgent request of you. Will you not be good enough to consent and make all possible arrangements accordingly to lecture in the department of Religion here at the college during the forthcoming academic year, 1939–1940? It has long been a concern of mine that your approach to the problems of philosophy and theology should be
175 heard by my students here and by others. Accordingly, I am venturing to plan on your coming and to make arrangements for similar lectures on other campuses of my acquaintance. I am sure you will be eagerly received.

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (24); handwritten; no return address, probably from Sigurdshof; previously unpublished.

[2.] His sister Ursula's birthday was May 21.

[3.] Vial's tonic wine, used to stimulate the appetite and gastric juices [containing bitters, it was also said to be good for the heart—VB].

[4.] Walter Dre .

[1.] *NL*, A 50,2 (6); typewritten; return address "Elmhurst College, Elmhurst, Illinois, Department of Religion. Previously published in *GS* 1:289. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

More precise details can be agreed upon while you are in residence at Union Seminary. Meanwhile, I shall look forward to your arrival there. Ever sincerely yours,

Paul^[2]

Paul L. Lehmann, Th. D.
Professor of Religion

98. Arrangements for Delegation of Work [Übergaberegungen] before Departure for the United States

98.1. Appointment of the Executor of Bonhoeffer's Estate^[1]

May 27, 1939

Herewith I declare that Pastor Eberhard Bethge, presently living at Sigurdshof via Zollbrück, Schlawe district, has full right of disposal over my entire possessions.

Lic. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Pastor
Schlawe in Pomerania, Koppelstrasse 9.

98.2. Directions for the Successor^[2]

May 28, 1939

To my successor

He will find

1. one of the most gratifying tasks in the CC;
2. two coworkers^[3] who have stood in this work for over four years and who have borne full responsibility for the leadership of the houses^[4] for one and a half years, to whom therefore the leadership of the communal life can be entrusted, whenever he himself is not able to be there;

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[2.] Handwritten.

[1.] *NL*, A 82,18; handwritten card; previously unpublished.

[2.] *NL*, A 82,19; handwritten card. Previously published in *GS* 2:551–52. Wilhelm Niessel, the member of the Old Prussian Union Church Council of Brethren in charge of theological training, asked Gerhard Ebeling, among others, to serve as Bonhoeffer's substitute during the period of Bonhoeffer's stay in the United States. Eberling had to refuse for personal and professional reasons (letter from Gerhard Ebeling to the German editor, December 5, 1993). During the period of Bonhoeffer's absence, Hellmut Traub was called as "acting director" of the collective pastorates.

[3.] Eberhard Bethge and Fritz Onnasch.

[4.] [I.e., the pastorates.—VB]

3. a work that has been started: *NT*: concept of ἀμαρτία,^[5] soteriological concepts are to follow. *Dogmatics*: the Formula of Concord up to *de libero arbitrio*.^[6] It will be necessary to continue the work on dogmatics. There is more freedom in the *NT*. Discussions of sermons in Köslin, several lectures on homiletics in both places.

It is requested:

1. In addition to *NT* and dogmatics to hold discussions on pastoral counseling, on catechetics with written drafts for catechesis in Sigurdshof, on sermons in Köslin;

2. Furthermore, to take walks or otherwise spend as much time as possible together with the brothers.

With sincere thanks and in faithful remembrance
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

98.3. Transfer of Motorcycle Title^[7]

May 28, 1939

Herewith I certify that on this day my motorcycle DKW 200 ccm Nr. I. H.^[8] has been transferred to the possession of Pastor Eberhard Bethge, currently of Sigurdshof via Zollbrück.

Dr. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Pastor

177 99. From Ruth von Kleist-Retzow^[1]

Lasbeck, May 31, 1939

My dear Dietrich,

I don't want to let you go without saying a final greeting to you. My prayers will accompany you on your way and the joy will be very great when you return home. This certainty will always stand by you, when perhaps sometimes in foreign lands it does become very lonely.

[5.] "Sin."

[6.] The Formula of Concord up to the section "Concerning the Free Will" (*Book of Concord*, 486–543).

[7.] *NL*, A 82,20; handwritten card; previously unpublished.

[8.] ["DKW" was the abbreviation for a motorcycle manufactured during the 1920s and 1930s, nicknamed "Das kleine Wunder" (the little miracle).—VB]

[1.] *NL*, Anh. C 4; later typewritten copy; previously unpublished.

What you have meant to me is another story, but I believe you know that you have helped me on the path to God. That is what constitutes my special gratitude and my close attachment, something of value that will not die.

Greet Eberhard. The two of us will now become even closer to each other. I am very glad that he is there. (I wonder whether he has written his friend? It makes it more difficult for me to help when our friends are neglectful.)^[2]

God's blessing accompany you from morning till evening, and may what you do for God be returned to you. Someday too all our "whys" will be resolved.

Could you perhaps help our friend Go.?^[3] Most faithfully yours

R[uth] v[on] K[leist]-R[etzow]

100. Henry Smith Leiper to Samuel McCrea Cavert^[1]

May 31, 1939

Dear Sam:

I want to give you the following report concerning the arrangements which have been made under considerable pressure in connection with the Rev. Dietrich Bonhoeffer of Berlin who will arrive here on June 12.

Just after the meeting of the American Christian Committee where the presentation was made of the need for a pastor to work with refugees and help to find appropriate church homes for them, I had word from Reinhold Niebuhr in Edinburgh that Dietrich Bonhoeffer was slated to go to a concentration camp unless we could get him out of Germany. Niebuhr stated that he had agreed to let him have residence at his apartment temporarily and would undertake to arrange some lectures for him at Union Seminary and elsewhere.^[2] Knowing Bonhoeffer very well, I was struck with the peculiar fitness of the man for just the thing we had been discussing^[3] and immediately called up Dr. Paul Tillich

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[2.] The reference is to Major Dieter von Kleist at the military enlistment office in Schlawa, whom Ruth von Kleist had contacted on behalf of Bonhoeffer and Bethge, to prevent an immediate summons to the physical for military induction. Cf. *DB-ER*, 634. [See also 1/92, ed. note 3.—VB]

[3.] Helmut Gollwitzer. Regarding the tensions in the Berlin-Dahlem congregation over the successor to Martin Niemöller, who had been imprisoned in July 1937, see Bonhoeffer's September 23, 1938, letter to Ottonie Blanck, 1/161, ed. note 6.

[1.] *NL*, A 50,2 (7); later typewritten copy; return address "Dr. Samuel McCrea Cavert, 297 Fourth Avenue, New York City." Previously published in *GS* 1:289-90. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

[2.] Cf. Niebuhr's May 1, 1939, letter to Leiper, 1/87.

[3.] [I.e., someone to work with refugees from Nazi Germany.—VB]

who had been appointed with me as a committee to find a man. Tillich was even more enthusiastic about Bonhoeffer than I and stated his conviction that he was exactly the right person for this delicate and difficult task.

Bonhoeffer was an exchange at Union Theological Seminary, then pastor of an Evangelical German Church in London, and latterly the director of one of the “peripatetic” theological schools of the confessional wing of the Evangelical Church in Germany. His knowledge of English is excellent and he understands the situation in American churches from firsthand contact. His skill and aptitude in pastoral work are exceptional.

May I ask you to consult with the various church bodies in New York City, which as I recall had indicated an interest in seeing that some such service was provided for the German refugees. It is my hope that we can supplement the amount made available by the Refugee Committee—\$1,000—so as to underwrite a budget of about \$3,000, for this undertaking. Please let me know if I can supply further data.

Yours faithfully,
[Henry Smith Leiper]
Executive Secretary

101. From Eberhard Bethge^[1]

An initial greeting to you.

When I finally got together yesterday evening after all with Hans, Fritz and M.^[2] (Katja)^[3] at the cinema, I felt the “loneliness” after the film in the absence of the verdict of a conversation partner.

179 What a *fine* airplane you had. Now I’m leaving. Please say hello to L.^[4]
Your
Eberhard

[1.] *NL*, C 1; handwritten; no location, but surely from Berlin; back of a postcard from Paula Bonhoeffer to Dietrich, written after Bonhoeffer’s departure from London on June 2, 1939; previously unpublished. See *DB-ER*, 649.

[2.] Hans Bethge, Fritz Onnasch, and Margret Bethge.

[3.] *Katja, the Uncrowned Empress*, a 1938 French film directed by Maurice Tourneur, which was showing in a German version in summer 1939 in the theaters.

[4.] The Leibholz family in London.

102. To His Parents^[1]

My dear Parents,

This card has just been handed to me and I can send it off unstamped. We are just landing in Amsterdam. The flight was *very* good. In my thoughts I am entirely with you, my brothers and sisters and friends. Greet them all!

Your grateful
Dietrich

103. To Eberhard Bethge^[1]

June 4, 1939

Dear Eberhard,

Now we are flying over the Channel with a wonderful glowing sunset. It is 10:00 p.m. and still very light. I am doing well. You all will now be sleepy and heading to bed. I thank you for everything. It was very good that you were there. Greet Fritz!^[2] and thank him too. My thoughts are between you and the future. Take care of yourself. Greet all the brothers. They are now holding the evening service! God with you all! Will you perhaps have this card tomorrow morning?

Your faithful
Dietrich

104. To Eberhard Bethge^[1]

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Dear Eberhard,

Many thanks for the first short greeting.^[2] How nice that you could celebrate the departure with a movie. Today in the city I often thought of our days here together, National Gallery, portraiture, etc.^[3] The Daily Texts

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (25); handwritten postcard; KLM [the Dutch airline—VB] postcard stamped: Amsterdam-Schipol June 3, 1939. Partially reproduced in *GS* 6:456.

[1.] *NL*, A 44,2 (17); handwritten postcard; KLM postcard stamped Croydon, Surrey, June 4, 1939. Previously published in *GS* 1:291.

[2.] Fritz Onnasch.

[1.] *NL*, A 44,2 (18); handwritten postcard; postmarked Forest Hill [London] June 6, 1939. Previously published in *GS* 1:291.

[2.] See Bethge's June 1, 1939, card to Bonhoeffer, 1/101.

[3.] The reference is to their visit together to England in March–April 1939.

these days give me great pleasure, and I am happy to have them from you.^[4]
 A shame that I could not buy them for you. I have initiated the necessary
 steps for the invitation in the autumn.^[5] But you must still write me whether
 you would prefer to visit Sabine^[6] and me for a short period or Sabine for a
 longer period. Greet everyone! Always

Your faithful
 Dietrich

105. From George Bell^[1]

5.6.39

My dear Bonhoeffer,

I am most eager to see you. I telegraphed this morning, proposing I pm tomorrow (Tuesday) here. I am unhappily not in Town—we have a confirmation at night in the country. *Telephone* please, to say you can!

I am affectionately
 George Chichester

181 106. To George Bell^[1]

6.6.39.

My dear Lordbishop,

thank you once again for the talk this afternoon. I have thought the matter over on my way back and I feel the question of the German representative^[2] must be considered very carefully. I forgot to tell you, that Dr. Rieger^[3] is

[4.] [These would have been the Moravian Daily Texts. When possible, Bonhoeffer and Bethge gave each other copies, although as the following sentence suggests this wasn't possible in 1939 (see also 1/119). The copy Bonhoeffer took with him seems to have been Bethge's copy, which the two might have shared in the collective pastorate.—VB]

[5.] The reference is to plans for Bethge's possible emigration to England.

[6.] Sabine Leibholz.

[1.] *NL*, A 42, 2 (12); handwritten; from Chichester; previously unpublished. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

[1.] LPL, BP 21:9; handwritten; no return address, but surely from London; previously unpublished. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

[2.] [For the ecumenical movement.—VB] Cf. Bonhoeffer's March 1939 correspondence with Leonard Hodgson, 1/81 and 1/83.

[3.] Julius Rieger.

going to Germany next Monday. He would certainly be a good man for examining the situation and for having the necessary preliminary conversations. My personal view would be that Otto Dibelius would be the best person for such a delicate matter. He has a long experience in Church government and works closely together with the Brethren-Councils. Of course, he is not what we should call a Confessional Theologian in the strict sense. But perhaps this is not the most important thing for your purpose. Another man of a very balanced judgement and broadmindedness and a great ability for negotiations is Pastor Held-Essen,^[4] although I do not know if he has any ecumenic experience. Confidentially I should like to add that I should not approach Asmussen, Jacobi, v. Thadden^[5] if the whole matter is to be kept strictly confidential. Niesel^[6] would be a very good person for discussing the matter. Most important of all I should think it would be, if Visser 't Hooft could be on the meeting. He would be an invaluable help for any German representative. With regard to Rieger I have the impression that he is a clear and thoughtful man and he, of course, could do it in the less conspicuous way.

The whole matter seems to me of highest importance; but it will require much patience as far as the German situation is concerned.—

I should be very grateful to you, if you would send me a few introductions to New York, and even more, if you would, now and then, let me know any wishes you have with regard to the ecumenic situation in America. Unfortunately I forgot to discuss with you the American attitude to the refugee pastors.

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With kindest regards and many thanks I remain, my Lordbishop,
Yours ever
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

107. To Eberhard Bethge^[1]

Dear Eberhard,

Many thanks for your last letter,^[2] which greatly delighted me just as it was! In the course of today or tomorrow, I will write you a letter. With this card

[4.] Heinrich Held.

[5.] Hans Asmussen, Gerhard Jacobi, and Reinold von Thadden.

[6.] Wilhelm Niesel.

[1.] *NL*, A 44,2 (19); handwritten postcard; postmarked "German-American Sea, Bremen–New York, 7.6.1939. Aboard the 'Bremen.'" Previously published in *GS* 1:292.

[2.] Letter not extant.

I only want to send you a final faithful greeting, before we get out on the Atlantic and cannot send any more mail. We just departed from Southampton and will land in a few hours in Cherbourg. The cabin is very roomy, and otherwise, too, there is a wonderful amount of room on the ship. The weather is glorious, and the sea utterly still. So we are able to eat lunch without danger. Now five quiet days lie before me, in which I will be thinking very much of you and all of you. Until now I am still surprised that all this has come about. I am already looking forward to when you come for a visit! I saw Uncle George, Julius,^[3] and set everything up for autumn.^[4] I hope it works out. Sabine^[5] sends cordial greetings and remembers our visit together with pleasure. I wish you all a joyful and blessed work. May God protect you and everyone, and give you joy! In brotherly devotion I greet you and everyone

your
Dietrich

183 **108. To Fritz Onnasch^[1]**

Dear Fritz,

The long voyage is coming to an end. In a few hours we will be on land. Now my thoughts must once again go forward, after they were more with all of you during the quiet days on the ocean. Now I eagerly await the first news from you all. During these days I have done much reading and enjoyed that greatly. I would rather have shared the substantial meals with you all. It is too boring alone. Otherwise one could swim, play ping-pong etc. etc., but what is all that without all of you?—I thank you that you were in Berlin.^[2] I enjoy remembering it. Greetings to the whole house, parents, and brothers.

Warm and brotherly greetings to you from your faithful
Dietrich

[3.] George Bell and Julius Rieger.

[4.] A reference to the plans for Bethge's possible emigration to England or the United States; see Bonhoeffer's June 15, 1939, letter to Henry S. Leipziger, 1/111, ed. note 6.

[5.] Sabine Leibholz.

[1.] *NL*, A 45 (66); handwritten postcard; postmarked "German-American Sea, Bremen–New York, June 12, 1939. Aboard the 'Bremen.'" Previously published in *GS* 6:456–57.

[2.] For Bonhoeffer's departure from there; see 1/103.

109. From Eberhard Bethge^[1]

June 12, 1939

Dear Dietrich,

Today you will just have arrived.^[2] I am thinking about it a great deal and would greatly like to know how things go from here. Until you were on the open seas, you wrote me such a nice letter.^[3] I thank you very much for that; I was able to make others happy with it as well. Yesterday I saw Aunt Ruth and Fritz in St[ettin].^[4] For suddenly we both^[5] had to go to B[erlin], since it didn't work out with Eb.^[6] The two of us were even supposed to continue alone.^[7] There, however, I countered very energetically. And now we are waiting for confirmation from the person in Potsdam,^[8] whom you know well from the work at Aunt Ruth's.^[9] Through these uncertainties, of course, I have been rather consumed with work. Nonetheless, we just had our first tennis game, which goes very, very well indeed. If only you could be with us. You had hardly left when we saw three fat wild boars in the twilight on the bank of the Wipper—we felt somewhat funny. Shortly before, we had already bagged an over-one-half-meter-long adder, whose stripped skin now adorns the room. Well now tell me yourself, how should I decide? In view of the new conditions I will hardly be able to turn to W.^[10] with a request to make a longer excursion to Sabine in the fall.^[11] There was really now quite some complaining about personnel difficulties.^[12] One would perhaps profit more from visiting Sabine. While, of course, to visit you would bring more of a change of pace. I don't know at all what I should do. Yesterday I had intended to celebrate the Lord's Supper and had as the biblical text for Saturday from the

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[1.] *NL*, C 26; handwritten; no return address, but surely from Sigurdshof; previously unpublished.

[2.] Bonhoeffer's arrival on the *Bremen* in New York harbor.

[3.] See Bonhoeffer's June 7, 1939, postcard to Bethge, 1/107.

[4.] Ruth von Kleist-Retzow and Fritz Onnasch.

[5.] [I.e., Bethge and Onnasch.—VB]

[6.] Gerhard Ebeling, whom Wilhelm Niesel had asked to step in for Bonhoeffer as director of the collective pastorates; see Bonhoeffer's May 28, 1939, directions to his successor, 1/98.2, ed. note 2.

[7.] Bethge was to lead the collective pastorate at Sigurdshof, Onnasch the one in Köslin.

[8.] Hellmut Traub.

[9.] This is probably a reference to a January 1939 meeting of the theological society; see Schönherr's November 14, 1938, letter to several Finkenwalde brothers, 1/35.

[10.] Wilhelm Niesel.

[11.] To visit the Leibholz family in London with plans for possible emigration.

[12.] [This refers to Niesel's difficulty finding people to lead the collective pastorates.—VB]

med.^[13] John 16:8ff., and for Sunday I John 4:17a (from [the] epistle for Sunday). But now because of the citation,^[14] I had to let that drop. Next Sunday I will have the wedding. Dietrich, I did have some money from you in my account, which Sabine reminded me of again; didn't we purchase my briefcase and umbrella and so forth from that? Can't you give me greetings and addresses via Karl-Friedrich? I don't have them anymore; perhaps Sabine can give them? Tell me, do you think that Mrs. von Kleist should go once more to your brother-in-law? Recently it didn't seem to have helped much, or do you think this is useless.^[15] Do write her about this.

I was very happy that W.^[16] in Berlin yesterday spoke so nicely about reading *Life Together* ^[17] with great interest and growing pleasure. That does mean a lot, doesn't it? I read it now too and am very pleased that you left it behind for us and for me. Yesterday I found exactly what I had said to Korp.^[18] in a very extensive conversation the previous evening, without knowing that it was in there. That pleased me and strengthened me.

185 A letter arrived here from Professor Paul L. Lehmann, Elmhurst College, Elmhurst, Illinois; he would like you to give a lecture in winter.^[19] I wonder how you are doing now? I think of you devotedly your
Eberhard

I just wrote a long thank-you letter about all kinds of things to your parents.

110. Eberhard Bethge to Paula and Karl Bonhoeffer^[1]

Sigurdshof via Zollbrück/Pomerania, June 12, 1939

Esteemed, dear Mrs. Privy Councilor, honorable Privy Councilor,
I wish to take Dietrich's departure as the occasion to say my particular thanks to you for your hospitality and home, which you extended to me so often in your family.

[13.] The inserted list of Bonhoeffer's meditation texts from the circular letter.

[14.] Bethge had to travel to Wilhelm Niesel in Berlin to discuss Bonhoeffer's possible substitute; see ed. note 6.

[15.] This reference is unclear. [It may be an allusion to the tensions in the Dahlem congregation after Niemöller's arrest; Walter Dre , husband of Bonhoeffer's sister Susanne, was involved in these issues. See 1/99, ed. note 3, and 1/161, ed. note 6.—VB]

[16.] Wilhelm Niesel.

[17.] Bonhoeffer's book *Life Together*, which appeared in 1939 as *Theologische Existenz heute* 61.

[18.] Hinrich Korporal, who was facing the decision whether to leave the collective pastorate in Sigurdshof; see Bonhoeffer's May 22, 1939, letter to his father, 1/94.

[19.] See Lehmann's May 27, 1939, letter to Bonhoeffer, 1/97.

Aside from the friendship, Dietrich was my teacher as well. And I have learned a great deal from him both personally and for the ministry. With time and the frequent longer visits in his parental home, however, I realized how much of his teaching came from this home. Because I now owe you so much gratitude, I want to try to express some of it.

Esteemed Mrs. Privy Councilor, if one hardly ever encounters you unpreoccupied with the concerns of others, it may well be because one can come to you with any difficulty and any request, and in no case do you ever leave that person without advice or help. And you know how to offer this so naturally and also so appropriately that one almost has too little reluctance to approach you again and again with a request. Dietrich has preserved and used this legacy well in his work. I will not conceal that next to my admiration I have sometimes also expressed to Dietrich my wonder at how you can endure the constant mindfulness and advising in all the different directions in which you are in demand, by us and by others. And strangely, the demands placed on you by the number of your children and grandchildren seem to increase these energies instead of limiting them. Above all, I will not forget the experiences of the past half year.^[2]

Dietrich once told me that there was only one point in which you, esteemed Privy Councilor, have always been very stern and uncompromising in [your] children's upbringing, namely, when one of them pronounced general judgments on matters of which he or she understood nothing. Dietrich very helpfully passed on this demand for exactitude and differentiation when expressing oneself in the discipline one practices and made it important to us;^[3] but then he attempted at the same time to achieve a proper correlation between this uncompromising stance and a great goodness and broad-mindedness, to listen patiently to all the so clumsy but genuine troubles and thoughts. And in this practice he referred explicitly to his father.

But your home has become very important to me in one matter that may be particularly inaccessible to people of my age. Through our schooling we have acquired a mostly insufficient and badly influenced view of Prussian Germany before the war, whose substance of almost forgotten dutifulness, selflessness, and modesty supports us even today. I can now say that through your home I have won a truly decisive and committed perspective and clarity in this matter, for which I am and will remain particularly grateful.

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[1.] *NL*, C 26; handwritten; previously unpublished.

[2.] [When Bethge had stayed at the Bonhoeffer home in Berlin.—VB]

[3.] Cf. Bonhoeffer's later self-assessment in his April 22, 1944, letter to Bethge: "I don't think I have ever changed much, except perhaps at the time of my first impressions abroad, and under the first conscious influence of Papa's personality. It was then that a turning from the phraseological to the real ensued" (*DBWE* 8:358).

I know very well that for you, these things are as they are precisely through their self-evident nature, and that means through their unspoken nature; yet for once perhaps I may be permitted to express some of the various thoughts that came to my mind when Dietrich departed. And the awareness of gratitude includes a growing awareness of the gifts as well.

Now several days of your vacation have passed, and I hope very much that you have had a good trip. I was very sorry that the notification about the car didn't work out.^[4] I still don't know what the reason was. Onnasch received the letter only on Tuesday afternoon, then called me, and I in turn called around evening of the same day. I am now trusting that the large car doesn't let you down and makes traveling comfortable.

Yesterday I was in Berlin at the officials'. The replacement unfortunately is not working out in any way, and perhaps we will remain on our own for a while.^[5] That means a great burden. Dietrich in the meantime wrote several cards according to which he was doing well and everything was working out according to his wishes.

187 I wish you a good holiday and some rest after all the lively days. In great gratitude and sincere admiration, your devoted
Eberhard Bethge

111. To Henry Smith Leiper^[1]

15.6.1939

Dear Dr. Leiper,

I wish to thank you very much indeed for the reception you gave me on my arrival in New York. I felt quite at home when Mr. Macy^[2] gave me your kind letter and when I met you the next morning. It is a great thing to have good friends and fellow-Christians abroad.

These beautiful days at Dr. Coffin's^[3] country home are giving me some time to think about my future and I am sure you will understand that I should like to put the situation before you as I see it, and ask you advice.

[4.] [Paula and Karl Bonhoeffer had hoped the Bethge could drive them to their vacation place.—VB]

[5.] See Bethge's June 12, 1939, letter to Bonhoeffer, 1/109.

[1.] *NL*, A 50,2 (12); later typewritten copy; return address: "'Coomb-Pine,' Lakeville, Connecticut." Previously published in *GS* 1:316–19. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

[2.] Paul Macy; the letter mentioned is not extant.

[3.] Henry Sloane Coffin.

Before I left Germany I had long talks with my brethren from the Brethren-Council and pledged myself to return to Germany after about a year's time to take up the training work in the Confessional Church again, unless some unforeseen development would change the whole situation. At first they were very reluctant to let me go at all, since they are in need of teachers. It was only when I expressed my hopes that I could be of some use to them by establishing contacts with American theologians and churchmen through lectures or meetings, that they gave me leave. So from the point of view of the Confessional Church my trip to America was meant to be an ecumenic link between our isolated church in Germany and our friends over here. We all felt that to be very essential from many points of view. My personal question and difficulty with regard to military service etc. came in only as a second consideration. Of course, my colleagues were glad, that I would be able to postpone my decision for at least one year. Now, I am sure, all that could not be made quite clear in correspondence before I left Germany. But before we are going to work out my programme for the next time, however long it might be, I feel strongly, that everything ought to be quite clear between us. I deeply appreciate, and so did my friends, your readiness to invite me to come to this country and I am most happy indeed to be here again and to meet old friends. There are, however, a few questions which we have to clear up before I start my work over here and I wish, you would help me to do the right thing. The post which you are kindly intending to confer upon me attracts me from every point of view. I feel strongly the necessity of that spiritual help for our refugees. When I was pastor in London I spent most of my time with these people^[4] and I felt it was a great privilege to do so. At the same time that post would offer me an unusual opportunity for getting acquainted with the life of the church in this country, which has been one of my greatest hopes for my stay over here. The only thing that makes me hesitate at the present moment of decision is the question of loyalty to my people at home. All of us, of course, were well aware of the fact that it means running a risk for a confessional pastor to go to America with the intention to go back to Germany, and we all agreed that I should take that risk and pay the price for it, if necessary, if it is of a true value to the Church of Christ there and here. But, of course, I must not for the sake of loyalty to the Confessional Church accept a post which on principle would make my return to Germany impossible. Now, my question is whether that would not be the case with any post that is officially concerned with refugee work? As a matter of fact, I am afraid, it would be so. Now, if that is true,

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[4.] Regarding the refugee work in the German congregations in London, see *DB-ER*, 413–15, and *DBWE* 13, esp. 279–81 and 286–89.

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what can we do about it? Is there a possibility of giving that post a somewhat larger scope? I have no particular idea, but if, for instance, it were possible to interpret that post as a sort of invitation, as a “guest-post” from the Federation of Churches as to enable me to get acquainted with the church activities in New York and to cooperate in some respect (whereby, of course, some of that pastoral work of which you have been thinking might be conferred upon me on the respective occasions), I think, that would change the matter a good deal. But, of course, I have no idea under what heading such a thing could be done. This is the first point, which I should very much like to have your advice on.

Secondly, when R. Niebuhr wrote to me first in February^[5] he was hoping to provide a few lectureships for me all over the country, so as to give me an opportunity of seeing a good deal of the theological schools and of getting in contact with the professors of Theology. That, of course, would be very much in the line of my work in Germany and I should be greatly interested to do that sort of work. Now, would you suppose, that the post in New York would leave the necessary time to do some investigation and some visiting of that sort?

Finally, let me add a very personal remark. My best friend in Germany,^[6] a young confessional pastor, who has been working with me for many years, will be in the same conflict with regard to military service etc. at the latest by next spring, possibly in the fall of this year. I feel it would be an utmost disloyalty to leave him alone in Germany when the conflict comes up for him. I should either have to go back to stand by him and to act with him or to get him out and to share my living with him, whatever it be, though I do not know if he would be willing to leave Germany. That is a last personal, but not only personal reason, why I feel bound to keep my way-back open. I am sure, you will appreciate that this is a duty of “Bruderschaft”^[7] which in these times one just has to fulfill.

Now I have put my case before you. I know, I am causing you a lot of trouble with all that. But you know us Germans and that we are sometimes a little complicated, and more than that, you know the Confessional Church and its needs. I need not assure you again how grateful I am for all that you have been doing for our cause and for me personally. It is just therefore that I feel you must know my whole case before you go on with me. If you should

[5.] Letter not extant; see, however, Niebuhr’s May 11, 1939, letter to Paul Lehmann, 1/91.

[6.] Eberhard Bethge.

[7.] [“Brotherhood.”—VB]

think it impossible to find the right post for me, after you have heard all that, please feel entirely free to tell me and then we should try to make the best of the next few months and I should return to Germany, certainly very gratefully for all the friendship I have experienced over here again, in the later part of the fall. My friends at home would only be too glad, if I came back a little earlier than they expected. But if you would see a way through all these difficulties, then I shall stay here with great pleasure, interest and gratefulness.

I am going to Eaglesmere for Saturday. I am looking forward to seeing you next week. The "prophet chamber" at Union^[8] is lovely and I am enjoying Union a lot.

With many thanks for everything, I remain yours ever
[Dietrich Bonhoeffer]

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112. Henry Smith Leiper to Samuel McCrea Cavert^[1]

June 15, 1939

I am attaching hereto a copy of my letter of Bonhoeffer under date of May 11th,^[2] which was the basis of his coming here.

I have not yet had any opportunity for a real conference with him, and when I tried to introduce him to you, I found you were out of town. He is visiting Henry Coffin at the moment, but will be back next week when we must sit down with this matter and work it out. Pit Van Dusen^[3] who has had one talk with him seems to discover that he does not feel he can work with the refugees and safely go back to Germany, as he now expects to do. Of course, I thought he was coming to stay. He, apparently, is coming only on a visitor's visa and will be so hampered in his movements on that account that I seriously question whether he can do the thing we had hoped to have him do.

[8.] The guest room at Union Theological Seminary (cf. *DB-ER*, 652).

[1.] *NL*, A 50,2 (11); typewritten carbon copy. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB] Previously published in *GS*2:351. Regarding Leiper's June 15, 1939, letter to Henry P. Van Dusen, see *NL*, A 50,2 (9). [Leiper's letter to Van Dusen is a brief cover letter that reads in its entirety: "I enclose a copy of my correspondence with Bonhoeffer in which I associated Cavert and yourself with myself because of what I understood from Reinhold Niebuhr was the nature of the situation. I thought you might have this on file in the light of our conversation by telephone and the necessity of working out the future for Bonhoeffer. Yours ever, Executive Secretary HSL."—VB]

[2.] See Leiper's May 11, 1939, letter to Bonhoeffer, 1/90.

[3.] Henry P. Van Dusen.

We must talk it over at the earliest possible date which I suppose would be Tuesday, when I get back, if you are here then.

[Henry S. Leiper]

191 **113. From John Baillie**^[1]

15 June 1939

My dear Dr. Bonhoeffer,

I am one of the trustees of the Croall Lectureship Trust, and I am writing to you to ask you whether you would be prepared to accept nomination as a lecturer during next winter. The duties of the lecturer are simply to deliver about six lectures on a theological subject of his own choosing, but the lectures must be published afterwards in book form. The lectures could all be given within two weeks, or could be spread over a longer period.

The fee offered would be 200 guineas (210 pounds), of which 150 guineas would be paid immediately on delivering of the lectures, and the remaining 50 guineas when the book was published.

Some suitable dates, perhaps some time between October of this year and March of next might be arranged between the lecturer and the trustees.

This letter is merely a preliminary enquiry, but if you write me indicating that you would be disposed to accept, I think the trustees will agree to invite you.

I have talked the matter over at some length with Professor Niebuhr, and he knows that I am writing you.

I shall write no more at present, but shall await an answer from you. I was most interested in all Professor Niebuhr had to tell me about you.

My wife and Jan send their warmest greetings, and so do I. Yours most sincerely,

John Baillie

[1.] *NL*, A 50,2 (10): handwritten; return address "9 Whitehouse Terrace, Edinburgh." Partially reproduced in *GS* 2:361–62. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

113a. From Max-Peter Meyer^[1]

Max-Peter Meyer (of Oberammergau)

c/o Mr. G. Henne

10 Inglemere Road

Forest Hill

London SE 23

Registered with the

“Catholic Committee for Refugees from Germany”

Father Ostermann^[2]

(case worker: Mr. Deechy)

123 Second Street

N[ew York] City

[1.] Lehmann Papers, Archive of the Library of Princeton Theological Seminary, box 67, folder 38; typescript. First publication in *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Jahrbuch/Yearbook 2005/2006*, 97–101; editorial notes by Hans Pfeifer. [Meyer’s letter was discovered after the publication of *DBW 17*, which contains documents found after their respective volumes had already been published; discoveries after *DBW 17* are published in the *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Jahrbuch/Yearbook*. An additional letter from Meyer to Paul Lehmann, dated July 24, 1939, was also discovered but is not included in this volume. English translations of both letters by Reinhard Krauss first appeared in the *IBS Newsletter* no. 83, Fall 2003. Krauss’s translation has been revised somewhat here.—VB] Bonhoeffer passed this letter along to Paul Lehmann, and then as he passed through England on his return from New York informed Meyer of this. (Cf. Meyer’s letter of July 24 to Lehmann, Lehmann Papers, Archive of the Library of Princeton Theological Seminary, box 67, folder 38.) The actual letter to Bonhoeffer follows a summary of information about Meyer, which is also included in the text here. [The following information about Meyer comes from Clifford Green. Max-Peter Meyer was a composer, organist, and music teacher from Oberammergau, Bavaria (the village internationally famous for its controversial Passion play). Married to a Catholic, he was a Jewish convert to Catholicism, and as the sole Jew in the village, referred to as “Jud Meyer.” Under Nazi racial laws he was classified as a *Volljude* and thus hoped to emigrate to the United States. After being assaulted by young Nazis during *Kristallnacht*, he was imprisoned in Dachau and released after three weeks. He left Germany and received refuge in London from Gottlieb Henne, the president of St. Paul’s parish council during Bonhoeffer’s pastorate there. There he met Bonhoeffer, who was en route to New York. Bonhoeffer offered to help him, and so Meyer wrote him at Union giving details of his immigration application. Meyer’s story is discussed in James Shapiro’s book *Oberammergau*. Meyer apparently stayed in England during the war, returned to Oberammergau after 1945, and testified at the denazification trial of Alois Lang (who had played Jesus in the 1930 and 1934 productions), asserting that Lang had not been a Nazi (the court classified Lang, who had been a party member, as a “nominal” follower). More information is available in an online interview with Shapiro at <http://tinyurl.com/4lcn5or>.—VB]

[2.] [The director.—VB]

Under my address Max (-Peter) Meyer. Oberammergau
 St. Gregor I

Currently residing at Munich
 Holbeinstrasse 16/1

1. Name of my friend who is in ongoing contact with the committee, especially with Mr. Deechy, concerning my immigration: Mr. Richard Holzner (from Munich), 596 Riverside Drive, Apt. 62, N[ew] York City II.
2. Name of the gentleman with whom I am friends who obtained the first affidavit for me (the committee does not yet know of this affidavit, since it intends to procure another affidavit for me, which I will gladly accept in order to have a closer connection with the committee): Prof. Dr. Anton Lang, Georgetown University, *Washington*. (The name of the provider of the affidavit, c/o Dr. Anton Lang, is Mr. R. Putnam, mayor of the City of *Springfield/Mass.*)
3. Additional committees or persons making efforts on my behalf or being in contact with me via the Monastery Ettal, Bavaria:
 - a. Father Dr. Sylvester Schaeffers
 Office of the Bishop
 Cleveland, Ohio
 605 NBC Building
 815 Superior Ave. NE
 - b. Monsignor Michael I. Ready
 National Catholic Welfare Conference
 1312 Massachusetts Ave.
 Washington, D.C.

London, June 15, 1939
 Pastor Dr. Dietrich Bonhoeffer
 Union Theological Seminary^[3]
 120 Street, Broadway^[4]
 New York

Esteemed Pastor,

Our chance acquaintance, as well as the extraordinarily kind offer on your part, lead me to trouble you with my plans to emigrate to the United States. I do not know how you much you are burdened with your own issues or more person-

[3.] "Seminary" is handwritten and replaces "University."

[4.] "Broadway" is handwritten.

ally pressing ones during your stay in the States. I would understand completely if you were to reply that for whatever reason you could not or would not want to deal with my concerns. It is only your kind offer during your last brief visit at the home of the Henne family, together with the need on my part to pursue all potential leads for my emigration, which prompts me to accept your kind offer. I will attempt to describe my situation to you as briefly as possible.

1. I am a *Roman Catholic* and, according to the German racial law, 100 percent Jewish [Volljude]. My wife is a *Roman Catholic*—100% Aryan. We lived for years undisturbed in Oberammergau. In Germany our circumstances were good. Upon my emigration, I was able to leave my wife, who is still living there, with a small sum of money, despite the expropriation of over 50 percent of our assets by the government. For the last three years, I have worked exclusively on compositions, especially the composition of masses and liturgical studies.

2. The situation of non-Aryans in Germany forced me to emigrate. I had to endure three weeks of Dachau—as part of the mass arrests [Sammelaktion] at the time.^[5] Through Ettal we became acquainted with the Henne family. This family served as guarantors with the Society of Friends, Bloomsbury, for my interim stay in England. Based on this guaranty, I received my permit. We did not even try to get a permit for my wife, since as an Aryan she is still able to live in Germany without difficulty for the time being; the plan is for her to come to the United States directly some day.

3. We received the affidavit for the United States via *Professor Dr. Anton Lang, Georgetown*. I was promised another one a few months ago by the Catholic Committee in New York. However, the guarantor has since died. Another one is being sought. The committee *does not yet know anything* about the existing affidavit and *ought not to for the time being*.

4. My friend who is constantly pursuing my case with the committee is Mr. Richard Holzner from Munich—address, see reverse. Please allow him to come to you sometime; he can provide much information.

5. *My number on the Stuttgart waiting list is 25718*. Based on this number, I would not be eligible before the end of 1942 or the beginning of 1943. This is obviously impossible—to live off and impose myself on the kind Henne family for such a long time. Because of this and the need to support myself, I must thus try under all circumstances to receive permission to enter the United States as a *nonquota* immigrant.^[6] Exemptions do exist for university professors and

[5.] [In the wake of *Kristallnacht*, approximately twenty thousand Jewish men were arrested throughout the country and sent to concentration camps. Like Meyer, most were released after several weeks.—VB]

[6.] [The 1924 U.S. immigration act created a quota system that drastically reduced the percentage of immigrants from European countries; it also required a screening of

music teachers. One has to receive an invitation from a college. (*This can be fictitious.*) With such an invitation and a significant number of teaching credentials and student certificates (from the last two to three years), there is the hope of obtaining the entry visa from the consulate. If the invitation is confirmed by the State Department, there is of course no problem at all.

Once over there, I intend to practice my profession as a music teacher, primarily for the theoretical subjects of harmony, counterpoint, and history of music, and *as an organist*. I have composed significant works, some of which have been performed. At present I am working on an a capella Mass. It is not important to me to work in one of the major cities over there. Being used to rural living, I am just looking for a position somewhere that enables me to have my wife (there are no children) follow me in the foreseeable future.

6. I have an initial set of recommendations and references. In particular, I have found great favor with the esteemed Abbot Dr. Angelus Kupfer of the Ettal monastery. I can get a recommendation from His Eminence Cardinal von Faulhaber. For purely political reasons, His Eminence currently does not like to transmit them across the border.

7. All my personal papers are on file with the Catholic Committee.^[7] If required, Mr. Holzner would assist you without reservation in this regard.

Thus I seek a position as a music teacher, primarily for theoretical subjects, in conjunction with a position as an organist in a Catholic setting. I have always combined the teaching of piano, in the many lessons that I have given with good success, with general musicology (the basics of theory as well as the historical foundation), in order to lay the foundation for a broader and deeper understanding of music. In particular I had young people play chamber music from an early age.

And now in order to practice my profession as soon as possible over there, I seek an invitation to a teaching position from a college that would bring me over.

I could imagine, most esteemed Pastor, that through some connection or other you might be able to arrange something like this for me. My only regret is that you have to do so bona fide, since I did not have the opportunity to introduce myself to you personally.

immigrants; the 1929 law established quotas based on national origin. For those who later sought to flee Nazi oppression, their best chance was usually to apply as a “*non-quota immigrant*,” meaning they either came from a country for which there was no immigration quota (there were no quotas, for example, for countries in the Western Hemisphere) or belonged to a “nonquota” group (i.e., certain professionals or persons with relatives in the United States).—VB]

[7.] Here there is a handwritten addition at the end of the page: “At the committee, Mr. Deechy is the person in charge of my case.”

If you allow Mr. Holzner to come to you sometime, he will be able to provide you with a more complete picture than is possible for me to do here in a letter. At any rate, at the top of the letter I have listed the respective addresses of those who are making efforts on my behalf.

I am extraordinarily grateful to you for whatever you do, Pastor. I have no relatives abroad and never considered leaving my native land, but am now after all forced to do so. I am thus dependent on the pure love for one's neighbor by people who know me only from a distance. Such neighborly love has in fact been extended to me in an astounding way, a case in point being the Henne family. You will surely understand, Pastor, that I do not want to unnecessarily take undue advantage of this.

I hope that you and your brother had a good passage across the Atlantic. Everything is fine here. For the next few Sundays I will serve as the temporary organist at the German Protestant Church.

With sincere greetings and most gratefully I remain

Yours respectfully

(signed) Max-Peter Meyer

Personal Data:

Name: Max(-Peter) Meyer (German address: Oberammergau, St. Gregor I)

Date and Place of Birth: born Nov. 3, 1892, in Munich

Marital Status: married since Nov. 27, 1927, to wife, Helene, néé Gutacker

Religion: Roman Catholic

Profession: composer and organist

c/o Mr. G. Henne, London etc.

114. To Paul Lehmann^[1]

June 17th 1939

My dear Paul,

nun also bin ich wieder hier!^[2] Niebuhr^[3] will have written to you about it. There has been some misunderstanding about my trip. I am not a refugee, but I must go back to Germany to take up my work over there. They are in

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[1.] *NL*, A 50,2 (13); later typewritten copy; no return address, certainly from New York. Previously published in *GS*2:351–52. [Letter in English and German. See ed. notes below.—VB]

[2.] "So now I am here again!"

[3.] Reinhold Niebuhr.

need of teachers.^[4] I want to stay until late autumn or spring at the very latest. The first week in August I am delivering lectures for one week at the Summer School of Union.^[5] Will I see you at all? Hopefully! Do you think that several more lectures (with salary,^[6] for I have no money here!) could be arranged at other universities? Niebuhr was perhaps *too optimistic*. I spent a few days with Coffin^[7] in Lakeville. Today I met Roberts,^[8] whom I liked a great deal.

Let me hear from you soon! I am living at Union, Prophet's Chamber!^[9]

Give my regards to your wife and accept my warm greetings yourself, from your old

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

115. To Henry Smith Leiper^[1]

19.6.39

Dear Dr. Leiper,

I have just received a letter from Dr. Freudenberg^[2] asking me urgently not to take over the refugee-post if I wish to go back to Germany. He also calls my attention to the fact that there are many of our confessional pastors who will never be able to return to Germany and from whom, therefore, I should not take away the chance of this post. I hope you will be able to spare an hour of your time to-morrow for me. We must get clear about it.

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[4.] [The previous two sentences, as well as the date and the salutation, are in the original English. Bonhoeffer wrote the remainder of the letter in German, but it is translated here.—VB]

[5.] ["Summer School of Union" in English in original.—VB]

[6.] ["Salary" in English in original.—VB]

[7.] Henry Sloane Coffin.

[8.] David Roberts.

[9.] ["Prophet's Chamber" in English in original.—VB]

[1.] *NL*, A 50,2 (14a); handwritten. Previously published in *GS* 1:319. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

[2.] Adolf Freudenberg, who because of his marriage to a "non-Aryan" woman had to emigrate to England in March 1939. [Freudenberg was a diplomat and a member of the Confessing Church.—VB] After April 1939, in London he organized the refugee work for the provisional World Council of Churches, which he later carried out from Switzerland (cf. Ludwig, "Christen dürfen zu diesem Verbrechen nicht schweigen").

With many thanks and best regards, Yours ever
 Dietrich Bonhoeffer
 I hope you have got my last letter.^[3]

116. To Elisabeth Bethge^[1]

June 20, 1939

Dear Mrs. Pastor,

I am sending you cordial greetings from here. I am doing well, and there is much to see. Unfortunately, it is dreadfully hot so that the work suffers somewhat. I was very happy to see Eberhard and your daughter^[2] before my departure. Would you be so kind to pass the enclosed card on to Eberhard?^[3] I would be very grateful to you.

With cordial greetings your very devoted
 Dietrich Bonhoeffer

117. To Sabine and Gerhard Leibholz^[1]

Dear Gert, dear Sabine,

In view of the ghastly situation over there, and since I only would have stayed until August, I have decided to travel back already with Karl-Friedrich. So I will arrive on July 13 in Southampton, unless a change for the better suddenly occurs. I cannot say at all how long I will stay with you. We must see, perhaps only briefly.^[2]

Heartfelt greetings to you from your
 Dietrich

[3.] See Bonhoeffer's June 15, 1939, letter to Leiper, 1/111.

[1.] *NL*, A 44, 2 (21); handwritten postcard; no return address but certainly from New York; previously unpublished.

[2.] Margret Bethge. [See 1/101.—VB]

[3.] Card not extant.

[1.] *NL*, Anh. A 28; handwritten postcard; from New York in June 1939. Partially reproduced in *GS* 6:461.

[2.] Bonhoeffer arrived in London on July 13 and remained there until July 25.

194 **118. To His Parents**^[1]

June 22, 1939

My dear Parents,

Your letter^[2] arrived yesterday. I thank you greatly for it. You were right in my neighborhood in Kolberg.^[3] A pity that I was not there. Did you also visit the cathedral there, or did you have too little time? Now the first days here are over, and I have gotten quite used to it again. It is strange; it does take time before one relearns all the little technical things. I am living in the same house as back then, have three rooms, and am doing well. I am trying to read through the scholarly literature that has appeared in the meantime, as far as it goes, so I am occupied the entire day. I wrote you about my stay in the mountains. The landscape was very lovely, but I yearned for a time that could be really filled. Now in the meantime there have been various discussions. The outcome was that just about everything has changed. They invited me to stay as long as I wanted, but I have refused. Karl Friedrich knows more details, and he can tell you. Thus I will return already in autumn, I think. Nothing else was possible if I wanted to bring together the wishes from over there and from here. Ultimately, I am quite content with this. I am also not sure whether I could have held out in the atmosphere here for long; everything is dreadfully sensationalized and full of hatred^[4] and dreadfully pharisaic.^[5] Personally, everywhere I went I found the friendliest hospitality from my friends from back then, but that of course isn't enough. Now I am working hard on my lectures, which brings me much joy. It is terribly hot, however, and at the same time always so humid. But on the whole I like the heat. I will go next week to Boerickes.^[6] They send you their best regards and are very friendly. Unfortunately, I have had no word until now from Eberhard. That of course is a bit unsettling. The newspapers

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[1.] *NL*, A 44:1(26); handwritten; no return address, but certainly from New York. Partially reproduced in *GS* 6:457–58.

[2.] Letter not extant.

[3.] Kolberg on the Baltic Sea is ca. fifty kilometers west of Kōslin.

[4.] [“Full of hatred” in English in the original.—VB]

[5.] [An interesting comment that indicates that even though Bonhoeffer was critical of the Nazi regime, he nonetheless as a German was sensitive to the tone of foreign criticism—this was true during his first stay at Union as well; one wonders whether this, too, influenced his decision to return to Germany. The pejorative use of “pharisaic,” here and elsewhere, has been noted in the editor’s introduction.—VB]

[6.] The Boerickes were distant relatives on the Tafel side of the family who lived in Philadelphia.

here are terribly upset over matters in China.^[7] But people say that this is always the case.

Hopefully, I will hear again from you soon, also about how Uncle Rudi^[8] is doing. Many greetings to you and my brothers and sisters from your grateful Dietrich

I have written in detail to Sabine.^[9] I will visit her some on my way back, I think. Hopefully, I will still see Karl Friedrich on the return trip!

119. From Eberhard Bethge^[1]

June 23, 1939

Dear Dietrich,

I am very sorry to have left you for so long without any news; I can imagine that you watch out for news even more than we do here. But perhaps you are also so taken up with all the new things that you hardly notice it. In any case, it is a pity that it is so difficult to hear from each other.

Perhaps you can picture for yourself how I have been absorbed by matters here, which until the beginning of this week did not work out. Three times, every week on Saturday, I was in Berlin, which in the heat was not a little exhausting (counting your trip as well), and in addition took care of work and order here. But in the end everything went well, without particular disruptions; until now at least there is some help here.^[2] While for the time being the two of us^[3] have been given the main responsibility by Berlin, the Formula of Concord and help with concepts are indeed already quite valuable and have been a good start.^[4] Throughout these days I have not gotten around to writing, despite several

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[7.] This is a reference to the continuation of the war that had resumed on July 7, 1937, between Japan and China, as well as to the battles between Japanese and Soviet troops on the Manchurian border and in Outer Mongolia. See Erdmann, *Die Zeit der Weltkriege*, 532–33.

[8.] The reference is to the state of the preparations for war.

[9.] Sabine Leibholz; letter not extant.

[1.] *NL*, C 26; handwritten; no return address but certainly from Sigurdshof; previously unpublished.

[2.] [Hellmut Traub had arrived to help out with the collective pastorates; see also 1/109.—VB]

[3.] [Bethge and Fritz Onnasch.—VB]

[4.] Theological work in dogmatics on the Formula of Concord and work on selected New Testament concepts; see Bonhoeffer's May 28, 1939, instructions for his successor, 1/98.2.

attempts. In fact, under no circumstances can this^[5] be neglected too much. But I was nonetheless very much in conversation with you. I read a great deal and thoroughly in *Life Together*^[6] and can now give you very well-founded thanks. With this you have in fact left much of yourself here and help me. It was a very great delight for me to read much in it, and it also made me happy to realize how much has become a possession in the course of time. Admittedly, the understanding of the Psalms, as I saw again today, will meet with difficulty, as briefly as it has nonetheless been stated there.^[7]—Today however preaching about a psalm was truly good and stimulating. Over there,^[8] however, where I preached the sermon yesterday about Cana,^[9] it was difficult, and there was little willingness to accept, although I am perfectly certain again about the exegesis; a new suggestion is the following: regarding the striking fact that among the seven miracles in John, the first is so seemingly insignificant: wedding water to wine—the following must be considered, namely, that all the chapters on promise in the Old Testament cannot do enough to describe the concise festiveness as a sign of the last things, that is, there is a joyful community eating together, there is oil and above all wine and so forth; and now John, by giving precedence to *this* miracle (“*this*, the *first* of his signs . . .”)^[10] intends to witness precisely to this: Jesus in this first drawing back of the curtain before his disciples is pointing to this: I am *this* ultimate time [Endzeit] . . . and *thus* in this very way he revealed his glory and they believed in him.

In the Old Testament I am now in Amos. I would have liked to meditate with you about John 17 [v. 2]. What does καθὼς ἔδωκας αὐτῷ ἐξουσίαν πάσης σαρκός mean? “Authority over all people”^[11] is really not enough, ἐξουσία here “that flesh which is taken into the lordship (of Christ)” . . . ? I find it difficult.

197 You can imagine how delighted I was with the plentiful mail, written on the ship and so forth, sent after your arrival there. It really was a good, long conversation with you, and you took so much trouble to write me everything that I would have particularly noticed and enjoyed on the voyage. One senses from the letters the calm and contemplation. Listening to letters is indeed good for the intercession in the evenings and during the meditation period (by the way, the

[5.] [Bethge’s teaching responsibilities.—VB]

[6.] Bonhoeffer’s book *Life Together*.

[7.] Cf. *DBWE* 5:52–58. Regarding Bonhoeffer’s understanding of the Psalter as “the prayerbook of Jesus Christ,” see also his 1935 lecture “Christ in the Psalms” (*DBW* 14, 2/5) and his 1940 “Prayerbook of the Bible” (*DBWE* 5:155–77).

[8.] In the collective pastorate in Köslin.

[9.] See John 2:1–11.

[10.] John 2:11; italics are Bethge’s.

[11.] [This is the NRSV wording; a closer translation of the Luther Bible German would be “power over all flesh.”—VB]

day before yesterday we had a group discussion in the evening about the meditation). Fuchs^[12] obtained the Daily Texts for me, and I have them again in the same form.—Now my comments on your letter will be somewhat muddled.^[13] That is really incredible that Boeckheler^[14] isn't preaching! Tell me, what is happening with Gert?^[15] I fear that something there could fall apart. Eight days ago on Saturday I was at your sister Ursel's^[16] (I slept in our room); when on Monday on my way home from the wedding^[17] I called there once more, she told me that on Sunday Christel^[18] had been there especially to talk about what was to be done; she and Klaus^[19] and so forth had received such crazy letters.^[20] They must have been harsh and been risking a breach. For my part I received very nice letters.

By the way Julius^[21] is supposed to be in Berlin now according to information from Sabine,^[22] but all my attempts to find out have remained unsuccessful till now. I am extraordinarily pleased that something has worked out with George.^[23] But it does not make him^[24] very happy? Many thanks for obtaining the dartboard. Hopefully, it will arrive soon. You may be right about the danger of becoming a bit easygoing; in any case these days, by myself and in part with and under the eyes of strangers, are a clearly noticeable incentive to get down to business, to new thoroughness, reexamination, and so forth. That is indeed very certainly the case.

With the financial matters, that can wait; at present your parents are still away. By the way, I just paid the full price for the dictionary.^[25] I am still doing quite well. The trip recently to the wedding went smoothly; I could ride there and back from Berlin with my cousin Karl-Friedrich in the BMW, which in addition was a technical pleasure. The wedding was lovely but exhausting, with many

[12.] A book dealer in Berlin.

[13.] Letter not extant.

[14.] Martin Boeckheler.

[15.] Gerhard Leibholz.

[16.] Ursula Schleicher.

[17.] The wedding of Dorothea (née Vibrans) and Johannes Andersen in Annarode in the eastern Harz region.

[18.] Christine von Dohnanyi.

[19.] Klaus Bonhoeffer.

[20.] [The circumstances here are unclear.—VB]

[21.] Julius Rieger [see 1/106.—VB]

[22.] Sabine Leibholz.

[23.] George Bell.

[24.] [Julius Rieger.—VB]

[25.] This refers to their joint purchase of Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. [Bonhoeffer and Bethge obviously split the cost for the expensive work.—VB]

good jokes. In the morning I preached the sermon, since Gerhard^[26] had shingles, and, don't laugh, I preached on "I believe, dear Lord, help my unbelief"^[27] with your divisions of the verse at hand.^[28] I had—there was as good as *no* time to prepare—nonetheless great fun with it. Gerhard was reasonably fit and doing all right. Perhaps next Sunday I will hold the Lord's Supper that recently had to be canceled. I must then soon look for texts!

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Otherwise we are all doing quite well. The sun shines often, and we are frequently at the Zignitz [lake], paddling. Tennis has also come up several times. If only you could be *with us*. You would find playing it somewhat more interesting than it was in Göttingen. Recently I irretrievably lost my cigarette roller while playing, which I'm quite sorry about. Here is a letter to you in English from John Baillie, 9 Whitehouse Terrace Edinburgh, Telephone 42647, of June 15, who spoke with Niebuhr about you and would like to see you there between October '39 and March '40.^[29] He wants to have your visit, as Niebuhr wanted it in America, for around fourteen days perhaps. Perhaps you should write him immediately (or to Niebuhr first?); he requested a reply. It is^[30] urgent.

I would like to invite Mrs. von Kleist^[31] here soon. She has now also gotten sciatica. Mrs. Struwe^[32] is doing quite well; she always comes to the prayer service and is now quite amicable and nice to me. Next week I will see my Superus^[33] again. Winfried^[34] left for vacation after he was here two more times with me, visiting and helping, and playing tennis.

Now be very, very warmly greeted by all of us here. We think regularly of you and pray for support for your work and blessing. I look forward to your next letter your

Eberhard

[26.] Gerhard Vibrans.

[27.] Mark 9:24.

[28.] Cf. *DBWE* 4:65–67.

[29.] See 1/113.

[30.] Deleted: "very."

[31.] Ruth von Kleist-Retzow.

[32.] Erna Struwe.

[33.] Superintendent Eduard Block in Schlawe.

[34.] Winfried Maechler (who had a ministry in Schlawe).

120. To Martin Boeckheler^[1]

June 26

Dear Brother Boeckheler,

My plans over here have changed significantly. I will return already this summer. Now my question to you is: could I not step in for you for several weeks? After all, I am on leave and would like to stay a few weeks in London without becoming a burden on anyone. I could be there on July 15 or later, in August till September, depending on what suits you better. I can stay here as long as I want. But the political circumstances are driving me somewhat toward Europe.^[2] I don't want to live through a war over here. And one can quickly reach Germany from where you are. Please do let me know promptly. I would also like to be in the old parish for a few weeks again and at the same time would have time for some work. Please be so kind and send an invitation in any case for the immigration-officer!^[3]

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With cordial greetings, your
D. Bonhoeffer

121. To Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer^[1]

June 26, 1939

Dear Karl Friedrich,

Many thanks for your card.^[2] I let the Boerickes^[3] know I would like to visit them next week, but that doesn't suit; now they want to have both of us from the fifth to the seventh. That, however, neither suits me nor probably you so well. This is how things stand here: I have turned down the job they offered me, for many reasons. With that I am now completely master of my time; I can stay or travel back, as I will. Now under normal circumstances

[1.] *NL*, A 45 (67); handwritten; no return address, surely from New York; previously unpublished.

[2.] The reference is to the worsening of the foreign policy situation in Europe, particularly following the military alliance formed on May 22, 1939, between Germany and Italy (the "Steel Pact"); see Erdmann, *Die Zeit der Weltkriege*, 484–86.

[3.] ["Immigration-officer" in English in original.—VB]

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (27); handwritten card; no return address, certainly from New York. Previously published in *GS* 6:458–59. Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer had been invited in June 1939 to Chicago for various lectures (cf. *DB-ER*, 649 and 656).

[2.] Card not extant.

[3.] See Bonhoeffer's June 22, 1939, letter to his parents, 1/118.

I would have participated here in the Summer School,^[4] which lasts until August, in which they also expect my assistance. But I find the political news from Europe so dreadful that I am seriously considering whether I should not travel back earlier. In case of war I want to be not over here but back in
 200 Germany. I have pondered this here in these weeks, especially since no firm work is tying me down here. So what I am considering is whether I travel on the eighth with you to England, from where I can then come home much more easily. I believe too that in one month of intensive work here, one can have seen, read, and learned a good deal. What do you think about this? It would, of course, be nice if you could come already on July 1, for there is still much we could discuss. But if you must cancel other plans, perhaps this would not be absolutely necessary. Should I register you in International House?^[5]

Many greetings your
 Dietrich

122. To His Parents^[1]

June 17, 1939

My dear Parents,

Now I have received both your letters, one right after the other.^[2] I thank you very much for them. I had not written to Anneliese,^[3] because the address was not certain and I feared it would perhaps not arrive. Now you have inquired there in vain; I am very sorry. It is simply too far a distance. Now, however, in the meantime you have received all the other news and hopefully have come to terms with it, as I have. I believe that it was very well intended, but impossible.^[4] After it gave me a small shock at the beginning, I am now quite content. I think that when one has already been here for as long as I was previously,^[5] one can deal with many things much more

[4.] ["Summer School" in English in original.—VB]

[5.] This was a residence for international students [and visitors—VB] in the neighborhood around Union Theological Seminary and Riverside Church.

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (28): handwritten; no return address, certainly from New York. Previously published in *GS* 6:459–50.

[2.] Letters not extant.

[3.] Anneliese Schnurmann in Switzerland.

[4.] [Bonhoeffer is commenting on his decision to return to Germany and turn down the job offer he had received in the United States.—VB]

[5.] [I.e., as a student in 1930–31.—VB]

quickly, and there is not that much to learn academically. I now sit very often in the library. I did not get to Boerickes yet. But something will surely still come of it. At the end of this week, I expect Karl-Friedrich, who can tell you. How is Uncle Rudi doing? Did they still travel to Bühlerhöhe?^[6] If he is not doing well, I do want to come earlier. A few weeks now don't matter. This is what I am planning. Moreover, I do still want to visit Sabine.^[7] Will your meeting still take place?^[8] I wrote to Boeckheler about whether I could substitute for him during his holidays.^[9] That would be rather nice. I am doing well. The heat in recent days has relented somewhat, so that one can work better. It is otherwise always dreadfully humid here. I am living in the loveliest area of Manhattan, directly on the Hudson and somewhat above the city. But it is probably even lovelier to live high up in one of the skyscrapers (the highest is 360 meters!). Again and again, the general impression of New York is indeed stunning, the skyscrapers, the masses of people from all nations and races milling about, the host of churches and chapels. But basically I have already become so accustomed to rural life that I often really long for it.

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Please give my greetings to all my brothers and sisters. I will, of course, see them all again in autumn. Greetings to you from your grateful
Dietrich

123. Letter of Recommendation from Paul Lehmann to Colleges and Seminaries in the United States^[1]

June 27, 1939

Dear Sir:

A committee of which Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr, Professor of Applied Christianity at the Union Theological Seminary, New York, is the chairman, is venturing to bring to your attention, the Reverend Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Licentiate in Theology.

[6.] This is an allusion to the day of the possible beginning of the war, additionally encoded here through a suggested visit to the Bühlerhöhe sanatorium in the northern Black Forest.

[7.] Sabine Leibholz in London.

[8.] [I.e., their visit to Sabine Leibholz.—VB]

[9.] See his June 26, 1939, letter to Martin Boeckheler, 1/120.

[1.] *NL*, A 50,2 (15); typewritten mimeograph; return address "Elmhurst College, Elmhurst, Illinois, Department of Religion." Previously published in *GS*2:352–53. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

202 Reverend Mr. Bonhoeffer is one of the ablest of the younger theologians and one of the most courageous of the younger pastors who have undertaken the task of the faithful exposition and perpetuation of the Christian faith in the present critical time in Germany. He comes from a distinguished line of forbears both in the pulpit and in the university. He himself holds a graduate theological degree from the University at Berlin and from the Union Theological Seminary at New York. Among the more notable of Mr. Bonhoeffer's contributions to theological learning are three brilliant and profound volumes on "The Communion of Saints," "Act and Being," and one published only recently under the title, "Community Life."^[2]

During the academic year, 1930–1931, Mr. Bonhoeffer was a fellow in theology at Union Seminary and after his return to Germany he began a promising theological career as Privatdozent^[3] in the theological faculty at Berlin. Political circumstances have interrupted these hopes. After a pastorate in the German Church in London, Mr. Bonhoeffer returned to his country and assumed the difficult responsibility of teaching the future ministers of the Confessional Church. Some time ago his little seminary was closed by the government and he has been continuing his work since then in a private capacity in the parsonages of Pommern.

Since Mr. Bonhoeffer will be lecturing in theology at the summer session of the Union Theological Seminary, New York, we are anxious to provide for him a wider hearing in American academic and theological circles. Accordingly, we are arranging a schedule of lectures at colleges and seminaries during the academic year, 1939–1940. If your institution has a lecture foundation or lecture series on a variety of problems, will you give favorable consideration to an invitation to Mr. Bonhoeffer to appear? He is in full command of the English language and prepared to discuss in a reliable and challenging manner problems of theology, philosophy, and the contemporary situation of Christianity in Germany. The committee is venturing to suggest an honorarium of not less than twenty-five dollars and, wherever possible, of fifty dollars.

I hope very urgently that we may have some word from you at the earlier possible moment. Correspondence either for Mr. Bonhoeffer or for the committee may be addressed to me at the address below. Your active cooperation

[2.] *DBWE* 1 (1st German publication, 1930); *DBWE* 2 (1st German publication, 1931); and *DBWE* 5 (published in English as *Life Together*) (1st German publication, 1939).

[3.] [That is, as an unpaid outside lecturer.—VB]

in this venture will be a real expression of the spirit of ecumenical Christianity and deeply appreciated.

Respectfully,
Paul L. Lehmann, ThD
Elmhurst College,
Elmhurst, Illinois

124. From Paul Lehmann to Reinhold Niebuhr^[1]

203

June 28, 1939

Dear Reinie:

Immediately upon receipt of your letter of May 11,^[2] I got started. I wrote at once to Dr. Press^[3] and contacted Pauck^[4] and Paul Scherer. The enclosed letter which I am sending out today to some thirty or forty places will speak for itself.^[5] I hope replies will not come in too slowly.

Meanwhile a letter has come from Bonhoeffer who is already at Union. I don't quite know what to make of it for he speaks already of going back. He says that he is not a refugee and must go back to Germany to take up his work over there, for Germany needs teachers. "Ich will," he writes, "bis Spätherbst oder spätestens Frühjahr bleiben."^[6]

What occurred to me at once was the Eden Theological lectures at Convocation. I ventured to ask Dr. Press to invite Bonhoeffer. He replied that he knew of Bonhoeffer and that the seminary which adds him to the faculty will indeed get an able theologian. What this has to do with my request, I do not comprehend. So I have written again today asking specifically for the lectureship for Bonhoeffer and saying that you regarded the matter as urgently as I do. Since Press asked me for your address, he may want to write to you about it. Therefore I want you to know what I am doing. We are inviting Bonhoeffer for the four Lenten sermons which come just about Eden convocation time. The two would fit beautifully together. As soon as I get replies to the general letter, I shall make up a schedule.

[1.] *NL*, A 50,2 (18); later typewritten copy; return address "Elmhurst College." Partially reproduced in *GS* 2:353-54. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

[2.] See Niebuhr's May 11, 1939, letter to Lehmann, 1/91.

[3.] Samuel D. Press, president of Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis.

[4.] Wilhelm Pauck.

[5.] See Lehmann's June 27, 1939, letter of recommendation, 1/123.

[6.] "I want to stay until late autumn or spring at the very latest." See Bonhoeffer's June 17, 1939, letter to Lehmann, 1/114.

Richter^[7] will be teaching with us next Fall. The Board seems to have been surprisingly cooperative, the faculty mildly impressed. But it will be like a cultural tornado, which is exactly what this place needs.

The Christian Century brings glowing reports of your lectures.^[8] For once I can agree with something that they are responsible for. It must be pleasant if pressing to work out the second set amidst the charms of the English country side. I still insist that it is the best thing the British have had in years. The real shame is that you can't take over the foreign office as well while you are there. But they seem to prefer ostriches.^[9]

We shall be leaving on Saturday for Columbus for the summer. We are practically exhausted from the ridiculous pace of the past month. Carlson^[10] has gone over my manuscript for stylistic touches and that has helped a great deal. The title is still hanging fire. I hope very much that you will not be bothered with the stuff at the wrong time for you.

Already we are looking forward to your January visit. Meanwhile take our continuing thoughts and good wishes to Ursula,^[11] yourself and the children, and if there is any way at any time that I can do something like this, please never hesitate to write. I'm never too busy or tired for your requests.

Affectionately,
Paul

125. From Paul Lehmann^[1]

June 28, 1939

My dear Dietrich,

You cannot know with what joy and relief your letter^[2] was received. It came to me just when I had to be away for some days and to take part in a conference here for some days, so that I have had to wait until now to reply. Evidently my

[7.] Werner Richter.

[8.] See Niebuhr's May 11, 1939, letter to Lehmann, 1/91, ed. note 2.

[9.] This is an allusion to the politics of British foreign minister Lord Halifax, who was still attempting in the summer of 1939 to negotiate a political arrangement with Hitler's Germany, despite the March 31, 1939, declaration of the Western guarantee of Polish independence.

[10.] Unidentified.

[11.] [Niebuhr's wife.—VB]

[1.] *NL*, A 50,2 (16); later typewritten copy; return address: "Elmhurst College." Partially reproduced in *GS*2:354–56. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

[2.] See Bonhoeffer's June 17, 1939, letter to Lehmann, 1/114.

letter of May 27th, sent to Berlin will not have reached you.^[3] Since that time, Marion^[4] and I have been eagerly awaiting word of your arrival in Union. Now that you are there, we can scarcely wait until you are here with us.

Whether or not Dr. Niebuhr has been too optimistic,^[5] I do not know. But I do know that it is unthinkable that you should return before America shall have had the fullest opportunity to be enriched by your contribution to its theological hour of destiny. At least, I like to think of it in this way. The tragic political occasion for these disturbed times may have one great and positive overtone in the widening of the American theological understanding by the present cross fertilization with the continental tradition. So that you must see this also as a responsibility as well as the German need for teachers.

And besides, Marion and I need very badly to see you again. Surely you would not deprive us of the hope that we have carried with us since the day when we left the café on Unter den Linden.^[6] With your anticipated permission, I have already taken steps to bring this about. The enclosed letter will speak for itself.^[7] But meanwhile, there is more definite word for you. I am authorized to invite you to deliver the annual series of Lenten sermons which is a part of our campus religious life program. These occur on four succeeding Wednesdays during Lent and seek to interpret the Cross to the contemporary student mind. There will be one hundred dollars at your disposal for these sermons and you will live with us. At about the same time, Eden Seminary has a theological lectureship at its annual convocation. This is usually about mid-February. I have written asking that you be invited for these. I hope it will work out.

But whatever happens, Marion and I want you to know that our home is yours in every respect for as long a time as you are able and willing to have it so. There is no limit. And you cannot afford us any greater happiness than by acting with complete freedom on this promise.

Whether or not I shall get to New York this summer, I do not yet know. I am trying very hard to arrange some kind of a brief excursion there, specially to see you. We are leaving here on Saturday for Columbus, Ohio,^[8] where we are likely to be until the first of September. The address there is 931 Oakwood Avenue. It should be just about that time that you will be ready to come west and we shall await you here. You will let me hear from you in Columbus, won't you?

[3.] See Lehmann's May 27, 1939, letter to Bonhoeffer, 1/97.

[4.] Marion Lehmann.

[5.] Note Bonhoeffer's June 17 letter to Lehmann: "[Reinhold] Niebuhr was perhaps *too optimistic*" (1/114).

[6.] Regarding Lehmann's visit to Berlin in spring 1933, see *DB-ER*, 267-69.

[7.] See Lehmann's June 27, 1939, letter of recommendation, 1/123.

[8.] Residence of the Lehmann family.

206 Sometime between July 9 and 12th, a very good friend of mine and former student, George Kalbfleisch by name, will try to visit you in Union. He is en route to Amsterdam and expects to visit Germany. It was through him that I hoped to send you some word of reply to your earlier letter at Christmas time.^[9] Since he expects to visit Germany, there may be some word that you might like to send. I simply mention this in order that you may know that you can have complete confidence in him. I have told him so much of you and am anxious that you meet.

As soon as replies to the letter which I am mailing today to some thirty or forty places come to me, you will hear more. Meanwhile do keep in touch with me and remember how anxious we are to have you with us again.

Marion joins me in kindest greetings and highest regard,

Paul

126. To Paul Lehmann^[1]

28.6.39

Dear Paul,

I wonder if you have received my letter last week.^[2] Things have changed for me entirely. I am going back to Germany on August 2nd or even July 25th. The political situation is so terrible. But, of course, I should like to have a word from you before I leave. I am enjoying a few weeks in freedom, but on the other hand, I feel, I must go back to the “trenches” (I mean of the Church-struggle). Yours ever

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

[9.] See Bonhoeffer’s December 14, 1938, letter to Lehmann, 1/40.

[1.] *NL*, A 50,2 (17); typewritten copy; return address: “Union Theological Seminary, New York.” Previously published in *GS* 2:356. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

[2.] See Bonhoeffer’s June 17, 1939, letter to Lehmann, 1/114.

127. From Eberhard Bethge^[1]

June 29, 1939

My dear Dietrich,

Many warm thanks for your letter^[2] yesterday and the card^[3] today. I am very sorry indeed that as late as this you must still write that you hadn't received anything. I now definitely hope that you have received our first letters. You should now already have three letters from me. Apparently the delivery tempo varies considerably. My letter yesterday from you took at least ten days. Mrs. Struwe's card on the other hand only seven to eight days; it came at the same time.

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I can imagine how you sometimes feel. Your letter conveys to me, I believe, a very vivid impression. But I nonetheless took great pleasure in your careful and detailed reports. Each piece interested me. How I would have liked to be there; how much I would have liked to have helped you in your considerations, to the extent help was possible. Believe me, the prospect of seeing you again sooner indeed fills me with very great joy, despite all appreciation for the tempting offers and the difficulty of giving it up. It will be good to be together again! But how will it happen? Where do I come? I must certainly pick you up somewhere! One thing, however, is clear for me. In no case can I leave Mother^[4] during the days of the wedding; around September 15, ^[5] I *must* be there and help with planning, organizing, and so forth. That should be my obligation under any circumstances, right? But before and even more so afterward there is time! Then we will be off on a trip clear across Germany!! Yesterday I was at Koppelstrasse^[6] again for the first time (even if only very briefly, because of pastoral duties) and related a few things that pleased them. As always, one is suntanned, relaxed, and in a good mood!

[1.] *NL*, C 26; handwritten; no return address, certainly from Sigurdshof; previously unpublished.

[2.] Letter not extant.

[3.] The card to Bethge has been lost; it was inserted in Bonhoeffer's June 20, 1939, card to Elisabeth Bethge; see 1/116, ed. note 3.

[4.] Elisabeth Bethge.

[5.] The wedding of Margret Bethge [Eberhard's sister—VB] and Fritz Onnasch in Kade. The wedding took place on September 17, 1939, officiated by Superintendent Friedrich Onnasch, who was imprisoned from September 9 to October 9, 1939, and received prison leave for the occasion. Bonhoeffer was able to participate as well.

[6.] In Schlawe, at the office of Superintendent Eduard Block and Winfried Maechler; the latter had been on vacation. See Bethge's June 23, 1939, letter, 1/119, ed. note 34.

As to celebrating the Lord's Supper, once more we had to postpone things a week. Aunt Ruth^[7] will perhaps visit us for it. Do you sometimes get to the meditation texts? John 17 is almost too difficult, and I turn very often to the Greek text. Recently over there^[8] I again had a very hard fight about the sin, which was witnessed to, and the grace, which was not to be witnessed to but rather, in a disapproving fashion, was to be proven through the portrayal of the circumstances of Christian examples. Now the work on the psalms of vengeance, which is always very fruitful, comes next.

208 I had a very detailed letter from your mother describing their vacation, with a personal greeting from your father, in reply to my thank-you letter back then.^[9] I was very pleased about it. Julius^[10] has already gone back, without my having been able to reach him, nor has he sent me anything (the dartboard). He writes that he discussed the curriculum for my studies there.^[11] I don't quite know what is happening now; for the time being I won't do anything on my part.

Perhaps you have enjoyed the pictures somewhat. They are not meant to increase your loneliness but on the contrary perhaps help a bit. I hardly get around to playing music at all, due to being abundantly occupied. Yesterday afternoon I was at the manor house^[12] for coffee; that always takes time, and then one also wants to use the opportunity to play tennis! Then perhaps the two of us will still play this year? Tell me, isn't it impossible for me to pick you up at the end of August? Because of here?^[13] As glad as I would be to do it. It would be interesting indeed in any case.

Very heartfelt greetings and God protect you and bless your work, your
Eberhard

[7.] Ruth von Kleist-Retzow

[8.] [I.e., in the collective pastorate in Köslin.—VB]

[9.] See Bethge's June 12, 1939, letter to Paula and Karl Bonhoeffer, 1/110.

[10.] Julius Rieger.

[11.] Plans for Bethge's possible emigration to England.

[12.] The estate of the Kleist family at Wendisch-Tychow.

[13.] As "inspector of studies" for the Sigurdshof collective pastorate, with teaching responsibilities in Köslin, Bethge could not leave in midsemester.

128. To Paul Lehmann^[1]

June 30, 1939

My dear Paul,

thank you so much for your good letter which is so full of friendship and hope for the future.^[2] I can hardly bring myself to tell you that in the meantime I have had to decide to return to Germany, already in the next few weeks. Behind my invitation here lay the misunderstanding that I intended to remain in America for good. They wanted to assign me the care of Christian refugees here, a job that would have prevented me from any return to Germany, as necessary as it is in itself. It must, however, be done by a refugee. Now in the meantime everything has been decided and has also been settled with the Confessing Church; I shall travel back in July or August. While I regret this for various reasons, on the other hand, I am also glad to be given the opportunity to help again over there very soon. I am being pulled toward the brothers in struggle. You will understand this! Now I have one urgent request: in your very friendly letter to the Colleges^[3] you mentioned my work in Pomerania. Should such a page come into the hands of a German official, the work that in the meantime continues would be at an end. Will you understand my asking you sincerely and urgently to write *immediately* to the same circle that I have already returned and all plans have been canceled, perhaps also (which would be important to me) that a misunderstanding had prevailed in the matter! I hope that the circle is trustworthy enough not to let the letter go further. Now you have had much work, and I thank you for this with all my heart! I am infinitely sorry that we will not see each other. I had expected, especially from a meeting with you, so much toward understanding the situation here and many other things. Now this will not come to pass. It is such a pity! But there is no longer any other way! I am now expected back there soon. The political situation is dreadful, and I must be with my brothers when things become serious. We will then often think of each other and be with each other in prayer, and we will leave it to God as to whether and when he will lead us back together again in a way we can see. In such "final" times everyone should be found at the place where he belongs. May God grant us that we stand firm there.

Forgive the trouble I have put you to! See to it that people tacitly regard the matter as finished. From now on, please do not mention anything at all

[1.] *NL*, A 50,2 (19); later typewritten copy; return address "Union Theological Seminary, New York." Previously published in *GS* 2:357–58. [The first sentence of this letter is in English; Bonhoeffer wrote the remainder of the letter in German.—VB]

[2.] See Lehmann's June 28, 1939, letter to Bonhoeffer, 1/125.

about Pomerania, etc. in your letter, nor that the matter should not reach any German official; instead it's best to just state that "the inquiry concerning Mr. D.B. in the meantime has been resolved through his return to Germany and that a misunderstanding had prevailed in the matter." That would be my preference and the best thing for my work over there, which is so urgently necessary. To say more could awaken unnecessary interest. And please, do this without delay!

Do not believe that I regret the journey here. I am very happy that I was here and have seen and learned much in one month. My greatest pain is that I did not see you and your wife.

Now be well, dear Paul! May God protect you both and give you strength and joy for the work; may God preserve our fellowship as well, as he has done up to now.

Greetings to you in old faithfulness and gratitude always, your
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

PS I travel presumably already on July 8!

129. To Reinhold Niebuhr^[1]

. . . Sitting here in Dr. Coffin's^[2] garden I have had the time to think and to pray about my situation and that of my nation and to have God's will for me clarified. I have come to the conclusion that I have made a mistake in coming to America. I must live through this difficult period of our national history with the Christian people of Germany. I will have no right to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people. My brothers in the Confessional Synod wanted me to go. They may have been right in urging me to do so; but I was wrong in going. Such a decision each man must make for himself. Christians in Germany will face the terrible alternative of either willing the defeat of their nation in order that Christian civilization may survive, or willing the victory of their nation and thereby destroying our civilization. I know which of these alternatives I must choose; but I cannot make that choice in security. . . .

[3.] Lehmann's June 27, 1939, letter of recommendation, 1/123.

[1.] Excerpt from a letter to Niebuhr from New York at the end of June 1939, cited by Niebuhr in "The Death of a Martyr," *Christianity and Crisis* 5, no. 11 (June 25, 1945): 6. The original of the letter has never been found. Previously published in *GS* 1:320.

[2.] Henry Sloane Coffin.

129a. Inscription to Henry Sloan Coffin^[1] in *Nachfolge*

To President H. S. Coffin in sincere gratitude and respect. Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

130. To His Parents^[1]

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July 1, 1939

My dear Parents,

Karl Friedrich has already written you today to say that I have booked a room on a ship, if need arises. Since I would have come in any case in the fall, the latest news made the thought of possibly not being able to travel back in time utterly impossible for me. I will still visit Sabine,^[2] as long as that can be done. Here I have seen almost all my friends, and that was very lovely. Karl Friedrich will still visit Irma Boericke. It is not yet certain whether I will still find time to visit her after everything has been arranged. Of course, I still have many plans. Would you please write to me c/o Sabine's address the date of Uncle Rudi's birthday,^[3] so that I can eventually still congratulate him personally? The friends here would still like to keep me here. But I cannot decide in favor of staying. There will be much to talk about. Your vacation plans will also be very uncertain.

Warm greetings to you and all my brothers and sisters, your grateful
Dietrich

[1.] This inscription in ink ["Herrn Präsident H. S. Coffin in aufrichtiger Dankbarkeit und Verehrung. Dietrich Bonhoeffer"] appears on a recto leaf inside the front cover of a 1st edition of *Nachfolge*. It was found in the open stacks of Burke Library, Union Theological Seminary, when a collection of archival papers and memorabilia were assembled for the visit to the seminary, in May 2009, of the scientist Friedrich Bonhoeffer, Dietrich Bonhoeffer's nephew and the son of his brother Karl-Friedrich. This volume is now housed in the Special Collections at Burke Library. Note by Clifford Green. First publication, with two similar inscriptions, in the *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Jahrbuch* 4, with notes and commentary by Clifford Green ("Commentary: Three Bonhoeffer Inscriptions at Union Theological Seminary Library"). The date of the inscription would be after November 1937, likely in the summer of 1939. While it is possible that Bonhoeffer mailed a copy to Coffin when the book was first published, it is more likely that he brought some copies with him on his visit in the summer of 1939 visit. See the reference in the "Commentary" about the books he gave to David Roberts.

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (29); handwritten postcard; no return address, but certainly from New York. Partially reproduced in *GS* 2:359.

[2.] Sabine Leibholz in London.

[3.] This was the code word for the beginning of the war.

131. From Paul Lehmann^[1]

Columbus, Ohio July 2, 1939

My dear Dietrich:

Your letter^[2] was awaiting me when I arrived here this morning. It was of great help in explaining your card^[3] which I received in Elmhurst on last Thursday. But I cannot tell you how deeply it troubles both Marion^[4] and me. I write now, believe me, with great heaviness of spirit.

212 I shall, of course, comply immediately with your request. Please know that I do so with great reluctance and out of a full understanding of your situation. On such a basis you are not entitled to speak of effort expended and kindnesses shown. The principle matter of concern is you and the cause to which you are devoted.

Now, I have the following to propose: we must meet before your return. I simply could not think of your being here and going back without it. Therefore, you must be good enough to let me know by return mail which time will be best for my coming to New York. Since the friend about whom I wrote you^[5] is planning to come to New York next Saturday, July 8, arriving Sunday morning, July 9th, I wonder whether or not you could wait long enough to make possible my coming with him. Then I could also be with him when he sails on July 12th. On the other hand, if you must sail on the 8th, as you suggest, I shall come at once. We must have some opportunity to talk together.

Will you let me have word by return mail? Do you think also that you could explain my coming to Emmanuel^[6] and ask him whether I might have a bed at the Seminary for the few days, I shall be there? Please go to no trouble over this. If it cannot be, I shall arrange when I come.

Meanwhile, I shall look forward to seeing you and Marion joins me in the prayerful commitment of our ways to Him who bringeth all things to pass^[7] and in continuing, affectionate regard,

Paul

[1.] *NL*, A 50,2 (20); later typewritten copy; reprinted in *GS* 2:359–60. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

[2.] See Bonhoeffer's June 30, 1939, letter to Lehmann, 1/128.

[3.] See Bonhoeffer's June 28, 1939, card to Lehmann, 1/126.

[4.] Marion Lehmann.

[5.] George Kalbfleisch.

[6.] The house manager at Union Theological Seminary.

[7.] Cf. Ps. 37:5.

**132. Circular Letter from Paul Lehmann
to Colleges and Seminaries in the United States^[1]**

July 3, 1939

Dear Sir:

Under date of June 27th,^[2] a communication was addressed to you in behalf of the Reverend Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Licentiate in Theology. It concerned the desire of a committee of which Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr is the chairman, to make Mr. Bonhoeffer's visit to America available to colleges and seminaries interested in his lectures.

Word has just come that the circumstances of Mr. Bonhoeffer's visit to the United States have been entirely misunderstood and that the contemplated opportunity of inviting him cannot materialize owing to his return to Germany.

The committee appreciates the courtesy of your interest in its effort and regrets very much the error of its earlier communication.

Respectfully,
Paul L. Lehmann,
ThD, Secretary

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133. To Paul Lehmann^[1]

July 3, 1939

My dear Paul,

Many, many thanks for your letter!^[2] Of course, I would be *very* happy to still see you, and your offer to come is more than I dared to think. Of course, I can also arrange my schedule as I wish. But I must depart on the evening of July 8. Can you really undertake the long journey for such a short time? Or is that not too much? Please don't overtax yourself! I will probably

[1.] *NL*, A 50,2 (21); typewritten mimeograph; return address: "Elmhurst College, Elmhurst Illinois, Department of Religion." Previously published in *GS*2:360–61. [Letter is in original unaltered English.—VB]

[2.] See Lehmann's June 27, 1939, letter of recommendation, 1/123.

[1.] *NL*, A 50,2 (22); later typewritten copy; from New York. Previously published in *GS*2:361.

[2.] See Lehmann's July 2, 1939, letter to Bonhoeffer, 1/131.

hear more from you. The enclosed letter^[3] was exactly what I had in mind. Sincere thanks!

Always in faithfulness your
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

214 **134. To His Parents**^[1]

July 3, 1939

My dear Parents,

Today your letter from Switzerland arrived.^[2] Thank you very much for it. In the meantime you will have received our mail from here. Today I will try an airmail letter. An airplane is supposed to go out on the fifth. Since tomorrow is a major holiday here—Independence day^[3]—I am already writing today so that the letter goes off for certain. There is not much to tell, since we wrote only two days ago.^[4] The news continues to make us uneasy here, and nowhere can one learn what is really going on. In any case, I am staying at present with my plan to travel together with Karl Friedrich. Ultimately, four weeks here more or less should not be of any consequence. Of course, it is a real shame. The other decision would in any case be all too incalculable. I would be very happy to find news from you at Sabine's.^[5] I will, of course, not stay there very long, and their vacation plans appear to me to be rather uncertain. Karl Friedrich is downtown all day today, at the consulate, the party,^[6] etc., so we will see each other only this evening; I still hope to visit several friends. Aunt Irma^[7] sent a very nice letter today.

[3.] Lehmann's July 3, 1939, circular letter to colleges and seminaries, 1/132.

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (30); handwritten; no return address, certainly from New York. Partially reproduced in *GS* 6:461–62.

[2.] Letter not extant.

[3.] ["Independence day" in English in the original.—VB]

[4.] See Bonhoeffer's July 1, 1939, letter to his parents, 1/130.

[5.] Sabine Leibholz in London.

[6.] The reference is to the NSDAP organization abroad, which at the time was represented at all major German consulates. Among other things, its role was to examine the political reliability of Germans who traveled abroad, and in some cases to denounce them to the regime in order to prevent them from obtaining visas for future trips abroad. [Regarding party surveillance of Bonhoeffer during his period in London, see *DBWE* 13:262, 264–66, 293.—VB]

[7.] Irma Boericke; the letter mentioned is not extant.

Karl Friedrich is decided on going there. By the way, Karl Friedrich and I had a long conversation with Gert^[8] before our departure. It was necessary. I will, of course, see him soon. By the way, I would like to have a letter to Sabine from Eberhard. I have heard almost nothing from there and want to [know] when they're taking vacation at the seaside and whether a substitute is there. Karl Friedrich is also in the midst of major deliberations, as you know.^[9] I wonder whether Walter^[10] knows enough English to come here sometime? I could certainly procure an invitation for him. He should write me there too, if he wishes. He would have to pay for the journey himself. That's it for today. Hopefully, the letter will arrive safely. Many greetings to you and my brothers and sisters, your grateful

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Dietrich

135. To Erwin Sutz^[1]

Dear brother Sutz,

You will be not a little surprised to receive a card from me here. I was invited to be here at Union for one month.^[2] It was good and instructive, but I am being pulled irresistibly back toward the Confessing Church. Tomorrow I will depart. I have thought of you often and spoken of you. Coffin, Bewer ,and others send their regards.^[3]

In old faithfulness, regards from your
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

[8.] Gerhard Leibholz.

[9.] This refers to plans to accept a professorship in the United States that had been offered to him; Karl-Friedrich turned down the call to Chicago. See *DB-ER*, 656.

[10.] Walter Dreß.

[1.] In the personal possession of the Sutz family; handwritten postcard; postmarked: New York, 5.7.1939. Cf. *NL*, A Anh. A 8 (3). Partially reproduced in *GS* 1:49.

[2.] Union Theological Seminary.

[3.] Henry Sloane Coffin and Julius A. Bewer. Sutz and Bonhoeffer had become acquainted when both were studying at Union Seminary in 1930–31. See *DB-ER*, 153, and *DBWE* 10.

216 **136. From Reinhold Niebuhr to Paul Lehmann**^[1]

Dear Paul:

Thank you for your kind letter. I am sorry about all the trouble you have had at my suggestion with Bonhoeffer. A letter from Van Dusen^[2] in the same mail with yours informs me that Bonhoeffer is returning on August 8. I do not understand it at all. He wanted to stay out for a year and [1] don't understand why he changed his plans after we made the arrangements.

I am working on my third lecture right now.^[3] Have been at it so long that I feel the whole thing to be stale and unprofitable. I don't find it easy to get material in the libraries in London so the second series will be thin and will have to be reworked. Karl Barth's son Marcus was at the lectures and he thought them very heretical. A very nice lad but 102% Barthian. He believes that if there were no ten commandments no one would ever have known that it is wrong to kill. That kind of stuff gets me quite madly liberal.

You are right about the English countryside. We have a lovely spot in Sussex where we will be till September 1st. The children are doing well. I enclose a photo. I do hope you and Marion^[4] will have a good rest this summer. For goodness sake don't do everything they ask you to do.

Terribly sorry to have increased your work futilely about Bonhoeffer. Please send me a bill for the actual expenses.

Love from Ursula^[5] to Marion. Affectionately yours,

Reinie

[1.] *NL*, A 50, 2 (26); typewritten carbon copy with handwritten signature; return address "The Moat House, Wivelsfield, Sussex, July 8th [1939]"; previously unpublished. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

[2.] Henry P. Van Dusen.

[3.] See Niebuhr's May 11, 1939, letter to Lehmann, 1/91, ed. note 2.

[4.] Marion Lehmann.

[5.] Ursula Niebuhr.

137. American Diary^[1]

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June 8, 1939^[2]

Zech. 7:9: "Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another."^[3]

Matt. 5:7: "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy."

Yesterday evening, shortly after I had written,^[4] I became acquainted with a young American theologian, a former Union man.^[5] That was as if my prayers had been heard. We spoke of Christ in Germany and in America and in Sweden, from where he had just come. The task in America became great again to me.

"Render true judgments and . . ." I request that first of you, my brothers at home. I do not want to be spared in your thoughts. But what does it mean to render true judgment before the merciful God, before the cross of Jesus Christ, other than to be merciful? Not a blind mercy; for that would not be merciful, but a seeing, forgiving, fraternal mercy as the just judgment upon us.

"Render true judgments and . . ." This is a compelling warning and directive for the task in America. It forbids all overconfidence and makes the *task* great. To see brothers in the Others, who stand just as much under the mercy of Jesus Christ as all of us, who have a right to a brotherly word, without glossing over, without prejudice, without arrogance, and full of merciful love. Only when we ourselves live and speak entirely from the mercy of Christ and no longer at all out of our own and particular knowledge or experience, then we will be not sanctimonious but merciful. If only God remains merciful to *us!*

[1.] *NL*, A 50,1; typewritten copy made later by Eberhard Bethge (the original has not been found). Partially reproduced in *GS* 1:292–315. On Bonhoeffer's trip to the United States in June–July 1939, see *DB-ER*, 648–62.

[2.] Written aboard the *Bremen* en route from Southampton to New York, via Cherbourg.

[3.] This verse and the following verses throughout the diary are the daily watchwords and interpretive verses from the Moravian Daily Texts.

[4.] Cf. 1/107, Bonhoeffer's June 7, 1939, postcard to Bethge.

[5.] The man is not identified.

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June 9, 1939

Isa. 41:9: “You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off.”

John 12:26: “Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also.”

God chooses the sinner as servant, in order that God’s grace becomes entirely clear. The sinner is to do God’s work and spread God’s grace. Whomever God has forgiven, God gives this person a service to do. But this service can consist in nothing other than in discipleship. Great programs always lead us only to where we ourselves are; we, however, should be found only where God is. We cannot be anywhere other than where God is. Whether you work over there or I work in America, we are both only where God is. God takes us along. Or have I indeed evaded the place where God is? where God is *for me*? No, God says: You are my servant.

June 10, 1939

Ps.^[6] 28:7: “The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts; so I am helped, and my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.”

Eph.: 4:30: “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption.”

Wherein can “the heart exult” except in the daily certitude that God is our loving father and Jesus Christ is our savior! With what could we grieve the Holy Spirit more than by giving way to sad thoughts rather than entrusting ourselves confidently to the Spirit’s direction, his language, his comfort? until the day of redemption is there, is finally there!

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June 11, 1939

Ps. 44:21: “For he knows the secrets of the heart.”

1 Cor. 13:12: “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face.”

[6.] The typescript erroneously states “Isaiah.”

Today is Sunday. No worship service. Moreover, the hours have already shifted so that I cannot take part in your worship^[7] as it is happening. But I am fully with you, today more than ever. If only the doubts about my own path were overcome. The own search for the secrets of the heart, which are unfathomable—"for God knows the secrets of our heart." When the confusion of reproaches and excuses, of wishes and fears makes everything in us opaque, God sees in all clarity right through to the bottom. There, however, God finds the very name that he himself has inscribed: Jesus Christ. And thus we will someday see in all clarity, right through to the bottom of the divine heart, and there will be one name to read, no, to see there: Jesus Christ.—Thus let us celebrate Sunday. Someday we will come to know and behold what we believe today, someday we will worship together in eternity.

The beginning, the end, oh Lord, they are thine,
 The span in between, the life, was mine.
 And if I erred in the darkness and found no way out,
 With you, Lord, is clearness, and light is your house. Reuter^[8]

A little time still and I have won.
 Then all the strife at once is done.
 Then I may rest in valleys sweet,
 Continually with Jesus speak.^[9]

This afternoon a former student from the Harnack seminar,^[10] Miss Dr. 220
 Ferber,^[11] addressed me. She has a job in the information office on the *Bremen*.^[12] We had a good talk.

[7.] Bonhoeffer is referring to Bethge and the candidates in the collective pastorate in Sigurdshof.

[8.] This is the first verse of the epitaph written by the novelist Fritz Reuter for his own gravestone in Eisenach (Reuter, *Sämtliche Werke* 1:35); cf. also *DBWE* 10:555, ed. note 10, and *DBW* 14:777 and 925.

[9.] The inscription chosen by Søren Kierkegaard for his own grave. This is a verse from a hymn by Hans Adolf Brorson, whose hymns Kierkegaard greatly loved (Geismar, *Søren Kierkegaard*, 636. Translation by Ann R. Born; <http://www.webcom.com/kierke/bio/church.html>).

[10.] On Bonhoeffer's participation in Adolf von Harnack's church history seminar during the 1920s in Berlin, see *DB-ER*, 67–68, and *DBWE* 10:621–26.

[11.] Not otherwise identified.

[12.] See ed. note 2.

June 12, 1939

Deut. 6:6: “Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart.”

Acts 15:40: “But Paul chose Silas and set out, the brothers^[13] commending him to the grace of the Lord.”

“Paul set out, the brothers commending him to the grace of the Lord.” Arrival in New York. To know in these first hours that brothers have commended us to the grace of the Lord was decisive. Rev. Macy^[14] from the Federal Council of Churches^[15] welcomed me at the pier. First night in the Parkside Hotel. In the evening Dr. Sch.^[16] picked me up. The entire problematic of the German [. . .]^[17] became evident. Great disappointment about [. . .]^[18] at Harvard; appears utterly resigned.

June 13, 1939

Breakfast with Leiper,^[19] who welcomes me most cordially and picks me up. First consultations about the future. I state, as the clear point of departure for everything, that I intend to go back after one year at the latest. Surprise. But it is entirely clear to me that I must go back.—Visit to the office. An entire city block is filled with church offices of every kind.

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After several preliminary conversations and appointments made by telephone, on to Union Theological Seminary and the Prophets' Chamber^[20] with a lovely view of the Quadrangle. I had forgotten a great deal; but everything came back quickly, right up to the smell of the house.—Lunch with Van Dusen.^[21] Earlier I quarreled with him.^[22] He was a poor and self-

[13.] [Here the NRSV has “believers.”—VB]

[14.] Paul Macy.

[15.] The Federal Council of Churches of Christ in the USA was founded in 1908 by various churches and North American Protestant associations that were close to the “social gospel” (with its emphasis on the social significance of the gospel).

[16.] Probably Paul Scherer.

[17.] A word is missing in the typescript; possibly “emigration.”

[18.] A word is missing in the typescript.

[19.] Henry Smith Leiper.

[20.] This was the guest room at Union Theological Seminary.

[21.] Henry P. van Dusen.

[22.] [In 1930–31, Bonhoeffer attended the seminar on philosophical theology taught by John Baillie, Eugene Lyman, and Van Dusen. (cf. *DBWE* 10:643). While Bonhoeffer does not mention Van Dusen there directly, see *DBWE* 10:308–10 for his low opinion of much of the academic theology at Union. (Bonhoeffer did not care for Van Dusen

righteous theologian of the American mold. Here for the first time I realize graphically the great change in American theology in the last eight years. The cause for which we were engaged in 1930,^[23] apparently utterly hopelessly, has come to prevail in the course of the years. How this came about is not yet clear to me. Perhaps only a culture crisis? One speaks often of the human being's forlornness, of the "sins" of human beings; the optimistic evolutionism is past. But is it perhaps just the replacement of an optimistic view of humankind by a pessimistic one? What is known and proclaimed of the gospel, of Jesus Christ himself? That is the question. Meeting with President Coffin^[24] at Grand Central at four o'clock. On the train, an hour and a half conversation about the American situation. Strange, how critically Coffin speaks about his own colleagues. I believe that we can no longer do that at home. There is too much that connects us, for all the difference in opinions. Continuation of the conversation with Van Dusen. Coffin is a clear, practical man. He sees the necessity of preaching the gospel. He says: "Niebuhr^[25] preaches a half hour about the 'failure of man' and the last two minutes about the 'grace of God.'^[26] If this is true in general, then people here stand now where we stood fifteen years ago.—Interesting, the reports about the re-union^[27] of Episcopal and Presbyterian, mutual recognition as Churches of Christ, and of ordination. (Apostolic succession among the Presbyterians recognized by the Episcopalians as acceptable through the presbyteries. Somewhat questionable, it remains an institutional understanding of succession!)

The country house in Lakeville, Connecticut, is in the mountains; it is cool and lush vegetation. In the evenings thousands of fireflies in the garden, flying lightening bugs. I had never seen them. Utterly fantastic sight. Very cordial and "informal" reception. For all that, only Germany, the brothers, are missing. The first solitary hours are hard. I don't comprehend

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personally; see the June 20, 1939, entry from this diary). While Bonhoeffer here emphasizes how his U.S. acquaintances and their theology have changed, one wonders if his reevaluation of American theology in 1939 was not also influenced by his experiences of the failures of his church and theologians in Germany and his own changed perspective after several years under National Socialism. And he remained quite critical of U.S. theology, particularly the sermons he heard in New York; see, for example, the diary entry for July 3, 1939. See also the comments on this in my introduction to this volume.—VB]

[23.] During Bonhoeffer's studies at Union in 1930–31. Regarding this, see Bonhoeffer's 1931 report on his year of study to the Church Federation Office, *DBWE* 10, 1/181.

[24.] Henry Sloane Coffin, president of Union Seminary.

[25.] Reinhold Niebuhr.

[26.] ["Failure of man" and "grace of God" are in English in the original.—VB]

[27.] ["Re-union" is in English in the original.—VB]

why I am here, whether it was sensible, whether the outcome will be worth it. In the evenings the last thing: the Daily Texts and the thought of the work at home. Almost two weeks have passed now, without my knowing anything from over there. That is hardly bearable. “It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord” (Lam. 3:26).^[28]

June 14, 1939

Breakfast on the veranda at eight o'clock. During the night it poured. Everything is fresh and cool. Afterward devotions. The short prayer—the whole family kneels—in which we thought of the German brothers almost overwhelmed me. Then reading, writing, a drive out to deliver invitations for the evening. In the evening some twenty-five people, pastors, teachers with wives and friends. Very amicable encounters without yielding anything in particular.

June 15, 1939

223 Since yesterday evening my thoughts cannot get away from Germany. I would not have thought it possible that one at my age after so many years abroad can become so agonizingly homesick. In the morning a car drive that was in itself beautiful, to a woman acquaintance in the countryside, that is, in the mountains, became almost unbearable to me. One sat for an hour and chatted, not at all stupidly, but about matters that were so utterly trivial to me, whether a good musical education is possible in New York, about raising children, etc. etc., and I thought, how usefully I could spend these hours in Germany. I would have liked to take the next ship. This inactivity, or rather activity spent on trivialities, is simply no longer bearable for us, thinking of the brothers and the precious time. The full force of self-reproaches about a wrong decision comes back up and is almost suffocating. I was filled with despair. In the afternoon I attempted to work somewhat. Then I was invited to a second drive to the mountains of Massachusetts. It was very ill-timed for me. I had not even found the quiet to read the Bible and for prayer. The drive was lovely. We passed through a whole stretch of laurel woods. The view from above was somewhat similar to the Harz countryside. But the pressure didn't leave me all day. In the evening the cinema: *Juarez* with P. Muni.^[29] A good film. My thoughts were captured

[28.] The Daily Text for that day.

[29.] The 1939 film *Juarez* (directed by William Dieterle) with Paul Muni in the role of Benito Pablo Juarez.

for a while.—By the way, another letter to Leiper: I must return in one year at the latest.^[30] How happy I was, when in the evening I opened the Daily Texts again and read: “My heart rejoices, for you have dealt bountifully with me” (Ps. 13:6).^[31]

June 16, 1939

Only fourteen days ago today from Berlin, and already so filled with longing for the work again. Return to New York. Finally evening. I needed that urgently. One is less lonely when one is alone. Afternoon to evening the World’s Fair.^[32] The strongest impression perhaps the [. . .]^[33] pavilion. The Russians are too pompous, and in addition completely bourgeois. Most of the others too commercialized. Overall no particular impression. In the “Temple of Religion” Christians and Jews preach in turns. The whole building is dreadful, a movie theater. By the way: how much cleaner New York is than London. Neither on the trains nor on the street do people smoke. Also technologically more advanced or sophisticated (ventilation on every subway). But also how much more international New York is than London. Of the people that I spoke to today, at least half spoke a very terrible broken English. For a good American this constant murder of the language must be an abomination!

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I wait for mail! It can hardly be endured. I will probably not stay long. God’s word today states: “See, I am coming soon—.”^[34] No time is to be lost, and here I am losing days, perhaps weeks. In any case, that’s how it looks at present. Then, on the other hand, I tell myself: it is cowardice and weakness to run away from here now. But will I ever really be able to do meaningful work here?—Disturbing political news from Japan.^[35] If turmoil now breaks out, I will definitely travel to Germany. I cannot be alone abroad. That is utterly clear to me. I do live over there, after all.

[30.] See Bonhoeffer’s June 15, 1939, letter to Henry S. Leiper, 1/111

[31.] [NRSV: “My heart shall rejoice. . . . I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me” (Ps. 13:5–6).—VB]

[32.] The 1939–40 World’s Fair in New York.

[33.] A word is missing in the typescript.

[34.] Rev. 3:11.

[35.] There was heavy fighting between Japanese and Soviet troops around the Manchurian-Mongolian border (the Lake Khasan and Nomonhan incidents) and tensions with the United States before the cancellation of the Japanese-American trade agreement on July 26, 1939.

June 17, 1939

The whole day in the library looking through *Christian Century*. Instructive essays: “How my mind has changed in the last decade.”^[36] Theology professors about the change in American theology since 1929. The decisive turn toward the Word appears to have not yet occurred, but rather a turn from belief in progress to nihilism, from ethicism to a philosophy of the “present,” of the “concrete situation.” Report on the most recent lynching of a black person. Two white persons enter the home and pray with the blacks “that the day may come when such things will not happen in America.”^[37] That is a good resolution of such events.—Furthermore, a report on 225 the a-religiosity of college students, “disinterested.”^[38] That must be what comes if one doesn’t finally understand that “religion” is truly superfluous.

June 18, 1939—Sunday

Worship at Riverside Church. Simply unbearable. Text: a statement by Jane James (!)^[39] about “accepting an horizon,”^[40] how one gains a horizon, namely, God as the necessary horizon for humankind. Preacher Luccock, Professor of Yale;^[41] the whole thing a discreet, opulent, self-satisfied celebration of religion. With such an idolization of religion, the flesh, which was accustomed to being held in check by the word of God, revives. Such preaching renders people libertine, egoistic, indifferent. Do the people really not know that one can do as well or better without “religion”—if only it weren’t for God himself and his Word? Perhaps the Anglo-Saxons really are more religious than we, but they may not be more Christian, if they tolerate such sermons. For me there is no doubt that someday a storm will blow forcefully into this religious hand-out,^[42] if God himself is still in the plan

[36.] A series of articles titled “How My Mind Has Changed in This Decade” appeared in the magazine *The Christian Century* from January to September 1939. [See Bonhoeffer’s reading notes on several of these essays (1/137a), which clearly influenced his work on the essay “Protestantism without Reformation” (2/6).—VB]

[37.] [Bonhoeffer gives the quotation in English.—VB]

[38.] Ruth Davies, “Are Students Losing Their Religion?” *Christian Century* 56 (1939): 676–69.

[39.] Bonhoeffer probably means William James, the standard representative of American pragmatism.

[40.] [Quotation in English in original.—VB]

[41.] [The German *DBW* has “Lubrook,” but the reference is to Halford E. Luccock, professor of homiletics at Yale at the time; Luccock spoke at Riverside Church in 1939 as part of its “30 Good Minutes” series. “Professor of Yale” in English in original.—VB]

[42.] [“Hand-out” in English in original.—VB]

at all. In human terms the matter is not even unpleasant, but I do prefer a sermon by Brother Schutz,^[43] as rustic as it may be. The tasks for a genuine theologian over here are immeasurable. But only an American can get rid of this rubble. Up to now no one appears to be there.

How good the Daily Texts for today are: Ps. 119:105; Matt. 13:8.^[44] Worked in the afternoon. Didn't speak to anyone the whole day. I must now learn again how well off I have been so far, always to be in the fellowship of the brothers. And Niemöller has been alone for two years.^[45] Unthinkable. What faith, what discipline, and what a palpable act of God!—Now the day has nonetheless ended well. I was in church again. As long as there are lonely Christians, there will still be worship services. It is truly a great help after a few completely lonely days to go to church and pray together, sing together, listen together there. The sermon was astounding (Broadway Presbyterian Church, Dr. Mc[Comb])^[46] about "our likeness with Christ."^[47] A completely biblical sermon—particularly good the sections: "*we are blameless like Christ,*" "*we are tempted like Christ!*"^[48] Later this will eventually be a center of resistance long after Riverside Church will have become a temple of idolatry. I was very pleased about this sermon. But why does a man who preaches this way not notice at all what dreadful music he has them play? I will ask him about it. With this sermon, an America heretofore completely unknown to me has been opened up.

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By the way, I almost became ungrateful during these days for all the protection God has given to me. Over the intention and the innermost need to think unceasingly of the brothers over there and their work, I almost fled the task here. It would have almost seemed to me to be disloyalty if I am not with all my thoughts over there. I must still find the right balance. Paul writes too that he thinks of his congregation "without ceasing"^[49] in prayer and simultaneously devoted himself entirely to the task there. This

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[43.] Erwin Schutz [one of Bonhoeffer's students in the collective pastorates—VB].

[44.] "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" and "other seeds fell on good soil."

[45.] Martin Niemöller had been imprisoned since July 1, 1937; after the beginning of February 1938, he was in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

[46.] John H. McComb. The typescript erroneously has "Dr. McColm."

[47.] [Quotation in English in original.—VB]

[48.] [Quotations in English in original.—VB] A note sheet of Bonhoeffer's has been preserved (*NL*, A 54,15), possibly his notes from the sermon he had heard: "Let us never pity ourselves; let us never be tragic. There is nothing tragic about our suffering. Let us realize that through suffering God is conforming us to his likeness, that our suffering is only part of God's suffering and that finally the victory and triumph is his. So a life of suffering is the root of victorious living."

[49.] Rom. 1:9–10.

is something that must be learned. It will come only through praying. God, in the next week give me clarity about my future and keep me in the community of the prayers of the brothers.

June 19, 1939

Without news from Germany the whole day, from mail to mail, waiting in vain. It doesn't help to get angry and write letters in that mood. By the time the letter arrives, the awaited news will have long come. I want to know how the work over there is going, whether all is going well or whether they need me. I want to have a hint from over there for tomorrow's decisive consultation.^[50] Perhaps good that it didn't arrive.—The news about China is disturbing.^[51] Can one reach home in time if things become serious? The whole day in the library. Wrote English lectures.^[52] I have much difficulty with the language. They say that I speak good English, and I find it so completely inadequate. How many years, decades did it take to learn German, and one cannot master it even now. I will never learn English. That in itself is a reason to go back home soon. Without language one is lost, hopelessly lonely. In the evening to Times Square, an escape. News Reel^[53] here lasts for an hour. Early to bed. What a day. But: "the name of the Lord Jesus was praised" (Acts 19:17). It bothers me that we don't have the same time as Germany. It makes common prayer more difficult and hinders it. It is the same each evening. But: "We give thanks to you, God, that your name is so near" (Ps. 75:2).

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June 20, 1939

In the morning a letter from my parents in southern Germany.^[54] Booklets from Stettin.^[55] Visit with Leiper. With that the decision has been made.

[50.] [Bonhoeffer had an appointment to speak to Leiper, where he shared his decision to return to Germany; see the diary entry for June 20.—VB]

[51.] Bonhoeffer refers to the events of July 7, 1939; the ongoing war between Japan and China had flared up again, as well as the battles between Japanese and Soviet troops on the Manchurian border and in Outer Mongolia. Cf. Erdmann, *Die Zeit der Weltkriege*.

[52.] See the descriptions in *NL*, A 50,1:21–25, mainly notes about the series of articles "How my mind has changed in this decade," from *The Christian Century*. Bonhoeffer used most of them in the sixth section (on theology) of his essay "Protestantism without Reformation," 2/6. [These notes, which are not included in the German *DBW* 15, are included in this volume as 1/137a.—VB]

[53.] ["News Reel" in English in original.—VB]

[54.] Letter not extant.

[55.] Not identified.

I turned it down.^[56] He was visibly disappointed and indeed somewhat put out. For me it may mean something more than I am able to foresee at the moment. God alone knows. It is strange that in all my decisions I am never completely clear about my motives. Is that a sign of lack of clarity, inner dishonesty, or is it a sign that we are *led* beyond that which we can discern, or is it both?

Isa. 45:19: "I am the Lord who speaks of righteousness,^[57] I declare what is right."

1 Pet. 1:17: "If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile."

The Daily Text today speaks with terrible severity of God's incorruptible judgment. God certainly sees how much personal concern, how much fear is contained in today's decision, as courageous as it may appear. The reasons that one puts forward to others and oneself for an action are certainly not sufficient. One can simply give reasons for anything. In the end one acts out of a level that remains hidden from us. Because of that one can only pray that God will wish to judge us and forgive us.^[58]

Visit to Dr. Bewer;^[59] very cordial reception. In the afternoon David Roberts. Long theological conversation. Criticism of the fundamentalists, holds them in an emergency as no more dependable than the Riverside Church people. Fosdick,^[60] the Antichrist in the eyes of Broadway Presbyterian. America forty years behind Germany. Twenty years behind Scotland. It appears as though Germany is indeed still the land of spiritual discoveries.—In the evening at Van Dusen's. I don't like him; he likes himself too much. Wrote letters.^[61] Nine-thirty for an hour at Bewer's. How good to speak German again. At the end of the day, I can only pray that God may hold merciful judgment over this day and all decisions. It is now in God's hand.^[62]

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[56.] [Bonhoeffer had turned down Leiper's offer of a position overseeing refugee work.—VB]

[57.] [Here the NRSV has "who speaks the truth."—VB]

[58.] This is similar to Bonhoeffer's letter to the young colleagues in Pomerania at the end of January 1938, 1/7, pp. 000–000: "What should happen now? There are so many reasons, and theologians can prove everything. Everything will depend on whether God will give his witness anew into our hearts. Jesus Christ alone can break the spell."

[59.] Julius A. Bewer.

[60.] Harry E. Fosdick.

[61.] See Bonhoeffer's June 29, 1939, letter to Elisabeth Bethge, 1/116.

[62.] For more about Bonhoeffer's decision to return to Germany, see *DB-ER*, 653–55.

June 21, 1939

Worked peacefully in the morning. Very hot. In the afternoon the Metropolitan Museum; I particularly liked El Greco (landscape above Toledo entirely in green)^[63] and Memling (head of Christ).^[64] In the evening very warmly and generously invited to Bewer's. I notice how much more freely one behaves among these people today compared to back then.^[65] It was so good to speak and think German again. I have never felt the resistance of the English language against my thoughts as strongly as here in New York. In the garb of this language, I always feel dissatisfied with myself. Bewer's judgment about America was quite important to me, as well as his experiences of war. They can yield themselves to hatred without reservation, perhaps immaturely.

230 Regarding my decision, the thoughts naturally continue. One might, of course, have justified it entirely differently: the fact is, one is here (perhaps the very misunderstanding was a guidance?); one is told that when I was announced it was as if prayers had been heard; they particularly want to have me; they don't understand why I am turning this down; it is upsetting all plans for the future; I have no news from home; perhaps everything is going just as well without me etc. Or one could ask: did I simply act out of yearning for Germany and the work there? And is this lingering homesickness, which is almost incomprehensible to me and till now remains almost completely unfamiliar, an accompanying sign from above, which should make the refusal easier? Or is it not irresponsible in light of so many other people, simply to say no to one's own future and that of many others? Will I regret it? I may not do so, that is for certain.^[66] Despite everything, for me the promise stands in the first place, then the joy in the work at home, and finally the other person whom I would be driving out.^[67] Once more the Daily Text speaks so harshly: "God will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver"

[63.] El Greco's painting *View of Toledo* (ca. 1595–1610).

[64.] Probably Hans Memling's painting *Christ Giving the Blessing*; cf. Friedländer, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, vol. 6, pt. 1, 90.

[65.] [I.e., in 1930–31, during his study year in New York.—VB]

[66.] Cf. Bonhoeffer's statement in his December 22, 1943, letter to Bethge from the Military Detention Center in Berlin-Tegel: "You should know, by the way, that not for a single moment have I regretted my return in 1939, nor anything of what has then followed. That took place in full clarity and with the best conscience" (*DBWE* 8:236).

[67.] [Bonhoeffer had been offered a job helping refugees in the American Committee for Christian German Refugees. He feared this would make any return to Germany impossible and also felt that the position should be given to a refugee who did not have the option of returning to Germany, as Bonhoeffer did. Cf. *DB-ER*, 651–52.—VB]

(Mal. 3:3). It is necessary indeed. I no longer know how things stand with myself. But God knows, and in the end all actions and deeds will be clear and pure.

June 22, 1939

Without news from over there. Invitation to Boerickes.^[68] I leave next week. In the morning worked, wrote.^[69] I am sorry about my decision mostly because of Sabine.^[70] Read in the afternoon. Niebuhr: *Interpretation of Christian Ethics*.^[71] Filled with wrong and superficial statements. The formulation of the questions still entirely between orthodox and liberal critique, but no truly fundamental new approach, “myth” instead of the word of God. Evening in the News Reel Theatre, nothing special. The evening papers bring very upsetting news about Japan.^[72] Bewer calms me down. For a German over here it is simply no longer to be endured; one is simply torn apart. To be here during a catastrophe is simply unthinkable, unless it is meant to be. But to be guilty of this oneself, to have to reproach oneself for having gone abroad unnecessarily, is certainly crushing. We simply cannot separate ourselves from our fate, here abroad less than ever; here it rests upon one’s shoulders alone, and one has no voice and no rights in a foreign land. Moreover, here too the storm will soon break loose. There is seething unrest under the surface. Woe then to them who are here without a homeland! It is so strange, how strongly these very thoughts move me in these days and how all thoughts of the *Una Sancta*^[73] break through only with difficulty. Terribly much is already buried in oblivion.

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Since yesterday evening I write in bed. That is a very good close. What remain are only the Daily Texts and intercessory prayers. No news from Germany. In the morning discussions with Bewer, Van Dusen about the future. I intend to go back in August. They urge me to stay longer. But if nothing else intervenes, I am staying with August 12. I will then stay a while at Sabine’s.^[74] Lunch with David Roberts and his wife, very nice. We talked

[68.] See 1/118, ed. note 6.

[69.] Cf. Bonhoeffer’s June 22, 1939, letter to his parents, 1/118.

[70.] Sabine Leibholz.

[71.] Reinhold Niebuhr’s 1935 book.

[72.] See ed. note 35.

[73.] The abbreviation for the formula from the Nicene Creed (*Book of Concord*, 22–23): “Credo . . . unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam” (I believe . . . one only, holy, Christian, apostolic church).

[74.] In London.

about the Negro question. Nothing seems to have changed, unless, at most the anti-lynching-bill.^[75] He thinks that the danger of revolution in the South is great. Until now I didn't know that the blacks are being kept from practicing their right to vote. In the great unification of the Methodists (May 1939), the black churches are not included.^[76] He couldn't name any recent literature. Great increase in anti-Semitism. A mountain resort: "1000 feet—too high for Jews."—Advertisement: "Gentiles preferred."^[77] In the afternoon visited Colvin.^[78] Back home. Sat by the Hudson and thought of Sigurdshof. Why do I not hear anything?²—Finished reading Niebuhr.^[79] The portrayal of the inapplicability of so-called Christian principles to life, politics, etc. is still the best. Critique of liberalism. Little or rather no originality as to positive statements. (Contrast between the absolute ideal and the relative-pragmatic good. Both necessary.) This thinking does not come from the Bible, for that reason deeply unproductive. His essay in *Beyond Tragedy* about "as deceivers yet true"^[80] is pure modernism.

Downstairs at the moment a conference about revising the hymnal is concluding. They are playing chorales in terribly bad tempo and with poor pedaling. For that the clavichord is better. Daily Texts and intercessory prayer.

June 24, 1939

Finally mail.^[81] That is a great liberation. But it is also totally clear to me again that I must get back to the work. Today I got quite a bit done. W. A.

[75.] ["Anti-lynching" in English in original.—VB] This refers to the law against lynching that was proposed and debated in 1934 in both houses of Congress and passed in 1935. [The reference here is probably to the Wagner-Costigan bill, which was debated in 1934 but was filibustered in 1935 and never made it out of committee. The first federal antilynching law was passed in the United States in 1968, when lynching became a federal crime under the Civil Rights Act.—VB]

[76.] As a result of their different positions on slavery, the southern Methodist Episcopal church had broken away from the northern Methodist Episcopal church in 1844. The reunification took place in 1939.

[77.] [Quotations in English in original.—VB]

[78.] Harold Colvin.

[79.] See ed. note 71.

[80.] Reinhold Niebuhr, *Beyond Tragedy*, 1–24. Cf. 2 Cor. 6:8: ". . . as impostors, and yet are true."

[81.] Cf. Bethge's June 12, 1939, letter to Bonhoeffer, 1/109.

Brown: State and Church,^[82] etc. This morning Rockwell^[83] took too much of my time. I am now reflecting often on whether it is true that America is the land without Reformation.^[84] If Reformation is the God-given recognition of the failure of all paths to the building of the kingdom of God on earth, then this is accurate. But does that not also hold true for England? In America the voice of Lutheranism does exist, but as one among many; it has never really been capable of challenging the other denominations. Apparently, “encounters” rarely come about at all in this vast land, where one can always evade the other. Where, however, there are no encounters, where liberty^[85] [is] the only unifying force, there the community created through encounter is naturally unfamiliar. This alters the general life together. Community in our sense can[not] grow here, neither culturally nor in the churches. Is this true?—Wrote cards in the evening. Called Felix Gilbert.—The newspapers today are again dreadful. Daily Text: “Whoever believes, will not flee” [Isa. 28:16].^[86] I think of the work at home. Tomorrow is Sunday. Will I hear a *sermon* tomorrow?

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June 25, 1939—Sunday

Worship service at Luther Church. Church on Central Park, Dr. Scherer.^[87] Sermon on Luke 15, about overcoming fear. Very forced approach to the text. Otherwise lively and original, but too much analysis and very little gospel. It hit home when he said of the life of the Christian that it is similar to the daily joy of one who is on the way home.—Again, no basic exegesis of the text. It is very pathetic.—Lunch at the Bewers. Conversation about the newspapers here, afterward about the peculiar silence of the American public about the suffering of Christians in Russia,^[88] about the unfamiliarity with the Bible, about poor Sunday schools.—Afternoon and evening with Gilbert.^[89] He respects Roosevelt greatly. Explained a

[82.] [“State and Church” in English in original.—VB] Brown, *Church and State in Contemporary America*.

[83.] [William Rockwell, the Union Theological Seminary librarian at the time.—VB]

[84.] See 2/6.

[85.] [“Liberty” in English in original.—VB]

[86.] [The NRSV reads: “One who trusts will not panic.”—VB]

[87.] Paul Scherer. [The church was Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, where Scherer was pastor from 1920 to 1945.—VB]

[88.] Particularly during and after the large Stalinist purges in the Soviet Union in 1936–37.

[89.] Felix Gilbert.

great deal to me. Pleasant encounter since our years at school.—Today is Augustana day.^[90] This makes me remember the brothers at home. Rom. 1:16.^[91]

June 26, 1939

234 Letter from my parents in Switzerland.^[92] During the day work in the library. Finished W. A. Brown.^[93] Denominational praxis of training and ordination.^[94] It is very difficult to get a uniform picture. Tillich's formulation of the contrast between the theocratic-democratic and the autocratic-sacramental is still too formal, too sociological. Theoretically it is somehow connected to the absence of the Reformation. The word of God has never entirely shattered and entirely liberated this people. Therefore too the preference for Catholicizing concepts of humanitarianism. (J. Maritain: *True Humanism*.)^[95]—Today I happened to read from 2 Tim. 4:21 "come before the winter"—Paul's plea to Timothy. Timothy is to share the suffering of the apostle^[96] and not be ashamed. "Come before the winter"—otherwise it might be too late. That is haunting me the whole day. We seem to feel like the soldiers on leave from the front who, despite all that awaits them, push to return to the front. We can't come free of it. Not as if we were necessary, as if we were needed (by God!?), but simply because our life is there and because we desert our life, annihilate it, if we are not part of things there. It is not at all something pious, but something almost vital. But God acts not only through pious impulses but also through such vital stirrings as well. "Come before the winter"—it is not a misuse of the Scripture if I allow this to be said *to me*. If God gives me the grace for that.

[90.] The commemoration of the day the Augsburg Confession was given to Kaiser Karl V at the Reichstag in 1530. [The Augsburg Confession was central in the theological training of Confessing Church pastors. See, for example, the section on "daily study" in *DBW*14:151 (1/72).—VB]

[91.] ["For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jews first and also to the Greek."—VB]

[92.] Letter not extant.

[93.] See ed. note 82.

[94.] Bonhoeffer made notes about the different training and ordination practices of the Presbyterians, the Congregationalists, and the Baptists. See *NL*, A 54,2.

[95.] Maritain's 1938 book.

[96.] [Paul.—VB]

June 27, 1939

Letter from my parents.^[97] Great joy, quite surprising. Noon and afternoon work in the library. Tillich, Niebuhr. In the evening a visit from Professor Richardson,^[98] long conversation. He is English. It seems to me as if one stood closer to him than to the Americans. Do the Americans perhaps fail so utterly to understand us because they are a population of those who left Europe in order to live their faith freely on their own? That is, because they did not stand up to the ultimate decision in questions of faith. They would, I believe, understand the refugee better than the one who stays. From this perspective the American tolerance or, more correctly, indifference on dogmatic questions can be understood. The encounter in battle is ruled out, but therefore the genuine passionate longing for unity in faith as well.

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June 28, 1939

In the morning YMCA headquarters, tour. The chapel is the loveliest room in the entire building. Most [. . .]^[99] have none at all. Among other things the Roman missal lies in the chapel. Otherwise the usual picture. Afternoon work in the library. In the evening supper with Professor Richardson. Afterward read for a long time. *Kingdom of God in America*—Richard Niebuhr.

The newspaper reports become more and more disturbing. They pull the thoughts away. I cannot think that it is God's will that if war comes I should remain here without a particular assignment. I must leave at the first possible date.

June 29, 1939

Telegram from K. Fr.^[100] Looked for lodging. Work till noon. Afternoon a missed appointment. In the evening a good, brotherly talk with Roberts,^[101] who leaves tomorrow on vacation. I gave him two of my books. He promised to send me books when I write him. The news today is such

[97.] Letter not extant.

[98.] Cyril Richardson.

[99.] One or several words are missing in the typescript.

[100.] Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer; the telegram is not extant.

[101.] David Roberts.

that I am rather decided to travel back with Karl Friedrich. Tomorrow we will talk about it.

236 Roberts spoke very critically about the church in America. The distress [Not] comes from within. The utter indifference toward the message increasingly undermines the church. “Keep away from politics”^[102]—says that the church should confine itself to its “religious task,” in which no one has any interest. It is always difficult for me to understand how the principle of a separation between church and state is consistent with the praxis of a social, economic, societal, and political effectiveness of the church. In any case, the separation of church and state obviously does not mean that the church remains devoted its own tasks, nor does it safeguard against secularization. Nowhere is the church more secularized than here, where it is separated on principle [from the state]. This very separation can create a counterpart that drives the church much more strongly into political-secular matters. That may be important for our own decisions over there.

June 30, 1939

Letter from Fritz.^[103] Contemplative and brotherly as always. Unfortunately nothing else. At 11 a call from Karl Friedrich, who is coming from Chicago. There is much to talk about. He received an excellent offer of a professorship there; it means a permanent decision.^[104] Then my questions. Since in the present situation I would have departed in any case after four weeks at the latest, under the present circumstances I have decided to leave with Karl Friedrich on the eighth. I do not want to be here in case of war, and objectively there is nothing here to learn about the situation. That was a major decision. In the morning a letter from Paul, who was so optimistic about my staying here.^[105] Afternoon and evening the World’s Fair,^[106] the technical things. In the evening for the first time didn’t write anything.

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July 1, 1939

Moved this morning. Noon Karl Friedrich. Afternoon wrote a bit. Then with Karl Friedrich in the city, bought presents, Music Hall, cinema, the

[102.] [Quotation in English in original.—VB]

[103.] Fritz Onnasch; letter not extant.

[104.] Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer turned down the professorship offered in Chicago. See *DB-ER*, 656.

[105.] See Lehmann’s June 28, 1939, letter to Bonhoeffer, 1/125.

[106.] See ed. note 32.

largest.^[107] Horrible. Obtrusive, showy, sumptuous colors, music, and flesh. Only in such a metropolitan atmosphere can one put on such fantasies. Karl Friedrich is of a different opinion. Back home in time in the evening. The whole day, thoughts about the situation in Germany and of the church did not leave me. The Daily Texts today are so good again! Job 41:11.^[108] “Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me.” Rom. 11:36: “. . . from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.” The earth, the peoples, Germany, and above all the church cannot fall from God’s hand. In light of the situation today, it is tremendously difficult for me to think and pray “Thy will be done.”^[109] But it must be. Tomorrow is Sunday. May God’s word find a hearing throughout the world.

July 2, 1939—Sunday

Church, Park Avenue, Rev. Sockman^[110] (radio preacher!) about “today is ours,”^[111] without a text, not the faintest echo of Christian proclamation. One more disappointment. The collection with prayer and singing is always good. Noon with Karl Friedrich, afternoon work, that is, wrote something about America, *attempted* to write. Spent the day at the seminary with Karl Friedrich; spoke at length about his plans.

The Americans in their sermons speak so much about freedom. Freedom as a possession is for the church a dubious thing; freedom must be won under the constraint of necessity. The freedom of the church arises from the necessity [Muß] of God’s word. Otherwise, it becomes arbitrary and ends in many a new bondage. Whether the church in America is truly “free” is very questionable to me. These are lonely Sundays over here. Only the Word creates the true church-community. I yearn for a good devotional service in community in my own language.—The news is not good. Will we come in time? Daily Text: Isa. 35:10!!^[112] Intercessory prayer.

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[107.] [Probably Radio City Music Hall.—VB]

[108.] [The German text incorrectly gives Job 41:3 for this verse. Translation here is from the NIV, which is closer to the German text.—VB]

[109.] The third verse of the Lord’s Prayer, Matt. 6:10.

[110.] [The German *DBW* text and *NL* microfiche incorrectly have “Gorkmann,” but the reference is certainly to Ralph Washington Sockman, a famous radio preacher of that era; the church was Christ Church, a Methodist church.—VB]

[111.] [Quotation in English in original.—VB]

[112.] “And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

July 3, 1939

Lectures by Coffin, Richard Niebuhr, Harris.^[113] Everything confirmed my observation that theology here stands where we stood fifteen years ago. In the afternoon work at home. In the evening a long night conversation with a student, Gill.^[114] A full day. I have written down the first summary thoughts for an essay.^[115] But I would have to be able to continue writing it in one sitting. The morning prayer service with Coffin was very pitiful. I must watch myself, that I don't become neglectful in reading the Bible and in prayer.—Letter from Paul Lehmann.^[116]

July 4, 1939

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In the morning Coffin; then visit with Richard Niebuhr. Noon with Karl Friedrich Empire State Building. Film. In the evening invited to the Niebuhrs. Very long good conversation. The American separation of state and church has the sense of a "limitation of power"^[117] with regard to the government, not the Reformation teaching on respective offices.^[118] I suspected that. Niebuhr believes that Roger Williams^[119] held God as effective only in the spiritual sphere, and Williams's complete indifference toward the state can be explained in light of this perspective. Separation of church and state in America is no unambiguous phenomenon.—Daily texts, intercessory prayer.

July 5, 1939

The closer the departure approaches, the fuller the days become. In the morning, devotional service with Professor Smart.^[120] Van Dusen on

[113.] Erdman Harris.

[114.] Theodore Gill. [Gill later published the outline for a screenplay on Bonhoeffer's life (*Memo for a Movie*), but Bonhoeffer's 1939 stay in New York is mentioned only briefly and there is no account of this conversation.—VB]

[115.] This refers to his essay "Protestantism without Reformation," 2/6. [These notes are the concluding pages of his diary, 1/137a.—VB]

[116.] See Lehmann's July 2, 1939, letter to Bonhoeffer, 1/131.

[117.] ["Limitation of power" in English in original.—VB]

[118.] [That is, the offices of state authorities, on the one hand, and the office in the church on the other.—VB]

[119.] Founder of the colony of Rhode Island and the first Baptist congregation in America; a proponent of the separation of church and state and religious toleration.

[120.] James D. Smart.

Descartes. Very superficial. Work in the library. Horton, Keller.^[121] Continued in the afternoon. Noon conversation with two students from southern states about the problems of blacks. In the evening reception in the social room.^[122] It would be good to stay for four more weeks. But the stakes are too high. Letter from Eberhard,^[123] great joy. Good thought about John 2. Still no reply to my decisions. The Daily Text calls for gratitude.^[124]

July 6, 1939

I am writing on the ship. The last two days were filled, so that I didn't get to writing. In the morning down town^[125] to take care of travel preparations. On the way back the Stock exchange.^[126] Errands. At 2:30 I meet Paul Lehmann in my room, who came from Columbus, Ohio, to see me while I'm still here. Great joy. From now on the entire remaining time together with him. Prepared l[ecture course].

July 7, 1939 240

Last day. Paul is still trying to keep me here. It is no longer possible. Van Dusen lecture. Packed. Before noon with Hans Wedell. Theological conversations with Paul. Farewells in the seminary. Supper with Van Dusen. Drive to the ship with Paul. Good-byes at 11:30, departure at 12:30. Manhattan at night, the moon stands above the skyscrapers.^[127] It is very hot. The journey is over. I am glad that I was there, and glad that I am on my way home again. I have perhaps learned more in this month than in the entire year nine years ago; at least I have come to realize important things for all future personal decisions. Probably this journey will have a great effect upon me.

[121.] Walter B. Horton and Adolf Keller.

[122.] ["Reception" and "social room" in English in original.—VB]

[123.] See Bethge's June 23, 1939, letter to Bonhoeffer, 1/119.

[124.] Gen. 32:10: "[Jacob said:] for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan; and now I have become two companies." The interpretive verse is Eph. 3:20–21: "Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

[125.] ["Down town" in English in original.—VB]

[126.] ["Stock exchange" in English in original.—VB]

[127.] ["Skyscrapers" in English in original.—VB]

July 8, 1939

On the ship. It is quiet and hot. Travel by ship has lost the charm of novelty. Read much, America book^[128] (which is truly bad; the style is so poor that much becomes unclear).—Practical Religion,^[129] good essays.

July 9, 1939—Sunday

English worship service, which is well attended, but probably just as much for a change from the monotonous life aboard, like the cinema, among other things the text: “the sea will no longer be” (Rev. 21:1).^[130] The sermon sentimental and full of hollow phrases. Conversation with Karl Friedrich about theological topics. Read much. The days are noticeably shorter through the reduction of an hour. Since I have been aboard the ship, the internal tension about the future has stopped. I can think about the abbreviated time in America without reproach.—Daily Text: “It is good for me that I was humbled, so that I might learn your statutes” [Ps. 119:71]. One of my favorite sayings from my favorite psalm.^[131]

137a. Notes at the Conclusion of the Diary^[1]*Church as religious province* (philosophically-culturally)

As means to an end (peoples’ . . . moral life, for the satisfaction of religious needs for the harmony of existence, like science, art[]).

Church submerged into the world

Religion, church, private matter, private enjoyment.

Church as an invention for forgiveness of sins

Waste of the word and the sacraments.

[128.] Not identified.

[129.] [“Practical Religion” in English in original.—VB] Not identified.

[130.] [NRSV: “and the sea was no more.”—VB]

[131.] Cf. Bonhoeffer’s meditation on Psalm 119, 3/9.

[1.] [The following notes are from pp. 21–25 of Bethge’s typewritten transcript of Bonhoeffer’s New York diary (*NL*, A 50,1). They were not included in *DBW* 15. We have chosen to include them in *DBWE* 15 because they are clearly Bonhoeffer’s reading notes for his essay “Protestantism without Reformation” (2/6). Bonhoeffer’s notes were made both in English and German; this is indicated only where he cites directly from an English work. The editor particularly thanks Clifford J. Green for his help with transcription and bibliographic queries. First publication in the *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Jahrbuch* 4.—VB]

Outstanding:

Problems of . . . continental theology

Doctrine and heresy.

1. Confession and damnation
2. The Church
3. The powers ordained by God
6. Christ and anti-christ^[2]
 - Christlike life
4. Christian life, the meaning of suffering
5. Church and synod.

Edwin Lewis: "From Philosophy to Revelation"^[3]

June 14, 1939

1924: *Jesus Christ and the Human Question*.^[4]

Based upon the philosophy of Pringle-Patterson:^[5] The idea of God in the light of recent Philosophers.

1934: *Christian manifesto*^[6]

Through study of the Bible to recognition of the independence of the biblical belief in revelation.

Willard L. Sperry: professor of practical theology, Harvard University.

Jan. 18, 1939: How my mind has changed in this decade.

General overview. First article.

Older generation. Begin with "What would Jesus do?" (Marles M. Sheldon).^[7] Direct ethic. Called into question by Tolstoy and Nietzsche (English spokesman for N. was H. W. Garrod "The religion

[2.] [The numbered sequence here, which is out of order, replicates what is in the typescript.—VB]

[3.] [Lewis subsequently published *A Philosophy of the Christian Revelation*, so his essay in *The Christian Century* seems to anticipate that book.—VB]

[4.] [Lewis, *Jesus Christ and the Human Quest*.—VB]

[5.] [*The Idea of God in the Light of Recent Philosophers*, by Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison (not Patterson as in the typescript), was the publication of the 1911–13 Gifford Lectures.—VB]

[6.] [Lewis, *A Christian Manifesto*, a critique of liberal theology.—VB]

[7.] ["Marles" is a typographical error; the reference is to Charles M. Sheldon's *In His Steps "What Would Jesus Do?"*—VB]

of all good men,” 1906)^[8] Connection between dogmatics and ethics. A turning to the God question. “American life has been, until most recently, optimistic, once-born. . . . Our once-born America is changing before our eyes.”^[9] In . . . the sense of L. G. Tyrell’s formulation: “Christian religion is an ultimate optimism [founded] upon a provisional pessimism.”^[10] Repentance: provisional pessimism.

Henry Nelson Wiemann: Professor Religious Philosophy, Chicago

Jan. 25, 1939: Growth of religion.^[11]

“Some blind spots removed.”^[12]

He sees more clearly:

1. symbol Christian
2. Sin: every ideal that positions itself above the concrete situation
Therefore—he who makes ideals supreme over his life, no matter how loftily and no matter how perfectly he may live up to them, is sinning.
3. grace. The grace of God is the good word God puts into each concrete situation over and above all that man can do or plan or even imagine.
Because of our ideal we do not receive the grace of God.
4. Living Christ.
“It is the working of a process of history which used that human personality (Jesus)
“the growth of a community”—which breaks through all groups of culture, ideal, law. That is the living Christ.
5. The Church
“a new way of living.” Church must have a certain continuity. “Therefore ceremony and doctrine,” but they change. “It is the way of life that is important.”

[8.] [H. W. Garrod, *Religion of All Good Men.*—VB]

[9.] [This quotation is from Sperry’s essay, p. 84; William James used the term “once-born” to describe the kind of faith “which looks on all things and sees that they are good”; W. James, “The Varieties of Religious Experience,” in *Writings 1902–1910*, 85.—VB]

[10.] [The quotation from p. 84 of Sperry’s essay is by the Irish Jesuit scholar George Tyrrell from his book *Christianity at the Cross-Roads*, 69. The actual phrase there is “a proximate pessimism but an ultimate optimism.”—VB]

[11.] [Wiemann and Horton, *Growth of Religion.*—VB]

[12.] [This was the title of Wiemann’s essay in *The Christian Century.*—VB]

6. The otherness of God.

“God alone is concrete in his working.” “Man must work abstractly.”
God travels through all conceptions of the human [Menschen-
bilder]

Particular assessment of the Apostle Paul.

For Wiemann the transition came “through recognition of the sin”
(!) (Sin = non- concreteness) (idolization of the concrete, of history.
Immanentism: ideology of the “concrete situation” [])

“*Growth of religion*”^[13]—1938

“Theistic naturalism”—God is “growth of living connections of val-
ues in the universe” or “*unlimited growth*.” Therefore higher than all
ideas, doctrines etc. Romantic naturalism. Schleiermacher. Rejec-
tion of the personhood [Personhaftigkeit] of God, the personal
immortality.

Immanentism as philosophy of history

Christianity: the God who is *becoming* and the history that is *becoming*!

Reinhold Niebuhr

26.IV.39: “The year that shook my world”^[14]

Starting point: *liberalism*. Belief in the good of humanity, whether
in the naturalistic-romantic or in the rational-idealistic sense.

Optimism.

Positive aspects of liberalism:

The liberation of exact science

The religion

The application of historical method to the Bible

In contrast: the Cross is the end of history.

Liberalism forgot that “the spirit of man can find a home neither
in nature nor in reason, but only in God.” [“]

The political end of liberalism is “Munich.”^[15]

[13.] [Wiemann's book *The Growth of Religion*.—VB]

[14.] [Niebuhr, “Ten Years That Shook My World,” *Christian Century* (April 26,
1939).—VB]

[15.] [This is a reference to the 1938 Munich agreement between Nazi Germany and
the governments of France, Italy, and Great Britain, in which those governments agreed

Christ for the *new-orthodoxy*: source of despair. God
 Christ for the *correct liberalism* demands our ideal, our norm, and
 the revelation of our essential being.

Both are necessary.

W. M. Horton: Professor Oberlin College . . .

17.V.39: “Between Libertism and the New Orthodoxy”^[16]

1930: “R . . . and the modern mood”^[17]

1934: “Realistic Theology[“]”^[18]

1930: Question: outright surrender to humanism—without belief in
 God (Lippmann)^[19] and “fatalitarism” (Krutsch—without “faith in
 man”)^[20] or turning to theological tradition.

Contemporary english Theology^[21]

Contemporary continental Theology.^[22]

First landmark: *Augustine, Calvin, Barth*. See in everything only the
 theology of crisis, the transcendence appropriate for the present
 age; but other eras need Thomas, Schleiermacher, the Christian
 penetration of the world.

Second landmark: *M. W. Wiemann*^[23]

Third landmark: *The social gospel*

to the German annexation of the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia for the sake of
 preserving the European peace. It was criticized even at the time as an act of appease-
 ment and a betrayal of democratic values.—VB]

[16.] [The actual title of Horton’s article in *The Christian Century* was “Between Liber-
 alism and the New Orthodoxy.”—VB]

[17.] [W. M. Horton, *Theism and the Modern Mood*.—VB]

[18.] [Horton, *Realistic Theology*.—VB]

[19.] [Walter Lippmann, the U.S. journalist.—VB]

[20.] [Incorrect transcription; the word Horton actually used was “futilitarianism”
 (the belief in the futility of all human endeavor) and the reference is to Frederick Doyle
 Kerschner (not “Krutsch”), a Christian educator and dean of the School of Religion at
 Butler University.—VB]

[21.] [Horton, *Contemporary English Theology*.—VB]

[22.] [Horton, *Contemporary Continental Theology*.—VB]

[23.] [Incorrect transcription; the reference is to H. M. Wieman.—VB]

E. S. Ames.^[24] Minister in the University Church of Disciples in Chicago,
Prot. Professor of Philosophy

“Liberation Confirmed”^[25]

Decisive humanism. Detestation of today’s theology. Atavism. Recommendation of science. “God is life as you live it.” “Worship as praise and adulation does not fit with my idea of either God or man. It tends to separate them, to exalt one too much and to debase the other too much.”—How can this man be a pastor?

E. Stanley Jones: India. Missionary.

May 3, 1930: *The Christ of the Kingdom*

Emphasis on the Kingdom that has its center in Christ. Overcoming of individualism. Christocentric. “Barthianism in small doses” (here, as everywhere, outrageous ignorance!)

Cl. E. Macartney^[26]

March 8, 1939: *Warm hearts and steady faith*

Fundamentalist—trained in Princeton Seminary. Says that nothing essential has changed for him in the last ten years and that he is pleased by this. (Heb. 13:8)^[27] Center is reconciliation. Then comes ethics, social gospel etc. on its own. The church was ethically most effective when it preached Christ. Critique of the modernists. Little interest in church-union: that doesn’t hit Satan.

G. C. Stewart. Episcopal Bishop of Chicago. Anglican.

“A Bend of the River”

sees . . . rupture since the *altar* has moved to the center of worship instead of the *pulpit*.

[24.] [Associated with the Chicago School of pragmatism.—VB]

[25.] [The actual title of the article was “Liberalism Confirmed.”—VB]

[26.] [Clarence E. Macartney, a Presbyterian fundamentalist.—VB]

[27.] [“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”—VB]

Dr. Bets: re Belief of 700 ministers^[28]

“the church against the world” (Niebuhr, Pauck, Miller 1935)^[29]

“What must we do to be saved?” is the question of the church today. Afflicted by the world from without and from within. The church has spoken and worked in the international, social, educational programs without visible success.

Pauck: The crisis of religion^[30]

Miller: American Protestantism and the christian faith.^[31]

Sees an American national-cultural religion growing up in the sense of J. Dewey!^[32]

Niebuhr: toward the independence of the church.^[33]

Coffin^[34]

Henry Drummonds^[35]

Natural science and God

J. Fiss^[36]

Assimilation. Theologians go into the laboratory.

Evolution

God of countless pulpits

[28.] [The reference is to George Herbert Betts, a Methodist professor of religious education at Northwestern University, and his book *The Beliefs of 700 Ministers*.—VB]

[29.] [Niebuhr, Pauck, and Miller coauthored *The Church against the World*, each taking one section.—VB]

[30.] [The title of part 1 of *The Church against the World*.—VB]

[31.] [The title of part 2 of *The Church against the World*.—VB]

[32.] [John Dewey, the U.S. pragmatist philosopher and educator.—VB]

[33.] [The title of part 3 of *The Church against the World*.—VB]

[34.] [In Henry Sloane Coffin's *Religion Yesterday and Today*, the first chapter is titled “Evolution”; on pp. 19–21 Coffin refers to H. Drummond, *Natural Law in the Spiritual World* (London 1883), Drummond, *The Ascent of Man* (London 1894), and John Fiske, *Through Nature to God* (Boston 1899). The editor thanks Clifford Green for these citations. Since Coffin's book wasn't published until 1940, it would seem that Coffin must have shared the manuscript with Bonhoeffer during his stay in New York.—VB]

[35.] [Henry Drummond.—VB]

[36.] [Probably the U.S. philosopher and historian John Fiske.—VB]

Josiah Strong: on the Americans as the survival of the^[37]
Proverb “evil is good in the making.”^[38]

Huxley:^[39]
1893 difference between natural and moral law.

138. From Eberhard Bethge^[1]

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July 11, 1939

Dear Dietrich,

I am at the moment somewhat disconsolate concerning how I actually should behave. On the one hand, I really have not written for quite some time. In the last week I was not doing well; I had rather severe vascular troubles that permitted me to do only the most necessary things; once I was better, I had to prepare for my two homilies on Saturday evening and then the celebration of the Lord's Supper on Sunday. When I finally wanted to write yesterday, a postcard arrived from your mother, in which she wrote me that just one letter dated the third had arrived, you both^[2] were together on your way to Sabine,^[3] and I should write there and no longer to the United States. Now I waited until this evening (in vain) for confirmation of this from you perhaps by the same post, which arrives here somewhat later. For this truly surprises me greatly. Now here is a letter from Aunt Ruth,^[4] and moreover you have again nothing for so long that I myself am very unhappy about it. Your letters with the complaint that you didn't receive anything hurt me a great deal. The mail from you varies in the time it

[37.] [The word is missing in the *NL* transcription but is probably “fittest.”—VB]

[38.] [The phrase is from Emerson's “The Conduct of Life,” part 1: “Fate”: “If Fate is ore and quarry, if evil is good in the making, if limitation is power that shall be, if calamities, oppositions, and weights are wings and means,—we are reconciled” (in *Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 433.—VB)]

[39.] [Thomas Henry Huxley. In 1893 Huxley delivered the Romanes Lecture titled “Evolution and Ethics,” in which he defined “social progress” not as “the survival of the fittest” but as the survival of “those who are ethically the best” (in his *Evolution and Ethics*, 81.—VB)]

[1.] *NL*, C 26; handwritten; no return address, certainly from Sigurdshof; previously unpublished.

[2.] Bonhoeffer and Karl Friedrich.

[3.] Sabine Leibholz [i.e., they were en route to London.—VB]

[4.] Ruth von Kleist-Retzow.

[5.] Cf. Bonhoeffer's July 9, 1939, diary entry during his trip to the U.S., 1/137, p. 000.

[6.] [Bonhoeffer's Luther Bible text reads “. . . and my praise and my salvation.”—VB]

242 takes, between eight and fourteen days! I believe that I wrote a total of four longer letters over there. I am truly very sorry that you had to wait so. The reasons were of course first the overwork, and last week I was not doing so well. Now today I am already writing, as your mother writes, to England so that you don't have to wait too long. I beg you please to give me some benefit of the doubt about what the new situation here demanded and not to be angry with me, so that we can look forward, untroubled and happy, to seeing each other again. Perhaps tomorrow morning I will already have news of what is happening and what I should prepare. Here all is going well and smoothly. Sunday I held communion. Preparation of the Sunday Daily Text Psalm 119:71: "It is good for me that I was humbled, so that I might learn your statutes"^[5] and the communion homily on the meditation text Exod. 15:2: "The Lord is my strength and my might,^[6] and he has become my salvation." I was, as I said, initially affected in my work through the considerable health troubles, but then all went smoothly and well. Now I am completely back in shape. I couldn't explain it to myself at all, really, where this came from, for I had no particular exertions immediately behind me; the fourteen days here alone, which perhaps were more of a strain on me than I initially felt, were already ten to fourteen days in the past, but perhaps it was only then that a certain exhaustion emerged. However it may be, now I am fine again, and Mrs. Struwe is feeding me especially well. So on Sunday I was doing well again, when we had visitors, the two from the estate, Aunt Ruth with her Kieckow son and his wife.^[7] Aunt Ruth already for lunch, the other four for afternoon coffee. I think it was quite lively and pleasant.

Yes, Dietrich—your return. When I announced it, it naturally provoked an outburst of enthusiasm, and there is the energetic wish to have the offer come true and herewith I pass it on.^[8] The only one whom this filled with ambivalent feelings is Potsdam,^[9] who simply likes it here very well.^[10] But that doesn't count. Should it still be as you wrote in your letters to me, then I believe that you will be in demand from many quarters upon your return, but I would nonetheless say, especially since you have offered it: please come! We are immensely pleased, especially me.

Your letters, the last two,^[11] made me very happy and I thank you deeply, especially for all the care with which you describe and observe. In case you are

[7.] Margarethe and Ewald von Kleist from Tychow, and Ruth, Hans-Jürgen, and Maria von Kleist-Retzow.

[8.] [Bonhoeffer's offer to resume his work in the collective pastorates.—VB]

[9.] Hellmut Traub.

[10.] [Traube had substituted for Bonhoeffer during the latter's trip to the United States. See 1/109, ed. note 8.—VB]

[11.] Letters not extant.

not there soon, do send me at the next opportunity a brief written devotion or exegesis of a Daily Text, which I then would like to use in the foreseeable future! My plans? I don't have any at all, except that on September 15 I must be there for the wedding,^[12] and Mother would be quite unhappy if I did not help her with the deliberations a few days in advance. We will make the final date^[13] dependent on your commitment to come or other plans. It's not yet set. I have not yet heard anything about the winter in E[ngland].^[14] I think, too, that it would be more proper to stay here. Well, in case you are in E[ngland], you will hear about this. In case you come soon, please let me pick you up somewhere with the car! That liberty must be! No trace yet of the dartboard that is supposed to arrive here. What is the cause of that? I think your 2 Timothy verses are very fine!^[15] By the way, on the whole I am really happy with the man from Potsdam. He is warmhearted and, for example, of one mind with me on the question of confession and says that is something very important to him!

At present the weather is so bad; this week I wanted at long last to go to the Baltic. Now it's stormy. Not even tennis can be played at the moment. One more thing to report from here, that very suddenly Pastor Gelhoff's^[16] wife died. Bleeding on the brain or something similar. Hopefully, I will know soon what will happen and can talk to you directly again. I look forward to it greatly. Did indeed have to think of you here during these weeks very much and of the particular duties that you have in such an office.^[17] Overall, things are going quite well, but the inner burden is out of proportion to everything else. When I have news, I will reply at once.

We think in the intercessory prayers of you and your path every evening. God keep you your

Eberhard

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[12.] See Bethge's June 29, 1939, letter to Bonhoeffer, 1/127, ed. note 5.

[13.] For the end of the semester in the collective pastorates.

[14.] [A reference to the discussion of Bethge's possible emigration to England.—VB]

[15.] [These have not been found; they may have been in one of the lost letters.—VB]

[16.] [The wife of Gerhard Gehlhoff.—VB]

[17.] [I.e., that of a theological instructor and supervisor.—VB]

139. To His Parents^[1]

My dear Parents,

Karl Friedrich arrives on Friday in Bremen and will travel via Berlin, if that works with the trains. I will go on to Sabine;^[2] I don't know yet for how long. I will await news there. Despite cutting it short, I am happy that I was over there. It was, however, under these circumstances certainly better to cut short the visit. The final days were very nice and full. So one travels home heavily laden with impressions.

Greetings to you from your grateful
Dietrich

140. To His Parents^[1]

My dear Parents,

244 Many thanks for your news. Your plans coincide completely with those of Sabine.^[2] They too wanted to take an earlier vacation. Now I don't quite know yet how I should arrange my plans. I am still working on a scholarly text for which I still need several days as well as some books from here.^[3] When exactly are you leaving? I would have liked to stay for several days in the Rhineland on the return trip, in order to visit several friends. Could we possibly meet somewhere there? I think I will be there somewhere around the twenty-seventh, twenty-eighth, or twenty-ninth [of July]. Please write me whether you could arrange that. Sabine will also leave on vacation around the twenty-seventh, twenty-eighth. They are doing well, but I think that they all could use some relaxation. Waiting periods are indeed often especially disagreeable. They already look forward greatly to seeing you again. Hopefully, our meeting too can be arranged beforehand.

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (31); handwritten postcard; postmarked: New York–Bremen, July 12, 1939. Partially reproduced in *GS* 6:462.

[2.] Sabine Leibholz in London.

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (32); handwritten; from London in mid-July 1939. Partially reproduced in *GS* 6:462–63.

[2.] The Bonhoeffer parents' plans for holidays together with the Leibholzes in Holland (cf. Bonhoeffer's July 21, 1939, letter to Karl Bonhoeffer, 1/144.)

[3.] This is very probably a reference to the essay "Protestantism without Reformation." See 2/6.

The baggage claim is enclosed. Please don't busy yourself too much with unpacking, dear Mama. I can do it when I come, and it is already crumpled. There's nothing to declare.

Greetings to you from your grateful
Dietrich

141. To Eberhard Bethge^[1]

Dear Eberhard,

Many thanks for your card,^[2] which probably just crossed paths with my letter. By the way, the airmail letter with the Clipper took a rather long time! I hardly understand it. I dropped it into the mail on the evening of the sixth. It should take three to four days to Berlin, and the airplane left on the eighth. Perhaps the plane was held up again due to weather.

So I will gladly come to the Baltic!^[3] I am even looking forward to it very much. See to it that we find someplace nice to stay. Is it again like last year?^[4] Or somewhere else? I can't wait to see. It is very lovely; one can talk a lot on the beach. Well, where do you want to pick me up? I might spend several days in the Rhineland visiting a few friends. I hoped to meet my parents there, possibly around [July] twenty-seventh, twenty-eighth, twenty-ninth, since they are traveling earlier to Holland. I don't know yet if it will work. Then I think in any case I wouldn't really need to go back via Berlin. I could have some things sent after me. Can you come farther than Stettin? I wouldn't have suggested Berlin, because there one must always live up to so many demands and there is no peace for real conversation. I don't think Stettin is very *lovely*, but one could perhaps drive home along the sea. It would be around the thirtieth, thirty-first, or first, I think. I am just figuring out that the twenty-ninth is a Saturday; does that suit you better? Perhaps particularly *not*? We hoped, didn't we, to have a day and a half for the return trip. But perhaps you will take me directly to the sea? So, I will count on your picking me up in any case and send you word of the details.

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[1.] *NL*, A 44,2 (22); handwritten; no return address, but certainly from London on July 13, 1939 (cf. Bethge's July 17, 1939, letter to Bonhoeffer, 1/142). Partially reproduced in *GS* 6:464–65.

[2.] Card not extant.

[3.] This refers to the planned retreat of the Sigurdshof collective pastorate, which then took place in Jersthöft on August 4–14, 1939.

[4.] Reference is to the June 20–25, 1938, retreat of former Finkenwaldians in Zingst. At its conclusion Bonhoeffer and Bethge took several days' vacation together in Rowe; see Bonhoeffer's June 29, 1939, postcard to his parents, 1/17.

In the meantime, you will book the fourth to the fourteenth, won't you! By the way, Sabine^[5] wants to give us a trip to Switzerland, which I find very kind. Do try as soon as possible to apply for the necessary foreign currency; I will do so as well as soon as I arrive. How should things go after the Baltic? Do you want me or not? I would really like to know. Please also see to it that Block^[6] doesn't speak too much about me on the estate.^[7] Officially I am still traveling.

Now a quick close; the letter must be on its way. It will probably cross again with one of yours. The dartboard is on the way. Julius^[8] forgot it again! How are you doing now? Warm greetings to all. I think of you very much. Many thanks to Mrs. Struwe for the card!^[9]

Greetings to you from yours truly
Dietrich

246 **142. From Eberhard Bethge^[1]**

S[igurdshof] July 17, 1939

Dear Dietrich,

Many thanks for your first letter that comes again from nearby.^[2] For one does sense this very strongly. One knows the environments, the people, can imagine the intellectual, physical, also spiritual (admittedly not too highly concentrated) atmosphere, and that is very good. Admittedly, this cannot reduce the longing to see and talk to each other soon; on the contrary, this has become newly urgent through the new prospects. But it still is something different from utter foreignness. I fear you are being bombarded from within and from without about what you should do. Potsdam^[3] preached this week in Berlin, and on that occasion I sent him to your mother. Now he tells me that you are to set yourself up there for several weeks in the house in the neighboring garden in pursuit of the old usual work.^[4] One found it very important to do this. Potsdam thinks so as well,

[5.] Sabine Leibholz.

[6.] Eduard Block, the superintendent in Schlawe.

[7.] The guarded reference is to Major Dieter von Kleist at the military enlistment office in Schlawe.

[8.] Julius Rieger.

[9.] Card not extant.

[1.] *NL*, C 26; handwritten; previously unpublished.

[2.] From London; see Bonhoeffer's July 13, 1939, letter to Bethge from London, 1/141.

[3.] Hellmut Traub.

but that isn't so important. Now I cannot quite visualize what you yourself think, but perhaps I will hear soon. Naturally, I can't say anything about it. What my heart thinks about it, you know of course. On the other hand, here of course all is going as usual. Although in the last few days the pressure is increasing somewhat. I will have to go to Berlin after all.^[5]

For the moment I have only your letter of the thirteenth. According to what it says, I would find August 1 very good for a reunion. I can come at least as far as Berlin, for I am feeling well again, especially since today it is cooler again after two very sultry days. The estate,^[6] of course, should not know about this. That should be doable.

Won't it be unnecessarily expensive to come to west Germany by train? But I would gladly otherwise pick you up at an earlier station (Hanover?).

Wouldn't a vacation trip have to include a new attempt to look at a harpsichord in Nuremberg? Perhaps it will turn out that we have to finish up already by mid-August!^[7] Please say a very friendly hello to Gert.^[8] I just received a wonderful Rembrandt card,^[9] which I was very pleased about. It is truly the most valuable of all my pictures to date, don't you agree? It's fine that you all were still able to get it. I was already thinking it might have been lost. Don't you judge this self-portrait as I do? It surpasses all the earlier ones. Do tell Gert that he shouldn't take so much trouble with letters to me; if he writes a brief postcard, that is quite enough and I am happy about it. I received his last letter the day before yesterday. Many thanks for all the greetings on the picture postcard. Just now a message came from your mother to Erna,^[10] who wants to send your things home because of the presently convenient chance for transporting them; she (your mother) also writes that they would not travel from the end of July to mid-August. Now I will call Berlin this evening. Because then I would indeed like to talk to her beforehand. I had wanted to combine the driving with picking

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[4.] At the Schleicher home at Marienburger Allee 42; the house was next to that of Bonhoeffer's parents. See Bethge and Gremmels, *A Life in Pictures*, centenary ed., 150.

[5.] [Possibly for discussions with those in charge of the Confessing Church's theological education.—VB]

[6.] An oblique reference to the Schlawe military enlistment office [see 1/141, ed. note 7.—VB]

[7.] [This refers to ending the courses at Sigurdshof and Köslin around August 24–25, 1939.—VB]

[8.] Gerhard Leibholz.

[9.] To circumvent the rigorous German regulations on foreign currency, Bethge periodically sent money to the Leibholz family, hidden in unopened literature on jurisprudence, the pages of which were not yet cut open. To signify the receipt of the money, Leibholz always sent Bethge an art postcard with images from the National Gallery in London. See Bethge, *Mein Freund Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 23.

[10.] Erna Struwe.

you up at the same time. If that doesn't work, however, I will simply have to go there earlier.

Yesterday the sermon was not as good. But I was able to play the organ, and I enjoy that. In the afternoon we read the end of *Under Satan's Sun*,^[11] which, however, was found to be too difficult. The weather prevented a boat trip. I would enjoy playing tennis with you again! I am practicing energetically. But I don't want to give you a heavy heart. You know things must work without you being here, and then they do work out, just as they have done up to now. With the warmest greetings your

Eberhard

A big hello from Alexander,^[12] who wrote me a good letter filled with steadfastness; and one from Horst Lekszas, a true Horst (stylistically uniting Tersteegen^[13] and Luther-German, as Fritz^[14] put it!).

17:125 **142a. From Paul Lehmann to Timothy Lehmann^[1]**

Columbus, Ohio. July 17, 1939

Dear Dad:

Thanks so much for all your bother about the mail and the check.^[2] It was a great help to have it since I had finally to go to New York. By this time the letter and the denial^[3] will have reached everybody so that I doubt any unfortunate circumstances will result.

[11.] George Bernanos's 1926 novel, *Sous le soleil de Satan*, had been published in Germany in 1927.

[12.] Alexander von der Marwitz. Both this letter and the one mentioned from Lekszas have been lost.

[13.] Gerhard Tersteegen.

[14.] Fritz Onnasch.

[1.] Lehmann Papers, Archive of the Library of Princeton Theological Seminary; typewritten carbon copy; unpublished. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB] Lehmann had traveled on July 6, 1939, from Columbus, Ohio, to meet Bonhoeffer in New York. They spent the final day and a half together until Bonhoeffer's departure from New York harbor on July 7, 1939. See Bonhoeffer's diary (1/137, p. 000) as well as the related correspondence between him and Lehmann that summer [1/97, 1/114, 1/125, 1/126, 1/128, 1/131, 1/133.—VB]

[2.] Timothy Lehmann had financed his son Paul's trip to New York and taken on the task of sending cancellations to some forty colleges since Bonhoeffer couldn't lecture there. See 1/123 and 1/132.

[3.] This was the letter from Lehmann, 1/132.

It was really very worth my going even though I could not persuade Bonhoeffer to change his mind. I simply could not bring myself to allow him to have come and gone, perhaps without any possibility of meeting again, without seeing him while he was here. The reunion was a great joy to us both. Of the details, I must tell you when we are in Elmhurst^[4] again. Meanwhile, I can only note that two important matters are likely to come from my visit. One is a rethinking of my whole theological and ethical position in the light of the current struggle of the Confessional Church; the other is a wholly new appraisal of the National Socialist movement. I am reading just now a book which Bonhoeffer gave me, written by a former Nazi,^[5] and the best interpretation of the spiritual and cultural significance of what is now happening in Germany. It is called "The Nihilistic Revolution"^[6] and reinforces in a remarkable way the reports from Bonhoeffer himself. I wish everyone might read the work for it makes plain what a vast difference there is between the penetrating and the surface understanding of current affairs and what is more shocking, how the end of a completely pragmatic philosophy is a pragmatic methodology which completely destroys all universal forms.

As for Dietrich himself, I can only say that I understand his position completely. He had agreed with his friends that he would come back without fail within one year, unless a mutually agreed upon code formula came to him. This formula was to express their conviction that war was imminent. This formula came and there was no alternative. He fully expects war in September and will thus have one month to make the necessary connections so vital to the ongoing of the Confessing Church. Meanwhile, there had come to Bonhoeffer the clear perception that he who wishes to have any voice in the new Germany must live through this worst of agonies with her.^[7] It was unthinkable to him to desert his friends and his task simply in order to safeguard his own life. The outstanding impression one gets from being with him and from hearing his account of the work he is doing is that the only power for living in a completely broken world is the Christian gospel. Here is a man and a group who are so completely committed to Christ in life that it has become axiomatic to them that they may have to die for Him. And they are ready. When the New Testament talks about one's "joy being full"^[8] it lays down what these men are actually experiencing now.

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[4.] Lehmann's father was president of Elmhurst College in Illinois.

[5.] Hermann Rauschnig [see also Wilhelm Rott's mention of the book in 1/143—VB].

[6.] [The actual title in English was *The Revolution of Nihilism*; see also 1/151, ed. note 10.—VB]

[7.] Cf. the excerpt of Bonhoeffer's letter to Niebuhr, 1/129.

[8.] Cf. John 15:11–13.

One discovers over against such a witness to the faith that the times of the end are really the time of the only possible beginning and that one's own life and faith securely pursued above these struggles of the end lack all reality. The German Confessional Church is re-enacting the book of the Acts. Therein is its power; therein is the hope for the only possible German future. . . .^[9]

Marion joins me in warmest greetings and love to you all,
As ever, [Paul]

248 **143. From Wilhelm Rott^[1]**

At present Jungfrauoch (in the fog), July 20, 1939

Dear Dietrich,

Your card^[2] reached me in Wengen (the Bernese highlands), where I am spending the major part of my holidays. I was very pleased to get it. Less pleased, naturally, with your resigned observation re: "liberty."^[3] Perhaps—I hope so—in the meantime other impressions have been added to it. In view of the world misery, which here outside Germany one overlooks in an utterly different manner (the—in my opinion—unavoidable catastrophe after the harvest!),^[4] this secularized Christendom and theology! Here in Switzerland the latter has become noticeably better in the past year. With many fellow pastors whom I've encountered by chance, the same self-evident position. The clear will to defend has really increased, not only here! The unrepentant anti-German stance, generally prevalent among contemporaries outside, is distressing. In this moment you have a great and difficult task! Call them all to bow down under the Word and to pray in intercession for all the need of the times.

Basel is indeed pleasant!^[5] Have you read Rauschnig, *The Revolution of Nihilism?*^[6]—I will travel for several days to the south (Mediterranean); on July 31 I am in Zollbrück near Bern (D. v. Steiger). Do send something to the Bergli^[7]

[9.] [Here a passage from Lehmann's letter has been omitted.—VB]

[1.] Previously published in *GS* 6:443–44; the original has been lost.

[2.] From New York; card not extant.

[3.] Cf. Bonhoeffer's observations on "freedom" in "Protestantism without Reformation," 2/6, pp. 000–000 [and in the June 24 and July 2 entries in his diary, 1/137—VB].

[4.] This is a reference to the constantly growing danger of war, which Hitler then began on September 1, 1939.

[5.] A reference to Karl Barth [Barth had left Germany in 1935 to teach at the university there—VB].

[6.] [Bonhoeffer had shared the book with Paul Lehmann; see 1/142a.—VB]

[7.] Rudolf Pestalozzi's vacation home, where Karl Barth met with theological and political friends in late July/early August 1939. See Busch, *Karl Barth*, 297–98.

(Dehn^[8] is there at present). *Finis Germaniae??*^[9]—CC^[10] will go on! Come back soon. Your

Willi

144. To Karl Bonhoeffer^[1]

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July 21, 1939

Dear Papa,

Many thanks for your letter.^[2] We have now reconsidered things and have arrived at the following conclusion: Sabine travels on Friday and wants to meet with you on Saturday; she will write about the place.^[3] I didn't want to shorten your time by the sea through my suggestion of a meeting on the Rhine and think it best if I come to Berlin on July 27, that is, on Thursday. We then have time until your departure, Friday evening. Sabine also asks very much that you not shorten your time together by a few days. I will then travel to Pomerania and either work at the old place with the others or by myself on an estate. I travel on Monday to Aachen. A letter would reach me by early Tuesday there at the main post office, in case you do have other plans.

Greetings to you from your grateful
Dietrich

145. To Eberhard Bethge^[1]

July 21, 1939

Dear Eberhard,

Many thanks for your letter, which, as expected, crossed with mine again.^[2] [—]Forgive the handwriting. I am writing on my knees.[—]So now brief

[8.] Günther Dehn.

[9.] "The end of Germany??"

[10.] [Confessing Church.—VB]

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (33); handwritten; from London. Partially reproduced in *GS* 6:463.

[2.] Letter not extant.

[3.] The reference is to a planned meeting between Sabine Leibholz and her parents in Holland.

[1.] *NL*, A 44,2 (23); handwritten; no return address, but certainly from London. Previously published in *GS* 6:465–68, with excerpts published in *GS* 2:552.

[2.] See Bethge's July 17, 1939, letter to Bonhoeffer, 1/142. The next two sentences, set off with dashes, are a comment written in the upper left margin.

250 news about the plans. I am in Aachen on Tuesday (i.e., probably Monday night), if possible will visit my colleagues in Dortmund and friends in Elberfeld^[3] on Tuesday and Wednesday, and am Thursday evening presumably in Berlin. On Friday evening my parents travel to Holland. Saturday I wanted to travel on to the north. Now the question is, where I am to meet you. Naturally, the earlier the better. On the other hand, I would prefer that we can really talk at leisure when we meet; that may be your intention as well. I am afraid in Berlin it will not be very peaceful, because there everything will descend upon me again, and I am a bit averse to that, in light of the pleasure with which I await our meeting. At times in the past, we have not found the quiet for conversations that we would like to have had. Would not Stettin on Saturday afternoon be better, possibly so that we could still go on toward the sea and then at least travel together till Monday, perhaps back home via Krössin.^[4] Naturally, I am also delighted if you are already in Berlin, but I don't quite know whether it wouldn't be better the other way. Your suggestion to come to Hanover with the car is, of course, also terribly nice and tempting. It's only that I can't tell you today which train. Also the traveling is indeed exhausting for you. Please send a telegram with your plans to Aachen *poste restante*^[5] before Tuesday morning. If nothing is there, I will let you hear from me, by telephone or telegram. Now as the return is so imminent, the joy of seeing you again is already very great. So, till the twenty-ninth at the latest; I'm looking forward to the sea.

By the way, I also think the Rembrandt portrait more beautiful than all the others.^[6]

Give everyone my warmest greetings. I am now eager to see whether you still want me to help or only wish a visit.

Why do you eventually want to start your vacation already on August 15? That I would really like to know.

251 Soon we will meditate again together. That is also very important to me. In recent weeks I have followed the Daily Texts much more.^[7]

May God strengthen you in your work and keep you! Warmly, your faithful

Dietrich

[3.] Hans Joachim Iwand and Hermann A. Hesse. See *DB-ER*, 662.

[4.] Klein-Krössin, the estate of Ruth von Kleist-Retzow.

[5.] [To be held for pickup.—VB]

[6.] See Bethge's July 17, 1939, letter to Bonhoeffer, 1/142, ed. note 9.

[7.] Cf. his diary from his period in the United States, 1/137.

Sabine sends cordial greetings. I'm writing in her room. She is doing well and will also soon take a vacation! We could also telephone on Thursday evening (around 9:30 I would await your call) and discuss everything else, if that is still necessary. Everything will surely come out fine.

146. To John Baillie^[1]

22.7.39.

Dear Professor Baillie,

I have just returned from America and received a letter from Germany with some indication of an invitation from you to Edinburgh for the purpose of lectures there next spring.^[2] Thank you very much indeed for this invitation. I will come with the greatest pleasure, if I get out of Germany by that time. Since I am not yet in the possession of your letter I do not know if you have any particular wish with respect of the topic of the lectures. But I suppose, we could correspond about it later. I should be most interested to spend a short time in Edinburgh and I am looking forward to seeing you again.^[3] I shall leave for Germany on Tuesday.^[4] If you have any special message for me which you would rather not write to Germany, will you please send it to the above mentioned address. Professor Leibholz,^[5] my brother-in-law who is living there, will find a way of passing it on to me.

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With many thanks I remain Yours sincerely
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

[1.] *NL*, A 50,2 (23); handwritten; return address "Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 55, Honor Oak Road, SE 23, Forest Hill, London." Previously published in *GS*2:362. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

[2.] See Baillie's June 15, 1939, letter to Bonhoeffer, 1/113. [Bonhoeffer had been invited to give the Croall lectures at the University of Edinburgh; cf. *DB-ER*, 661.—VB]

[3.] Bonhoeffer had met Baillie during his time at Union Seminary in 1930–31. See *DB-ER*, 157–60, and *DBWE* 10:307–9.

[4.] July 25, 1939.

[5.] Gerhard Leibholz.

147. To George Bell^[1]

22.7.39

My dear Lordbishop,

when you were in London on Thursday I asked Hildebrandt^[2] to tell you that I had already come back from U.S.A. and that I am on my way to Germany. Unfortunately, he forgot to tell you. Now I can only write a few words of explanation and to say “good bye” to you. I shall leave on Tuesday morning.

On my arrival in New York Dr. Leiper^[3] very kindly offered me the post of a refugee pastor (I mean a pastor for the refugees) in New York. This post was to be connected with lectures in various places. Of course, I was rather surprised about this offer and told Dr. Leiper, that I had promised to the Confessional Church to come back at the latest after a year unless the political circumstances would make that impossible. So it was just a question of loyalty whether I could accept a post which by itself would make my return doubtful or even impossible. I discussed the problem with my friends very thoroughly and decided to decline the offer for three reason: I was bound by my promise to go back next year; there are many non-aryan brethren who a[re] much more entitled to such a post; I had got my leave of absence for another purpose.

It was a difficult decision, but I am still convinced, I was not allowed to decide otherwise. That meant my early return to Germany. Kindly enough, I was invited by Dr. Coffin and Van Dusen to stay at Union Seminary as long as I wanted. But when news about Danzig^[4] reached me I felt compelled to go back as soon as possible and to make my decision in Germany. I do not regret my trip to U.S.A., though, of course, it had been undertaken under different presuppositions. I have seen and learned much in the few weeks over there and I am looking forward to my work in Germany again. What sort of personal decisions will be asked from me I do not know. But nobody knows that now.

[1.] LPL, BP 42:70–71; handwritten; return address “Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 55, Honor Oak Road, SE 23, London.” Cf. also *NL*, A 42,1 (30); later typewritten copy. Partially reproduced in *GS* 1:320–22. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

[2.] Franz Hildebrandt.

[3.] Henry Smith Leiper.

[4.] This refers to the intensified tensions between Germany and Poland due to the Nazi foreign policy demanding that Danzig become part of the German Reich. Following the abrogation on April 28, 1939, of the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact, the situation in July 1939 escalated dangerously. For excerpts from Hitler’s speech in the Reichstag, see Snyder, *Documents of German History*, 440–45.

My passport expires next spring;^[5] it is therefore uncertain when I shall be in this country again. Let me thank you today for all help and friendship and real understanding in the past and in the future. We shall never forget you during the coming events. I thank you for what you have done for my brother-in-law^[6] and his family. It has meant everything to them. Will you allow me to leave them and this country with the confidence that they may approach you whenever they need advice and help?^[7] Of course, their future is unsettled, too, and it will require much patience and much energy before they can start afresh. Nevertheless I am confident that they finally will not suffer more than they can bear.

May I ask you to convey my best regards to Mrs. Bell? I remain, my Lord-bishop, in sincere gratitude Yours ever

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

P.S. I have just heard that my brother-in-law has applied to Magdalen-College^[8] to be allowed to keep his offered grant of 100 pounds for two years in addition to the grant from the Church. That would give them 350 pounds a year which would be a sufficient basis to live on. Do you think that anything could be done to support this request? It would make a great difference.
D.B.

148. From Eberhard Bethge^[1]

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July 22, 1939

Dear Dietrich,

Aleas sunt iacta.^[2] I just wrote your mother (in reply) that I will be in Berlin Thursday (the twenty-seventh) evening, and would like to drive with them

[5.] Bonhoeffer's passport expired on March 4, 1940. See Bethge and Gremmels, *Life in Pictures*, centenary ed., 115.

[6.] Gerhard Leibholz.

[7.] Regarding all the help that Bell offered the Leibholz family in the years that followed, see Leibholz-Bonhoeffer, *Bonhoeffers*, esp. 113–16, and Bethge and Jaspers, *An der Schwelle zum gespaltenen Europa*. [Bell also assisted numerous German refugees in England and was responsible for helping many of the "non-Aryan" Confessing Church pastors emigrate, as well as finding them positions in England. See Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent*, 152–54.—VB]

[8.] [In Oxford.—VB]

[1.] *NL*, C 26; handwritten; unaddressed, but certainly from Sigurdshof; previously unpublished.

[2.] Mistakenly instead of *Alea iacta esto* (the die has been cast).

together toward the west, the main stretch on the twenty-eighth, then the shorter one on Saturday morning to wherever you are staying, Cologne or wherever. You can simply write to Berlin; I will find out there. Based on your letter,^[3] for which I thank you very much, things have just worked out that way; I called and simply asked with this as a recommendation. Now I am looking forward very much for everything to go this way. Hopefully, you will be able to keep your promise. I have also already reserved rooms in Jeershöft.^[4] That will be the best for several reasons. Rented from the fourth on. Before that, though, I would like to come back here and finish some things. Namely, we would like Potsdam^[5] to bring some of his work to a close, and to take over my time for that (the conclusions I arrived at are all right), and I would then very much like to be able to sit in and listen to you and him teach. We think this is a very good idea. Now let us get going.

Some days now I lead a fantastically lazy life, during the day by the lake with games, the boat, and an old punt that constantly capsizes and then in the evening a nice easy game of tennis. I am enjoying this to the fullest, in the expectation that soon I can enjoy doing it even more with you.

I informed Block in the appropriate manner.^[6] I don't see him very often now. Didn't come so often to Schlawe. Next week we will see Knorr^[7] and several others.

On the whole I am doing quite well. I am getting ample exercise in the fresh air. Do you not also think that for the winter we should find the opportunity to start playing *The Art of the Fugue* on two keyboards?^[8] My thoughts are somewhat preoccupied with that. Well, there is so much to tell. I look forward to the drive.

A very warm hello to your sister, brother-in-law, nieces^[9] (how is the recorder practice going?) your

Eberhard

[3.] See Bonhoeffer's July 13, 1939, letter to Bethge, 1/141.

[4.] ["Jershöft."—VB] See 1/141, ed. note 3.

[5.] Hellmut Traub.

[6.] Eduard Block [see the warning in Bonhoeffer's July 13 letter, 1/141—VB].

[7.] Dr. August Knorr in Köslin, who was very active there in the Confessing Church. Cf. *DB-ER*, 590.

[8.] Bach's composition *The Art of the Fugue*, from the 1740s [BWV 1080.—VB]

[9.] The Leibholzes in London.

149. From Jean Lasserre^[1]

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July 26, 1939

My dear Friend,

Thank you for your postcards, which gave me great pleasure and revived in me very agreeable memories, including those of our camaraderie at Union and the jokes we played together.^[2] I am very happy for you that you were able to make the trip again and am sure that you did a lot of good work there. Courage, brother!

Next week we are leaving for vacation in the Drôme, and the first week of September we will be in Houches (near Chamonix) before returning here.

Our work continues here, inspiring but difficult because of the discouraging atmosphere all round, the skepticism, and the embittered indifference. But those few souls who approach God are heading directly toward the heavens.

When will I see you again?—We are well; my wife and my little boy are my pride and joy. I would really like you to meet them.

I received a nice letter from Erwin,^[3] who is also keeping to the straight and narrow path of celibacy.

Have no doubts, my brother in Christ, of my sincere affection. Yours ever.^[4]

Jean Lasserre

150. To John Baillie^[1]

30.7.39

Dear Professor Baillie,

many thanks for your letter which I found here on my return. I am writing today to confirm my letter from London^[2] which you will have received in the meantime. It is indeed a great privilege and joy to me to be invited to Edinburgh for the purpose you have mentioned in your letter. I hope to

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[1.] *NL*, C 23; handwritten postcard; stamped: Maubeuge, August 2, 1939; previously unpublished. The original letter is in French; translation here by David Higgins.

[2.] Bonhoeffer had come to know the young Frenchman during their year of study at Union Theological Seminary in 1930–31. Cf. *DB-ER*, 153–54, and the frequent references to their friendship in *DBWE* 10.

[3.] Erwin Sutz, who was also at Union Theological Seminary in 1930–31.

[4.] [These two words are in English in the original.—VB]

[1.] *NL*, A 50,2 (24); handwritten; no return address, probably from Berlin; previously unpublished. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

[2.] See Bonhoeffer's July 22, 1939, letter to Baillie, 1/146.

hear from you soon if everything will work out as you think. October would be a most suitable time for me to come to see you. I am looking forward to this visit very much indeed.

May I ask you to give my best regards to Mrs. Baillie and to Jan. Hoping to see you soon and in sincere gratefulness for your great kindness I am
Yours most sincerely

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

151. From Paul Lehmann to Reinhold Niebuhr^[1]

Columbus, Ohio

July 31, 1939

Dear Reinie:

After hearing from your mother and Hulda^[2] about your tremendously crowded schedule these days, I ought to thank you for taking any time at all to write and for the additional kindness of the photo. I saw your folks, including also Helmuth,^[3] when I made a dash to New York the first week of this month to see what all this was about Bonhoeffer. Your mother was kind enough also to let me have the press comments on your lectures.^[4] These I have now read with great interest and care and shall return. It was almost as though I had been there myself. I have no doubt at all that the Gifford's have reached a new high. As soon as they will be published, I shall own them myself.

Perhaps you will have heard all about Bonhoeffer by now. His hope was to get a brief glimpse of you on his return through England. In case he did not succeed, I think some explanation is due you, so I shall venture to make it. My own conversation with him convinced me that he was doing the only thing he could do.

You see, his original concern was the avoidance of military duty. The oath to Hitler which this would have involved was intolerable to him. At the same time, he did not welcome the idea of imprisonment on this ground any earlier than absolutely necessary. The visit to America would have secured a postponement of this decision and left him free to continue his work, though at some distance. Meanwhile anything could happen both within Germany and without and the whole problem disappear. The American invitation actually has delayed his obligation to report for duty until Spring.

[1.] *NL*, A 50,1 (27); typewritten carbon copy; previously unpublished. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB]

[2.] Hulda Niebuhr, Niebuhr's elder sister.

[3.] H. R. Niebuhr.

[4.] See Niebuhr's May 11, 1939, letter to Lehmann, 1/91, ed. note 2.

Bonhoeffer arrived in New York about the tenth of June, expecting a stay for one year. Before he left Germany, he pledged himself to return without fail after this year and, if war seemed imminent, to return at once. The war news was to reach him from his friends in the confessional church by code. He was here scarcely a week when this formula came to him, whereupon he decided to return at once. He reasoned that one month of work before the hostilities would be of strategic importance for the confessional church.

Now there are three other factors which play into this decision. The first is that Bonhoeffer had no definite job over here. The post which Leiper^[5] offered him with the Refugee Committee could not be accepted without excluding himself permanently from Germany, which he was pledged not to do. On the other hand, if he had had a definite teaching post, he would have regarded that as a prior obligation and not returned immediately. Occasional lectures seemed to him too dangerous in view of the imminence of war which would certainly prohibit these opportunities to aliens. The second consideration was the discovery during the short time that he was here that he could not hope to make any contribution to the German future, if it were given him to survive, unless he suffered through this present time. This had not been quite so clear to him before his trip. But from the isolation of Coffin's summer home he had looked across the seas and become convinced that voluntary exile was the path to permanent inactivity. Here was an additional ground for not endangering his return by accepting Leiper's offer. And of course, the third factor in his decision was the growing feeling that to remain here would have reduced itself to a violation of the gospel injunction that he that loseth his life shall save it.^[6] On this point he could not bring his conscience to rest and in the face of the next few critical weeks, he simply had to return.

I do not feel justified in taking your time now with more than the barest comments. So I shall reserve other remarks about this whole situation until we meet, I hope in January. As for the expenses, please let this be a small contribution of mine to the decencies that still remain in this world. It was not very much and I can and do gladly assume it. If you want to get rid of the money you would have spent, give it to the society for drowning the present Prime Minister,^[7] if the British still have enough virility to organize it.

[5.] Henry S. Leiper.

[6.] Cf. Matt. 10:39.

[7.] Neville Chamberlain. [This is a comment on Chamberlain's role at the September 1938 Munich conference, where both Britain and France agreed to Nazi Germany's annexation of the Czech Sudetenland. Chamberlain defended the agreement, saying it had ensured "peace for our time."—VB]

258 One specific point Bonhoeffer wanted me to mention. It concerns the Union fellowship to Germany. We visited Tryon^[8] while in New York and gleaned indirectly that the German appointee was a German Christian. This really disturbed Bonhoeffer greatly. He felt it an unwarranted contradiction in the professed interest of the Seminary in the Confessional struggle, the more especially since he believes it of very great importance for Confessional Church students to have the opportunity of the freer air of foreign study for a time. Doesn't it mean that the Seminary ought to revise its German Committee? Why couldn't Bonhoeffer be asked to head such a committee for the future? The International Student Exchange in Berlin is certainly Nazi dominated. I suppose nothing can be done anymore this year. But I think that these awards ought to be thoroughly altered.

Perhaps Eden^[9] could help by exchanging students with the Confessional Church. Bonhoeffer says that they are prepared to provide keep over there and passage from Germany to New York for the German student. If Eden could offer keep here plus the fare from New York to St. Louis some arrangement could be made. It would be a real assistance to the Confessional Church. . . .^[10]

Do you know the book by Hermann Rauschning: "Die Revolution des Nihilismus"?^[11] Bonhoeffer gave it to me as the best interpretation of contemporary German affairs. I have just finished it and found it immensely illuminating. I must talk with you about that too when we meet. . . .

[Paul Lehmann]

[8.] Harold Harrison Tryon.

[9.] Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis.

[10.] Here some comments about Lehmann's personal professional plans have been omitted; a similar omission concludes the following paragraph.

[11.] Rauschning's book (the German subtitle was "Kulisse und Wirklichkeit im Dritten Reich," or "Stageset and Reality in the Third Reich") appeared in Zurich and New York in 1938. [The English title was *The Revolution of Nihilism: Warning to the West.*—VB]

152. From Ottonie Blanck^[1]

Berlin-Steglitz, August 11, 1939
Paulsenstrasse 55

Dear Pastor Bonhoeffer,

Perhaps you will have a vague recollection that we are children of the same department and university;^[2] indeed I do not turn to you today for that reason, but I possibly do so more freely and with fewer reservations than I would have otherwise. I turn to you as the author of the pamphlet “Life Together,”^[3] which, whenever I reach for it, enriches and delights me more and more. It will be familiar to you that in these turbulent times questions within the congregation come up and go around, which often don’t find a path to the appointed pastor—(unfortunately or thank God?)—because he is too overburdened, or because the parishioners’ sense of their own responsibility and maturity among themselves is growing?^[4]—Thus during my vacation the question came to me, posed by a group of very young people: whether it is permissible or commanded to go to Holy Communion, when for those concerned the general confession^[5] is no longer that “which it pretends to be,” but rather a path to the attainment of cheap grace,^[6] while they cannot yet travel the path to private confession. It was surely a genuine question, filled with need, from which a great thirst for the “bread of life”^[7] was speaking, a resolve to no longer be satisfied with cheap commitments. Now I naturally asked them to pose this question first to the pastor in charge. However, since a cordial brotherly relationship ties me to these young people of our congregation, I had to attempt as well to reply what my own stand is on this; approximately to this effect: yes, permitted and commanded.

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[1.] Letter in the personal possession of Heinz-Jürgen Blanck-Lubarsch; typewritten carbon copy; previously unpublished.

[2.] Ottonie Blanck’s father, Otto Lubarsch, was professor of pathology at the Berlin University medical school during the same period as Bonhoeffer’s father.

[3.] *DBWE* 5; it first appeared in 1939 as *Theologische Existenz Heute* 61. See *DBWE* 5:6.

[4.] From summer 1933 on, Ottonie Blanck worked energetically as a voluntary deaconess for Martin Niemöller in the Berlin-Dahlem congregation, helping to build up the Confessing congregation there. See Graff et al., *Unterwegs zur mündigen Gemeinde*, 54.

[5.] [The general confession during the liturgy is spoken together by the congregation.—VB]

[6.] This was a central concept in Bonhoeffer’s *Discipleship*; cf. *DBWE* 4:43–56.

[7.] Cf. John 6:35.

And attempted to ground this reply on the basis of the sacramental words of institution of the Lord's Supper^[8] and Luther.^[9]

Now, however, I feel greatly burdened by this responsibility, and I would be very thankful to you if you could tell me whether such a venture is forbidden to laypeople and how you would respond to such a question. The open door to private confession should have remained clearly visible in the answer.

On page 79 below you say: "From now on, the Christian gains one victory after another."^[10] But what if experience can also say that the defeats "from now on" will become much harder, more numerous, and more burdensome? Could you show me a way out from being caught between these contradictions, which are a heavy burden on me?

260 In the hope that I don't burden your full schedule too terribly much with my questions—(I can also wait patiently!)—I remain with best respects

Yours truly

[Ottonie Blanck]

153. To Paula Bonhoeffer^[1]

Dear Mama,

I will be here by the sea for several days, this time with the group from Köslin. I may stay up here until we finish working,^[2] if Uncle Rudi^[3] continues to do well. Here though the relatives had serious doubts about that. I can best be reached by telephone or otherwise via Eberhard.

Best regards from your grateful

Dietrich

[8.] Cf. Mark 14:22–24 and pars. (Matt. 26:26–29; Luke 22:14–20; 1 Cor. 11:23–25).

[9.] See especially Luther's explanation of the "sacrament of the altar" in the Small Catechism (*Book of Concord*, 362) and "A Brief Exhortation to Confession" in the Large Catechism (*Book of Concord*, 476–80).

[10.] See *DBWE* 5:112.

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (34); handwritten postcard; postmarked: Bauerhufen via Köslin, August 16, 1939. Partially reproduced in *GS* 6:467.

[2.] The end of the summer term in the collective pastorates at Sigurdshof and Köslin on August 24–25, 1939.

[3.] Code name for the day of the beginning of the war.

154. To John Baillie^[1]

24.8.39

Dear Professor Baillie,

when I wrote my last letter to you indicating that October would be a very suitable time for my coming to Edinburgh^[2] I had not yet received your kind letter to my address in London. Since I have not heard from you after my last letter I supposed that it has not reacted. Today I must tell you that it will be very difficult for me to get out in October and I should like to ask you if any time after December 1st or 15th would be acceptable for the committee. I am thinking of the following topic: “the death in the christian message.” Would you kindly let me know if you could agree to this proposal. I thank you most sincerely for your great kindness and help and I remain Yours ever

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Dietrich Bonhoeffer

155. To Sabine and Gerhard Leibholz^[1]

August 28, 1939

Dear Sabine and Gert,

Since the day before yesterday I've been with our parents. It was difficult in recent days and weeks to take longer trips.^[2] You have also not heard much from me. I was very sorry about that. Nonetheless, if it is still possible for you to go to the National Museum sometime, I would like to have the colored reproduction of Raphael,^[3] if that doesn't create too many difficulties for you. It is the very large painting that one sees immediately from the entrance, and the reproduction is also larger than the other cards. Perhaps you can still obtain it? Everyone is doing well, and our thoughts often go in your direction. Do drive again if possible to George^[4] concerning where to

[1.] *NL*, A 50,2 (25); photocopy of a handwritten card; return address: “43, Marienburger Allee, Berlin-Charlottenburg 9.” Partially reproduced in *GS* 2:362. [Letter is in original unaltered English.—VB]

[2.] See Bonhoeffer's July 30, 1939, letter to Baillie, 1/150.

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (35); later typewritten copy; from Berlin. Partially reproduced in *GS* 6:467.

[2.] This refers to the mobilization in Germany in preparation for the attack on Poland on September 1, 1939.

[3.] Cf. Bethge's July 17, 1939, letter to Bonhoeffer, 1/142, ed. note 9.

[4.] George Bell.

stay during your vacation. He will certainly be able to give you good advice and recommendations. How is Franz's^[5] new cottage coming along? Don't you want to take something like that too? Our parents have spoken very happily about your days together by the sea.^[6] It remains uncertain when I will come. Perhaps in December.^[7]

Much love to you all from your faithful
Dietrich

262 **156. From George Bell^[1]**

6.9.39

My dear Dietrich,

You know how deeply I feel for you and yours in this melancholy time. May God comfort and guide you. I think often of our talk in the summer.^[2] May He keep you now. Let us pray together often by reading the Beatitudes;^[3] Pax Dei quae superate omnia nos custodiat.^[4]

Your affectionate
George

[5.] Franz Hildebrandt.

[6.] The reference is to their meeting in Holland; cf. Bonhoeffer's July 21, 1939, letter to Karl Bonhoeffer, 1/144, ed. note 3.

[7.] Cf. Bonhoeffer's August 24, 1939, letter to John Baillie, 1/154.

[1.] LPL, BP 9:357; handwritten; from Chichester. Cf. also *NL*, A 42,2 (13); later typewritten copy. Previously published in *GS* 6:469. [Letter is in the original unaltered English.—VB] After the September 1, 1939, German attack on Poland, Great Britain and France declared war on Germany on September 3. Regarding Bell's concerns about the fate of his friends in Germany after the war began, see *DB-ER*, 665.

[2.] See Bonhoeffer's letters of June 6 and July 22, 1939, to Bell, 1/106 and 1/147.

[3.] Matt. 5:3–12.

[4.] "May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, preserve us." Cf. Phil. 4:7.

157. To Johannes Radtke**157.1 Application for Army and Military Hospital Chaplaincy^[1]**

To Army Head Chaplain Radtke, Berlin-Spandau

September 9, 1939

My dear and esteemed Brother Radtke,

It has been more than ten years since we last saw each other. Now the connection has surprisingly been reestablished in a rather roundabout way through my cousin Mrs. v. Hase.^[2] A few days ago I was at the military bishop's^[3] to offer my services. On his advice I went to Schackla^[4] in Stettin, who, however, cannot use me at the moment, although possibly later. In the meantime, you have been informed about my intention. I would be very grateful to you if you could use my services in the military hospitals or elsewhere in some fashion, and I may expect your decision. My previous work will unfortunately have to cease for the time being, since almost all the young people have been drafted.

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At the same time, [I] would like to ask you whether you see a way to use my assistant supervisor [Inspektor], an excellent young Confessing Church theologian—born in 1909.^[5] You would find him a very efficient man, and I would be pleased if he could be used in a ministry of proclamation.

For your information I am enclosing the curriculum vitae that the military bishop recently asked me for.

I thank you very much for all your efforts and would be very pleased to see you again. With all best wishes for your work, greetings from your respectful

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

157.2 Enclosure: Curriculum vitae^[6]

I, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, was born on February 4, 1906, in Breslau as the son of university full professor for psychiatry Karl Bonhoeffer and his wife,

[1.] Letter in the personal possession of Johannes Radtke; typewritten with hand signature; return address: "Pastor Lic. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, presently at Berlin-Charlottenburg 9, Marienburger Allee 43"; previously unpublished. Cf. *NL*, Anh. A 26,1. See also *DB-ER*, 666.

[2.] Klara von Hase (residing in Rostock), wife of the army chaplain Hans Christoph von Hase.

[3.] Franz Dohrmann.

[4.] Army head chaplain Schackla, the Protestant pastor in Military District II in Stettin.

[5.] Eberhard Bethge.

[6.] Document in the personal possession of Johannes Radtke; typewritten; unpublished. Cf. *NL*, Anh. A 26,1.

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Paula née von Hase. After 1912 I attended the humanistic Friedrich Werder Gymnasium in Berlin, later the Grunewald Gymnasium, which I left in 1923 with my Abitur.^[7] After studies in Tübingen and Berlin, I completed my Licentiate degree summa cum laude under Privy Councilor Seeberg^[8] at the University of Berlin. After my first theological examination^[9] before the consistory in Berlin, I was sent to Barcelona as a vicar^[10] for one year—1928–29. In 1930 I received my habilitation degree in systematic theology at the University of Berlin, completed my second theological examination before the consistory in Berlin, and then went on an academic scholarship to Union Theological Seminary in New York for one year. After my return I was ordained—in 1931—, lectured at the university, and held the office of student chaplain at the Technical College in Charlottenburg. In October 1933 I was elected pastor of two German Protestant congregations in London. From there I was called back to Germany in April 1935 to assume the directorship of a preachers' seminary. Since the conclusion of this work—winter 1937–38—I have worked in the superintendents' offices in Schlawe and Köslin. I speak English fluently.

I have published the following books: *Sanctorum Communio. A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*, 1930; *Act and Being*, 1931; *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 1933; *Discipleship*, 1937; *Life Together*, 1939.

Under the present circumstances, I would like to place myself at the service of the military chaplaincy.

158. To Johannes Radtke^[1]

To Military Head Chaplain Ra[d]tke, Berlin-Spandau

September 13, 1939

Dear Brother Ra[d]tke,

You will have received my letter from last Saturday. I don't want to press you at all. But I should inform you of the following: I have just been called by

[7.] [The German secondary school diploma that allows students to pursue university studies.—VB]

[8.] Reinhold Seeberg.

[9.] [Prospective pastors had to pass two theological examinations.—VB]

[10.] [I.e., an assistant pastor who had yet to pass the second theological exam.—VB]

[1.] Letter in the personal possession of Johannes Radtke; typewritten with hand signature; return address: "Pastor Lic. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, presently at Berlin-Charlottenburg 9, Marienburger Allee 43"; previously unpublished. Cf. *NL*, Anh. A 26,2.

the Army High Command and authorized to tell you that my wish has come to the attention of Colonel Burdach and Major General Kaufmann, who would warmly support it. The military chaplain^[2] has also been informed. Perhaps it is important for you to know this.

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With best wishes respectfully yours
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

159. From Heinz Doebert^[1]

Züllichau, September 16, 1939

Dear Brother Bonhoeffer,

When the Sunday sermon is done, one is also at ease to write letters! So I am doing quite well! I am still a civilian. Unfortunately, things didn't work out on the one Wednesday for getting together! My fiancée and I had bicycled to Bethesda Hospital in Teltow, where my fiancée held a Bible study and then visited patients. On the way back, we were caught in a thunderstorm in Lichterfelde. And to make matters worse, I didn't know Brother Grosch's^[2] house number.

I had hardly arrived in Berlin when I was told that I had to go to Züllichau on the Polish border,^[3] since several brothers there had been conscripted. At the same time I received my topics:^[4] "the true relationship of the offices of preacher and of elder and its historical realization in the Old Prussian Protestant congregations in the western and the eastern provinces," 2 Cor. 5:14–15 and Luther's explanation of second article.^[5]

At the train station I was told that everything beyond Frankfurt/Oder was uncertain. Therefore: a ticket that far, and took the bicycle along. The train went as far as Liegnitz. So in Frankfurt I paid extra while the locomotive engines were changed. One look at the road map obtained with effort (the army needed maps too!): to Sommerfeld. There I arrived around 7:20 p.m. It was dark. I had two small suitcases and a coat. I drove, lamp dimmed,^[6] in total darkness

[2.] Franz Dohrmann.

[1.] *NL*, C 25; handwritten; unpublished. Doebert was a candidate in the collective pastorate at Sigurdshof in the summer of 1939.

[2.] Götz Grosch.

[3.] [This was in Silesia, which at that time was a church province in the Old Prussian Union.—VB]

[4.] The reference is to the topics he had to write for his second theological examination, taken under the Old Prussian Union Confessing Church Council of Brethren.

[5.] Cf. Martin Luther's explanation of the second article of the Apostles' Creed in his Small and Large Catechism (*Book of Concord*, 355 and 435–40). On the first topic, cf. the word πρεσβύτερος (elder) at the end of the paragraph following the next one.

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through the completely strange area. Finally the moon came out. As long as the road was good, things now went pretty quickly. This was true, however, of the fewest stretches. Finally it became hilly. I finally reached a telephone connection in Grünberg. Fortunately, the superintendent had just returned from guard duty, so that I awakened him at 11:30 p.m.! He informed me that tomorrow (a Sunday) had been taken care of. So I spent the night in Grünberg. I had ridden forty-five kilometers! The next morning I rode in bright sunshine to the peaceful little town of Züllichau, twenty-two kilometers behind the front. As I traveled by moonlight, I heard the thunder of the cannons: the Poles were shooting at Fraustadt on German territory.

In the meantime, the superintendent was needed to minister to the wounded and could not put down the soldier's profession. Brother Röhling^[7] is still here as well, unexpectedly. So just a few surrounding villages had to be tended to. That worked to the benefit of my exam. So the sermon and catechesis are done. My fiancée made excerpts from the commentaries, and so I gathered the obligatory literature for the exam with the help of the local parish libraries. After Monday I will turn *πρεσβύτερος* over in my mind.

Otherwise I depend on the Stabi^[8] for the academic work. I have therefore requested a transfer to the area around Berlin, because from here traveling will be too expensive (185 km) and is also too problematic, since one must manage some of the connections by bicycle.

I wrote Brother Tonn^[9] last week, but have no answer yet. Do you know anything about the other brothers from Sigurdshof?

Here it is peaceful and rural. It is as if nothing at all were happening. In Berlin people were beside themselves. Here one scarcely notices anything of the events.

Next Sunday I am coming to Berlin to work through the literature that my fiancée obtained from the library, above all the church ordinances. I hope that I can remain in Berlin for a week. Will we see each other there?

Tomorrow morning I head through the countryside, twelve kilometers to a worship service. Outside it's raining cats and dogs, and I'm preparing myself for a wet ride.

In brotherhood respectful greetings to you from your
H. Doebert

[6.] [The wartime blackout instructions required that bicycle lamps be hooded so that only a slit of light came through.—VB]

[7.] Not otherwise identified.

[8.] Staatsbibliothek, or state library, in Berlin.

[9.] Heinz Tonn.

160. To the Finkenwalde Brothers^[1]

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September 20, 1939

Dear Brothers,

In response to an army postcard to the front, I received the news, which I must pass on to you today, that our dear brother Theodor Maaß was killed in action on September 3 in Poland. This news will be as incomprehensible for you as it was for me. But please let us thank God in remembering him. In him we had a good brother, a quiet, faithful pastor of the Confessing Church, who himself lived by the Word and sacrament, whom God has also honored with the privilege of suffering for the gospel.^[2] I am certain that he was ready to go. We should not try to fill with human words those gaps that God has ripped open. They should remain open. Our own comfort is the God of the resurrection, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was and is also his God. We know that our brother is with him, and that in him is the lasting fellowship of those to whom fulfillment has come and those who stand before their final hour. May God be praised for our fallen brother and be merciful to us all at our end. Brother Maaß's parents live in Stralsund, Pastor Maaß, Ketelhotstr. 8.

I know the following brothers are now soldiers: Maechler, Dobrick, von der Marwitz, Mickley, Wolfgang Schmidt, Gerhard Krause, Block, Martin Schaaff, Berg, Buchmann, Schrader, Pompe, Lynker, August, Winkelmann, Sander.^[3] Despite my inquiries, I have as yet no army postal numbers for Brothers Corbach, Seydel, Haarhausen, Giese, Nimz, Hofmann, Büchsel, Schröter, Winfried Krause. Others face being called up soon. I sincerely ask you to inform me as soon as someone is drafted or if someone is missing from the list about whom I have not been informed. Please let me know every army postal number that you learn of. Take time now, as often as possible, to write to the brothers out there. Above all, let us not neglect the greatest service that remains for us to do, the service of the faithful daily intercessory prayer. For our brothers among the soldiers we have so much to pray for, first and last and ever again, that they can prove themselves at all times to be Christians, that they can perform a genuine ministry to many

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[1.] *NL*, A 48,3 (9); typewritten mimeographed copy. Previously published in *GS* 2:553–58. This was the first newsletter during the war. Regarding the situation after the beginning of the war, cf. *DB-ER*, 662–64.

[2.] Theodor Maaß was one of the first in the Pomeranian Confessing Church to be imprisoned for a period.

[3.] Behind each name (in parentheses) is an army postal number.

of their comrades, and that Jesus Christ be their one and only comfort in life and in death.^[4]

An inner restlessness may have come over most of us in the last weeks. We know that our brothers out there are in all kinds of battles and danger; we hear of the death of one brother and this burden is like a compulsion: I must be there too, where my brothers are; I now want to have nothing else and nothing better than they have. This often depresses us completely, and then everything that we do appears superfluous; in fact at times we even tend to regard the vital questions about our church, for which we have struggled up to now, as secondary in light of worldwide events. We think that suddenly now everything must completely change; we should leave everything in the past behind us and start all over again. Who would not understand this? And yet, dear brothers, since you have not yet been called up, everything now depends upon not throwing to the winds the grace God has given us until now, upon not despising our ministry now, but learning to honor and love it, particularly in these days. We have the vocation to be preachers of the gospel and shepherds of the church-community, and as long as we are that, God will only ask us one thing, namely, whether the faithful ministry to his church-community has suffered damage due to us for even one moment, whether, for even one moment, we have paid too little attention to his church-community and the brothers he has given us.

269 We may still preach, and so let us continue to preach as we've done until now, with a good, free conscience, and to be faithful pastors who do not deny their church even in times of need. We know that God demands this service of us today, and that we thereby perform the greatest service to human beings that can be done for them. We do not ask what our inclination [Sinn] is today or tomorrow, but ask instead for our commission. Therefore, let us not quarrel and offend, but instead rejoice in it and serve.

The Daily Text and interpretive verse for the first of September^[5] were surprising and promising enough: "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near" (Isa. 55[:6]), "See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6[:2]). What else does this say but this: the hour of God has struck; it is high time for conversion and prayer; the day of the good news has dawned; the harvest of God's word will be greater than the harvest of death; victory belongs not to the world but

[4.] This is an allusion to the first question of the Heidelberg Catechism of 1564, "What is thy only comfort in life and death?" Entire text online at <http://www.ccel.org/creeds/heidelberg-ca.html>.

[5.] The day of the German invasion of Poland.

to God. If we truly believe this, we and our congregations will have been helped.

We are preachers of justification through grace alone.^[6] What [does] this mean today? Very simply it means that we no longer equate human ways and goals with divine ways and goals. God is beyond all human plans and deeds. Everything must be judged by God. Whoever evades this judgment of God must die, but whoever submits to it will live; for to be judged by God is grace for life. God judges for the sake of mercy; God humbles in order to lift up. Only the humble will succeed. God does not confirm human action, but thwarts it and with that tugs our gaze upward to God's grace. By thwarting our paths, God comes to us and speaks his merciful Yes to us, but precisely only through the cross of Jesus Christ. He has placed this cross on the earth; if under the cross he gives us back to the earth and its work and toil, so he commits us anew to the earth and the human beings who live, act, struggle, and suffer on it. "You then, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. 2:1) "Be strong, be courageous, and keep the charge of the Lord your God" (1 Kings 2:2-3).

I do not know whether this time we will experience the outbreak of the theodicy question in as agonizing a fashion as in the previous war. It almost seems to me as though something here has changed. Christians today may know more of the biblical judgment on the world and history; thus they will perhaps be confirmed in their faith by the present events rather than afflicted. The non-Christians have done away with the question of the righteousness of a personal God too definitely to be overwhelmed by it. Nonetheless, under the force of these events the question will not be completely absent, and we will, like the author of Ps. 42, still often have to hear: "Where is your God?" [Ps. 42:3].^[7] Is it true that God is silent? It is only true for those whose God is the God of their own ideals and thoughts. The biblical message of the power and terrible might [Furchtbarkeit] of the Creator and Lord of the whole world must be brought to these people. "Who can command and have it done, if the Lord has not ordained it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come?" (Lam. 3:37-38) "I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe" (Isa. 45[:6-]7). "Does disaster befall a city, unless the Lord has done it?" (Amos 3:6). This God, who lets the peoples drink from the cup of wrath and confuses them (Jer. 25:15ff.), is the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose council is wonderful and who carries it out gloriously

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[6.] This is an allusion to the Augsburg Confession, Article 4 (*Book of Concord*, 38-39).

[7.] [In the German Bible, this is verse 42:4.—VB]

at the end (Isa. 28, 29). Is God silent? No, God speaks the tacit language of his terrible power and glory, in order that we become small and humble and pray to him alone. He speaks out of pure grace as well the clear, audible language of his mercy and blessings for his human children through the mouth of Jesus Christ, in whom we have the almighty God as a loving father. “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isa. 6:3).

Therefore, our hearts and our gaze are not trapped and captivated by the daily events, as attentively as we follow them. We seek and find through them God the Lord and see his works in awe. We seek and find our lord
 271 Jesus Christ and believe firmly in his victory and in the glory of his church-community. We seek and find God, the Holy Spirit, who makes his Word win power over us, greater power than the world can ever win over us. And we pray that the work of the Trinitarian God may soon be fulfilled.

Death has once again entered into our midst, and we must think about it, whether we wish to or not. Two things have become important to me recently: death is outside ourselves, and it is in us. Death from outside is the terrible foe that approaches us when it wishes. It is the Grim Reaper, under whose blow the flower drops off. It steers the bullet so that it hits. We can do nothing against it; “[its] force is from God in the highest.”^[8] It is death for the entire human race, God’s wrath and the end of all life. But the other is the death within us, our own death. It, too, has rested in us since Adam’s fall. But it belongs to us ourselves. We die this death daily in Jesus Christ, or we refuse it. This death in us has something to do with the love for Christ and for human beings. We die this death when we love Christ and our brothers with all our heart, for to love means to give oneself wholly to the loved one. This death is grace and the fulfillment of life. This may be our prayer: that we die this death, that it be given to us that the death from without only meet us after we have been prepared for it through this death of our own; then our death is truly only the gateway to the fulfilled love of God.

When around us strife and death practice their wild dominion, then we are summoned to witness to God’s love and God’s peace, not only through

[8.] This alludes to the spiritual folk song *Es ist ein Schnitter, heißt der Tod, hat Gewalt vom großen Gott* (There Is a Reaper, Called Death, Has Power from the Great God), Regensburg 1637 (composer unknown; the song is not in German Protestant hymnals). [The song is included in *Der Zupfgeigenhansl*, the songbook of the German Youth Movement, which was already in its 60th edition by 1918. Cf. *DB-ER*, 32. The editor thanks Ilse Tödt for this information.—VB]

words and thoughts but also through the deed. Do read James 4:1–2!^[9] Let us daily ask ourselves where we can give witness through the deed for the kingdom [Reich] where love and peace rule. Only from the peace when two or three are gathered^[10] can the great peace for which we hope begin to grow. Let us put an end to all hatred, mistrust, envy, strife, wherever we can. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”^[11]

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I have been back from my journey for several weeks.^[12] The day before yesterday was Fritz’s wedding.^[13] This summer’s work was very rewarding. I would have liked to send you all a report on my trip,^[14] but it has become too long, and I don’t know how I can make it available to you. Of course it’s already long ago.

I am thinking of you all and your work in intercessory prayers. May God keep and bless you, your homes, and your congregations. God grant us all his peace.

Greetings to you all from your faithful
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Meditation texts:

September 24–September 30:	Ps. 16
October 1–October 7:	Ps. 23
October 8–October 14:	Ps. 31
October 15–October 21:	Ps. 34
October 22–October 28:	Pss. 42, 43
October 29–November 4:	Ps. 62

[9.] [“Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask.”—VB] Bonhoeffer’s note *NL*, A 54,16 (handwritten) contains thoughts about being a “doer” [Täter]: “James 4:11f Rom. 2:13 Matt. 7:21 and finally Matt. 21:31 Matt. 12:50 to do God’s will is foundation [addition:] center of community John 7:17 John 15[:5] without me . . . [you can do nothing]—doing is the only appropriate behavior when faced by God’s will. First contrast: to say Lord, Lord—confession (Matt. 7 Matt. 21:31) Second contrast: the Christian works (Matt. 7 1 Cor. 13 John 6:28) Third contrast: judging (James 4:11–12 Rom. 2:1ff.). Fourth contrast: hearing (James 1 Rom. 2:13)—doing is the exclusive orientation of the whole human being toward God—works are done in God (John 3:21!)”

[10.] [Cf. Matt. 18:20.—VB]

[11.] Matt. 5:9. Cf. Bonhoeffer’s exegesis of this in *DBWE* 4:108–9.

[12.] The reference is to his trip to the United States and England.

[13.] The marriage of Margret Bethge and Fritz Onnasch on September 17, 1939; see Bethge’s June 29, 1939, letter to Bonhoeffer, 1/127, ed. note 5.

[14.] Bonhoeffer is referring to his essay “Protestantism without Reformation,” 2/6.

November 5–November 11:	Ps. 73
November 12–November 18:	Ps. 85
November 19–November 25:	Ps. 32
November 26–December 2:	John 5:24–29
December 3–December 9:	Luke 1:26–38
December 10–December 16:	Luke 1:39–56
December 17–December 23:	Luke 1:57–80 . . . ^[15]

273 **161. To Ottonie Blanck^[1]**

September 23, 1939

My dear Lady:

I was very pleased to receive your letter.^[2] Thank you very much for it. Since you yourself have already found it necessary to answer the question you directed to me, I may assume that to begin with we are agreed that this is one of those questions that cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. The question as you formulate it is, I believe, not a dogmatic question but a pastoral one, which must be answered differently according to the people with whom we are concerned. If one asks whether a Christian may come to communion without private confession, in general one can only say yes, for the sacrament of forgiveness may not be dependent upon a work done by me. Asking in this way one turns confession into a law. Every sinner is permitted to come to communion, therefore, certainly the one who until now either did not find the courage or the occasion for confession. On the other hand, we will have to examine in the individual case why the path to confession has not yet been taken? Here we will have to clear hindrances and misunderstandings out of the way. Above all, the misunderstanding of confession as a severe law. We cannot speak enough about the joy and the gift of confession.^[3] Further, it will be important to learn the reasons why

[15.] The literature recommendations have been omitted. Besides several evangelizing writings [volksmissionarischen Schriften], e.g., “Biblical sayings for soldiers,” they also include Kohlbrügge’s *Sechs Predigten, gehalten vor der Eröffnung der Kriegsläufe im Jahre 1870*; Luther’s *Ob Kriegsleute auch in seligem Stande sein können* (1526), WA 19:616,623–62; Schnepel’s *Als Christ und Kompanieführer im Weltkrieg* (1938). Named with “most serious reservations” are Arper and Zillessen’s *Kriegsagende* (1915).

[1.] Letter is in the personal possession of Heinz-Jürgen Blanck-Lubarsch; typed with hand signature; previously unpublished.

[2.] See Ottonie Blanck’s August 11, 1939, letter to Bonhoeffer, 1/152.

the general confession is insufficient. Finally, our advice will also depend very much on whether the gift of communion itself has become weak and ineffective for the person concerned, precisely because the full confession of sins is absent.

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Only in cases of sins that have become evident must we demand a personal confession before we can extend communion. In all other cases, and this is the great majority, we must display the glory of the gift^[4] tirelessly, but we may not make it compulsory, since otherwise the confession becomes an ultimate work of piety, and with that forgiveness itself is called into question. Indeed, everyone should confess, but on the other hand only the one who can do nothing else may confess. I believe that this is how Luther meant it, and that thus confession must be practiced in light of the gospel.^[5]

I don't know whether with all this I have said anything that is of use to you. Otherwise, I would be happy to write again at greater length.

With thanks and all good wishes for your work in Dahlem. (How much we in the countryside outside Berlin are oppressed by what we hear from there! God grant someone there an easing and unifying word!)^[6] Greetings from your respectful

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

[3.] Regarding Bonhoeffer's theological respect for and practice of confession, see especially *DBW* 14, 2/12.2 and 2/24, as well as *DBWE* 5:108–18.

[4.] [I.e., of personal confession.—VB]

[5.] Cf. *DBWE* 5:114 and its reference to Luther's Large Catechism (1529), "A Brief Exhortation to Confession" (*Book of Concord*, 460).

[6.] After Martin Niemöller was taken to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp on March 2, 1938, a bitter dispute broke out in the Berlin-Dahlem parish about his successor and the proper church authority. Pastor Eberhard Röhrich, who worked together with the Old Prussian Union church committee, and the parish council decided for Walter Dreß and achieved his official installation by the church authorities. [It is interesting that the installation of Dreß, who was married to Bonhoeffer's sister Susanne, was approved by the official (German Christian–controlled) church governance board in Berlin. This pitted Dreß against Gollwitzer, who was Niemöller's successor.—VB]. In opposition, the confessional faction of the parish, with Pastor Fritz Müller, which since Niemöller's imprisonment assembled each evening for a prayer service, refused any cooperation with the official German Christian-led church government, and demanded (as did Niemöller himself) that Helmut Gollwitzer be Niemöller's successor. See Graff et al., *Unterwegs zur mündigen Gemeinde*, 81–84. [For an account of the different factions in the Dahlem congregation, which fought even during Niemöller's time there, see Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 70–71.—VB]

275 **162. From Ottonie Blanck**^[1]

Steglitz, September 25, 1939

Dear Pastor Bonhoeffer,

Thank you very much for your friendly and quick reply. Particularly for your word of solidarity about the crisis in Dahlem,^[2] which is truly a difficult burden for us; the certainty that outside there are also people who think of this in intercessory prayer is a great comfort and we are in great need of that!—And now please do not be angry if I have further questions and additional remarks to your letter: Surely we are agreed that the question cannot be answered with a simple yes or no, and in one individual case that came to me in a letter during my holidays, it was certainly a matter of pastoral care. Since the same question is occurring more and more frequently, I would like to ask whether it might not indeed be a dogmatic question. In one case it was formulated approximately as follows: “I simply feel trapped. The path to communion, which is becoming more and more a genuine ‘bread of life,’^[3] through the general confession seems for the time being closed to me.^[4] For this path seems to me to be a means toward attaining cheap grace.^[5] The general confession leaves one so wonderfully uncommitted. And this absence of commitment naturally shatters the essential meaning of confession. A person who confesses his sins to God and asks forgiveness, but who shies away from confessing these sins also before his brother, is simply not serious in his desire for forgiveness. . . . And the noncommittal general confession is surely to blame that, again and again, the old misery starts up anew the next day. . . . My concern with all this is much more the communion than the confession, and the case is apparently solved if I just say: communion without confession. It’s only that this appears to me to be running away from it.”

This is essentially the tenor of all such questions as I got to hear them, and now I must confess that I only attempted and attempt a response in fear and trembling, and am ever again terribly oppressed that such things that are particu-

[1.] Letter in the personal possession of Heinz-Jürgen Blanck-Lubarsch; typewritten carbon copy; previously unpublished.

[2.] See Bonhoeffer’s September 23, 1939, letter to Ottonie Blanck, 1/161, ed. note 6.

[3.] Cf. John 6:35.

[4.] [Blanck and the young parishioners turning to her were obviously familiar with Bonhoeffer’s *Discipleship* and read its comments on “cheap grace” as a critique of the official church and its accommodation to the German Christians, and therefore were questioning whether they could take communion and make their confession within the official church.—VB]

[5.] See Blanck’s August 11, 1939, letter to Bonhoeffer, 1/152, ed. note 6.

larly important for young people are asked solely among laypeople, burdening some of us with an immense responsibility, and we are much too immature and unripe in our faith to bear this! It could indeed be that we should be grateful for these questions and appreciate that it is a fruit of our special circumstances in Dahlem that the parishioners must help themselves. But I often fear this enormous responsibility and the potential of going astray toward a sectarian community!

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In my attempt to give a reply, I endeavored to keep to the biblical words of institution of the Lord's Supper and the places in Luther that are known to me,^[6] but I cannot escape the feeling that I have encroached on a field that I am not entitled to enter. But much less can I leave those who asked me without an answer, as they simply don't turn to a pastor because today they are such overburdened people. I have great fear—and I believe this is even more true of the younger people among us—that the merciful gift of confession will be made a law, and it is also somewhat problematic for me in *Life Together*, whether the sentence on page 111: “. . . we refuse to carry the cross when we are ashamed to take upon ourselves the shameful death of the sinner in confession,”^[7] is not also somewhat legalistic? I have also endeavored to speak of the joy and the gift of confession, in order to direct the perspective of the questioner in that direction again and again, but I simply cannot hide the fact that—in my experience—the Christian [may] indeed “gain one victory after another,”^[8] but that accordingly the defeats become much harder and are more burdensome as well! The Christian must certainly consider this as well before he ventures into the abyss of confession?

Since you were friendly enough to offer me a further reply, I would indeed be grateful to you for that; it would be good if I could on occasion read your reply to such a group?! Do I perhaps express myself clumsily or unclearly, thereby troubling you more than is responsible? In any case, I thank you once more very cordially for your lines yesterday, which will certainly help me and the others further, and with the request that you continue to take us to heart in your prayers for our particular needs in Dahlem, I am

Your respectful
[Ottonie Blanck]

[6.] Cf. Bonhoeffer's September 23, 1939, letter to Blanck, 1/161, ed. note 5.

[7.] See *DBWE* 5:111.

[8.] See *DBWE* 5:112.

277 163. From Otto Kistner^[1]

Trier, September 28, 1939

Dear Brother Bonhoeffer,

Heartfelt thanks for the newsletter,^[2] which reached me here in Trier. I had to leave Saarbrücken—leaving behind all my books etc.^[3] The congregation is scattered throughout Germany; here and there I hear from a few parishioners, and that is then always a great joy. I stayed the first days in Boppard with my parents, until the summons came from the council^[4] to substitute here in Trier for a brother who had been drafted. One then works in a very strange situation. All preparation is only based on the Book of the church.^[5] The external life circumstances are similarly confined only to the bare necessities. So the day begins with housewives' work, make beds, make coffee, wash the dishes, straighten the room a bit, and then on to the rest. In addition the uncertainty, will Trier be evacuated as well, must I take such a route once again or not? I have never before experienced so clearly what it means: we have no lasting city.^[6]

What you enumerate in your letter as the questions that move the brothers basically doesn't move me at all. Other things do. Everything that I had wanted to tell you during the summer is stored up and will—if God wills and we live^[7]—be said at some point. I am unable to doubt God and his righteousness, but can doubt myself. But more on that later.

Here in the Rhineland there have been some things happening. I simply don't know how I should judge it. The disciplinary proceedings and blocking of salaries have been canceled.^[8] Regarding the collection question, a mixed committee is at work.^[9] Even the assistant pastors are to be (?) legalized. You have certainly

[1.] *NL*, C 25; handwritten; unpublished. Kistner was a candidate in the fifth Finkenwalde session in the summer of 1937.

[2.] See Bonhoeffer's September 20, 1939, newsletter to the Finkenwalde brothers, 1/160.

[3.] [Directly on the French border, the Saar region was placed under French and British governance in 1920 by the Treaty of Versailles and reunited with Germany after the January 1935 Saar plebiscite. On September 7, 1939, the French army surrounded Saarbrücken and captured a number of small German villages in the region; the French withdrew after the fall of Poland.—VB]

[4.] [The Council of Brethren.—VB]

[5.] [I.e., the Bible.—VB]

[6.] Cf. Heb. 13:14.

[7.] Cf. James 4:15.

[8.] [In January 1939, Kistner had been glad that things for the Confessing Church were still going well; see 1/60, p. 000.—VB]

[9.] [The taking up of collections by the Confessing Church was banned in December 1935; cf. *DB-ER*, 496.—VB]

heard of this. It would interest me to learn whether these things have started happening where you are as well. The gentleman from Hanover has brought his name once again to public attention.^[10] How lovely!

It occurs to me that the brothers in Pomerania often complain that they live in such a remote region and can hardly get together with other brothers. If I want to travel here from Trier to a confidant, I need two days, one for the trip there and one for the trip back; even under normal conditions it doesn't go faster.

By the way, do you know Trier? It is indeed an astounding city. Everywhere one goes one is reminded of the Roman era and thereby also of the early Christian period as if it were alive. I don't know the date ascribed by archaeologists to the first Christian finds. But when one considers that even before the great migration of tribes, a Christian congregation existed here and indeed quite a large one, when one considers that Christians back then already went by the Porta Nigra and the Caesarean hot springs and pondered the Roman Empire and its world power, then one has very peculiar feelings. Sic transit—.^[11]

And now may you and the brothers who are with you be very cordially greeted from this Trier. Your

O. Kistner

A friend of mine who also had to flee Saarbrücken found the enclosed gravestone inscription in a church in Schwäbisch-Hall.^[12] Perhaps it will be of interest.

[10.] [The "gentleman from Hanover" refers to Lutheran bishop August Marahrens, leader of that regional church, who as a "neutral" party in the Church Struggle was viewed as an enemy by Confessing Church radicals; of the Lutheran bishops in Germany, he was one of the most outspoken supporters of the Nazi regime.—VB] See the September 2, 1939, "Public Proclamation of the German Evangelical Church," signed by Dr. Friedrich Werner and the other members of the German Evangelical Church "Spiritual Confidential Council," which included, in addition to Marahrens, German Christian Bishop Walther Schultz (Schwerin) and High Church Council member Johannes Hymmen (Berlin). Among other things, this document stated: "Since yesterday our German Volk stands in battle for the land of its fathers, in order that German blood may return home to German blood. The German Evangelical Church always stood in loyal solidarity with the fate of the German Volk. It has offered invincible strength from the word of God to augment the weapons of steel. . . . So we unite in this hour as well with our Volk in intercessory prayer for the Führer and Reich, for the entire armed forces and all who perform their service in the homeland for the fatherland" (*Gesetzblatt der Deutsche Evangelische Kirche* 1939, 99). See also Herbert, *Der Kirchenkampf*, 226–27.

[11.] Sic transit gloria mundi, "thus the glory of the world passes." Cf. 1 John 2:17.

[12.] The grave inscription has been lost. Bonhoeffer's ancestors lived in Schwäbisch-Hall after 1513. "Some of these ancestors gaze down on visitors to the St. Michael Church in Schwäbisch Hall from their baroque epitaphs on the walls" (*DB-ER*, 9).

279 **164. To the Families of Finkenwalde Brothers
Drafted into the Armed Forces**^[1]

October 8, 1939

Esteemed, dear Friends,

Today may I turn to you, the parents, siblings, and wives of our brothers who now stand in the field? As the former teacher of your son, your husband, I consider it a brotherly obligation to him that I write a word in these weeks not only to him but to you as well, as his closest relatives. At the same time I want to do it in accordance with the wishes of all those who consider themselves always bound to him as brothers, on the foundation of their work together. Even if we hardly know each other, we are connected by the daily remembrance of him for whom we can now do so little and whom we must commend entirely to the grace of God.

For those of us who still stand in our church ministry in the homeland, it is often hard to think of our brothers whom we know to be out there, without being able to share with them all that they must endure there. When we then hear from them through letters that they rejoice in thinking of everyone who is still doing his urgently needed ministry in the parish, then we continue in this ministry with greater joy and greater seriousness. It is indeed the same ministry into which our brothers out there hope soon to return and through which we are bound to them.

When we consider the life of the young pastors who are now in the field, it moves us to see how much their life has been a struggle until now. It is no easy life, but it is a life that they and we know is worthy of being lived. We must not feel sorry for these young pastors, but we should, wherever we can, bear their burdens, struggle, and suffer with them. Nowhere else is the peace that they have found in Jesus Christ for their entire life more wonderful and visible than in the midst of struggle. Whoever has found this peace
280 may be blessed as happy, despite all that may befall him.

In the past weeks I have received many letters from the field.^[2] Not one of them includes a word of complaint about how they are faring personally.

[1.] *NL*, A 48,3 (10); typewritten with handwritten signature; return address: "Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Berlin-Charlottenburg 9, Marienburger Allee 43." Previously published in *GS* 6:469–71.

[2.] Letters not extant.

But they all have two things in common: the hope of being able to prove themselves as Christians even in war and thereby serve their comrades, and the yearning for the preaching ministry in their parish back home. Again and again our brothers in the field ask and remind us to do for them that which they often lack time and quiet for, namely, to pray for them and their faith, for their families, parents, wives, children, and for their congregations. Let us not leave this request unheard.

A great circle of Christians, colleagues, and parishioners surrounds your son, your husband, your brother in faithful intercession during these months. We have often heard that this prayer has become a help in difficult hours for those out there. It is God himself who turns the prayers of the church-community into a source of strength for our brothers. All those who are connected to one another through intercessory prayer know about this. But let us include in our intercessions the unknown others who are together with ours and perhaps have no one who does this service for them. Who among us knows how often in his life he has been preserved by the prayer of an unknown person! Not only we, however, but the entire church of Jesus Christ stands praying by our brothers as its true servants, for whom it thanks God and prays to God for their service in the future as well. This we may take as our great comfort.

The most important thing for us, however, may be this: we may know that our brothers have gone out there well prepared through God's word. As conscious Christians they face the future and know that all things must serve for the best of those who love God.^[3] Thus we don't want to burden them with our worries, rendering the testing of their faith even more difficult. Instead, we want to learn from them to entrust all worries to the one who alone can and will take care of us.

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In conclusion, may I ask you to write me if there is anything that I can do for your son, your husband; and I believe it is in accord with our brothers when I ask you to let me know if I can offer any kind of service to you during this time.

God give us all his peace. Greetings from your respectful
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

[3.] Cf. Rom. 8:28.

165. To Max Mebes^[1]

October 10, 1939

Dear Brother Mebes,

You will be deployed for the winter work in Pomerania.^[2] I ask you to be patient a few more days before you receive exact information. In any case, the work will begin in October. You need a bicycle there and warm clothes, in addition to bedsheets, towels, etc. Bring along the Nestle NT; Lutheran confessional writings; *The Clear Tone*.^[3]

Please let me know immediately the year in which you were born and what your military status is. Please give this information to Pastor Bethge, Berlin-Charlottenburg 9, Marienburger Alle 43. All other questions should be directed to him as well.

With best wishes your
Bonhoeffer

282 **166. From Georg Eichholz**^[1]

Wuppertal-Barmen, November 6, 1939

Dear Licentiate Bonhoeffer,

I would like to request your participation for a series of interpretations (meditations) of old gospel pericopes, which are to serve in the preparation of the pastor's Sunday proclamation—the publishers will be E. Müller, Barmen.^[2] Because

[1.] Letter in the personal possession of Mrs. Renate Petras; typewritten with handwritten name of recipient and signature; return address: "Lic. Bonhoeffer, Schlawe/Pommern, Koppelstrasse 9"; previously unpublished.

[2.] Invitation to the collective pastorate in Sigurdshof in the winter of 1939–40. Due to conscriptions into the military, there could no longer be a second collective pastorate in Köslin.

[3.] *Der helle Ton* was a songbook of the Reich Association of Protestant Groups for Young Men. [Since 1871, the word "Reich" had been synonymous with "National"; while after 1933 some groups adopted "Reich" when they nationalized and became extensions of the Nazi Party, in this instance the title does not connote any association with the Nazi party.—VB]

[1.] Literary estate of Georg Eichholz; typewritten carbon copy with handwritten initials; return address: "Pastor G. Eichholz, Wuppertal-Barmen, Missionsstrasse 9." Cf. also *NL*, A 60,2; later typewritten copy. Previously published in *GS* 6:478.

[2.] The book appeared in 1941 as G. Eichholz, ed., *Herr tue meine Lippen auf*, (Lord, open my mouth), vol. 1.

the prospectus must be sent out, I would be gratefully obliged to you if I could have your consent, which in practical terms would have to be fulfilled approximately for the season of Trinity, in principle by the end of this week. The pericopes for Advent are already being written by Brunner and Schlier, with further pericopes by Gollwitzer and Dehn.^[3] I hope that the working community, which this book wants to call into being, will offer a new consideration of fundamental problems of proclamation, for example, that of the homily, which the present book by Diem^[4] also sets as a task for further consideration.

Please pardon me for this very short notice. I ask you however to understand it in terms of the matter itself. I don't believe I need to emphasize the urgency of the task.

[G. Eichholz]

167. To Georg Eichholz^[1]

November 8, 1939

Dear Brother Eichholz,

Many thanks for your letter. I agree, but would ask you to tell me the deadline and text very soon. By the way do we not know each other from the summer of 1931?^[2]

Cordially, your
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

[3.] Peter Brunner, Heinrich Schlier, Helmut Gollwitzer, and Günther Dehn.

[4.] Hermann Diem, *Warum Textpredigt?* (Why a textual sermon?) (1939).

[1.] Literary estate of Georg Eichholz; handwritten; from Berlin. Cf. also *NL*, A 60,2: later typewritten copy. Previously published in *GS* 6:478.

[2.] They had met during Bonhoeffer's visit to Barth in Bonn. Cf. *DB-ER*, 175–78, and *DBW* 11, 1/4, 1/5, and esp. 1/6 (which describes the visit, although Eichholz is not mentioned—VB).

283 **168. To Georg Eichholz**^[1]

December 6, 1939

Dear Brother Eichholz,

Many thanks for your letter.^[2] When do you need the manuscripts? A reply will have to depend on that somewhat. If the date is not too early, I would agree to do it.

Best regards, your
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

169. To the Finkenwalde Brothers^[1]

Personal letter

Dear Brothers,

Sad news must come at the beginning of this Christmas letter. On December 2, 1939, our brother Emanuel Kahn had a fatal accident during his military service in the homeland. He was buried on December 6 in Sternberg, where he last worked. Brother Kahn participated in the entire Polish campaign. Out there he had the task of picking up the wounded on the front and taking them to the first-aid station. During a brief leave he visited me less than two weeks before his death. He spoke with great clarity and steadfastness about the path of our church and the ultimate decisions of faith. He asked about many brothers, and after a conversation of many hours, we parted after devotions. I am very grateful that I could still have this meeting with Brother Kahn. I am certain that God's call did not meet him unprepared. In this life he was with the Word, so we may believe that the Word holds him fast in eternity. The meditation text for the week of his death was "anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life" (John 5:24).

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The fact that today a Christmas letter must begin like this makes our situation utterly clear to us. Death and Christmas have moved very close to each other, and we do not at all want to avoid this. Do we not already hear

[1.] Literary estate of George Eichholz; handwritten; no return address; previously unpublished. Cf. *NL*, A 60,2; later typewritten copy.

[2.] Letter not extant.

[1.] *NL*, A 48,3 (11); typewritten mimeographed copy; return address: "Lic. Bonhoeffer, Schlawe, Koppelstrasse 9"; undated, but certainly during Advent 1939. Previously published in *GS* 2:559–62.

the news of the death of a Christian brother today with different ears than we did only a few months ago? Hasn't the light of the Christmas message become bright enough for us that we can genuinely rejoice when we may know that one of us may now already see this light in eternity? Indeed, that even we ourselves begin to look forward to this? Admittedly, we are sometimes seized by an indescribable anxiety, particularly in the face of this light, when we think of the many whom death meets without their being in faith, and perhaps as well when we think of ourselves, our life, and the way we carry out our ministry. Then there are times when we would like to try to force, for ourselves and for others, that which God often only wants to give us in long years of praying, seeking, and waiting, and perhaps then the comfort is sometimes rather hasty and fast, and there is therefore no lasting peace. So we then thank God that he does not yet call us away today, that he still gives us time to learn his word here and live according to it and carry out our ministry in such a way that it brings fruit, perhaps after long fruitless years. Thus the Christmas message of the great joy, of the Savior, of peace, amid all fulfillment that it brings, remains for us personally and for our ministry to people a promise that we pursue.^[2]

Many of you will receive this letter amid a great burden of work. God knows all your service and knows your strength; he will allow you to stand upright as long he needs you. For most of you it will be uncertain, how long you can still work in the congregation. Regarding this one brother recently wrote from the front: when God bids us to leave the congregation, then he may want to till the acre himself. Many of you are separated from your parishes, from wives and children, and you yearn for the work that threatens to suffocate the others. We think very particularly of you, dear brothers, who are out there. No one there is forgotten, not by us and most certainly not by God. We commend you each day to the grace of God and pray that you will be led back into your parishes back home. But we know of course as well, that through you a great service is being performed out there, and that your commission accompanies you, wherever you are. We have received many letters from the field in the last months, and each one truly made us happy.^[3] It is one and the same witness, in which we strengthen one another; and the fact that you out there could remain steadfast in this is a great help and assurance for us here. Let us continue to pray for one another, that each of us can make that confession that God requires of him where he is, even if this becomes very difficult at some point. Only that in this time no one be left alone and that God, in addition to faith in the community of saints, may

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[2.] Cf. 1 Pet. 3:11.

[3.] Letters not extant.

give us again and again to experience and see something of this! Yet God will and can only do this when we place ourselves at his disposal and seek our brother and stand by his side.

Dear brothers, when have we been able to preach the Christmas message with more confidence and joy than in this year? When would our ministry have been more necessary and glorious? When would we have had to call on God more urgently to finally, finally give the fruit that he has promised, to purify us and to brush away everything that hinders a proper ministry, and then to use us, the way we are, as his servants?

On a limited scale, our work here proceeds as before.^[4] Please let us hear again from you, of your work and how you are doing. I very warmly thank all those who have written in the last weeks.

286 May God bless you this Christmas time, you personally, your homes, and your congregations. May he let you enter the new year strengthened in faith, richer in love, and confirmed in your hope.

Greetings to you all from your faithful
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

. . .^[5] I am sending as an enclosure a theological letter composed for another purpose, for a quiet hour over Christmas.^[6]

Meditation texts:

December 31–January 6:	Prov. 1
January 7–January 13:	Prov. 3
January 14–January 20:	Prov. 8
January 21–January 27:	Prov. 14
January 28–February 4:	Prov. 18
February 5–February 11:	Prov. 28
February 12–February 18:	Col. 1:1–20
February 19–February 25:	Col. 1:21–29
February 26–March 2:	Col. 2
March 3–March 9:	Col. 3:1–15
March 10–March 16:	Col. 3:16–25
March 17–March 23:	Col. 4

[4.] In the collective pastorate at Sigurdshof. The collective pastorate in Köslin did not take place in the winter of 1939–40 due to all the conscriptions [of young Confessing Church theologians—VB] into the military.

[5.] Omitted here is a list of the military postal numbers of several Finkenwalde brothers.

[6.] See 3/10.1.

170. To Paula Bonhoeffer^[1]

December 18

Dear Mama,

With the same mail I'm sending a package in which there are a few Christmas things and some dirty laundry. I don't need it immediately, since I will of course find some at your place; all the same, I would like to have it sometime during the holidays. It has become very cold here. Early today -20.^[2] But the lake is frozen over, and so today we intend to go ice skating. I wanted to be in Berlin Thursday evening.^[3] How is Thomas doing?^[4]

Many greetings and loving thanks your
Dietrich

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171. To Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer^[1]

January 15, 1940

Dear Karl Friedrich,

I did not forget your birthday,^[2] but because I was completely without help in recent days, I didn't find time for a letter. Although that remains just as much the case today, I want to at least briefly wish you a good new year, that you both can stay healthy and with each other. The period of uncertainty will now not last much longer.^[3] Here we sit concerned about coal and with no petroleum,^[4] so that we must light candles as long as they are in supply. We are also presently almost entirely cut off from the town. All this would be in itself quite nice if it were not accompanied by the general worries here. But we are still doing quite well.^[5] By the way, I must tell you I am currently

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (36); handwritten postcard; postmark: Zollbrück, December 18, 1939. Previously unpublished.

[2.] [Celsius.—VB]

[3.] Presumably Thursday, December 28, 1939.

[4.] Thomas Bonhoeffer, son of Klaus and Emmi Bonhoeffer.

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (37); handwritten card; no address but certainly from Sigurdshof. Partially reproduced in *GS* 2:562.

[2.] January 13.

[3.] [This is a reference to the conspiracy's negotiations at the time with the Vatican. Cf. *DB-ER*, 673.—VB]

[4.] [For lamps.—VB]

[5.] Eberhard Bethge described the situation in Sigurdshof, which was snowed in, on January 1, 1940, in a letter to his cousins and friends: "At present my existence stands under the motto, freezing and in darkness. We're worried about the coal. . . . We also

288 with real enthusiasm reading the book *Science Breaks Monopolies*^[6] like a novel. If only someone had told me this in school or somewhere later! For me it virtually alters my view of the world; in any case, it is making a great impression on me and much pleasure. Time and time again, I find the photographs of Mama very splendid. So, all the best to all of you!

Many greetings your
Dietrich

172. From George Eichholz^[1]

January 16, 1940

My very dear Brother Bonhoeffer,

I thank you very much indeed for your telegram of consent, which I received on January 10.^[2] The letter you mention must have been lost, since it hasn't reached me yet. I am pleased that I may expect your manuscript on *Quasimodogeniti* and *Misericordiasdomini* by February 1, the manuscript for Pentecost Sunday and the Monday after Pentecost (for these 240 typed lines per pericope, otherwise 160 typed lines) by February 20.

With cordial greetings and all good wishes your
[G. Eichholz]

173. To Georg Eichholz^[1]

January 24, 1940

Dear Brother Eichholz,

Here are the meditations requested by February 1.^[2] The other two will follow as we agreed before February 20. My address is Schlawe/Pomerania,

aren't receiving any more petroleum, so that presently we are straining our eyes with candles only, evenings almost everyone huddles in one room. Work for that reason is difficult. We play games or read something aloud" (Bethge, *So ist es gewesen*, 359).

[6.] Zischka, *Wissenschaft bricht Monopole* (1938).

[1.] Literary estate of Georg Eichholz; typewritten carbon copy with handwritten initials; return address: "Pastor G. Eichholz, Wuppertal-Barmen, Missionstrasse 9"; previously unpublished. Cf. also *NL*, A 60,2; later typewritten copy.

[2.] See *NL*, A 60,2; this was sent from Stettin on January 10, 1940.

[1.] Literary estate of Georg Eichholz; handwritten; postmarked Stettin, January 25, 1940; previously unpublished. Cf. also *NL*, A 60,2; later typewritten copy.

[2.] See 3/11.1 and 3/11.2.

Koppelstrasse 9, or Berlin-Charlottenburg 9, Marienburger Allee 43. The mail is forwarded from both places. Since I am often on the road, the one is not more convenient than the other. Please confirm receiving this letter, since I am not sure of your address.^[3]

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Cordially your
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

174. To His Parents^[1]

Sigurdshof, January 29

My dear Parents,

Yesterday I arrived here. Despite great delay the trip was warm and tolerable. Yesterday the postal vehicle almost didn't get through due to the snow. It has been snowing for four days almost without stop. Yesterday afternoon I could not keep myself from going out right away with the skis and through the snowy woods. It was utterly beautiful, such a quiet peace, so that everything else seems uncanny. Indeed, I feel more and more that living in the countryside, particularly in times like these, is much more humanely decent than in the city. All the mass effects simply fall away here. The contrast between Berlin and this remote farmstead is now particularly great. How is Papa doing? And Christel?^[2] Otherwise everyone has stayed healthy? I am fine. This afternoon I want to ski some more in the woods; unfortunately there are only two pairs of snowshoes here; therefore not everyone can come along. Many greetings and many thanks for everything! Your

Dietrich

Eberhard Bethge says hello and will send the receipt.

[3.] Eichholz acknowledged receiving the first two meditations and thanked Bonhoeffer "very cordially" in a January 31, 1940, letter. See *NL*, A 60,2.

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (38); handwritten postcard. Partially reproduced in *GS* 6:472.

[2.] Christine von Dohnanyi.

290 **175. From Fritz Onnasch**^[1]

Stettin 7, Pölitzerstrasse 33, February 2, 1940

My dear Dietrich,

In the last four years, the fourth of February^[2] is among the high points of “life together” for me as well, and it is hard for me not to be able to say my greetings to you in person. While we will also celebrate your birthday together with Aunt Ruth,^[3] a celebration together by the burning fireplace or in the forester’s cottage with its dark oak-beamed ceiling would be much lovelier.

May God gently guide you along his path through your new year of life, continue to transform your gifts into the ministry to his church and the brothers who are being placed on your way, and give you always the *παρρησία*,^[4] which overcomes the unbelief and fear of this world, since it comes from his hand. On Sunday we want to think especially of you, as we used to do otherwise. With that, even the great geographical distances are overcome, so that a firm fellowship will indeed come about.

We don’t want to pass over in silence one very personal wish: do come here to us in this new year as well, as often as you can. We count every visit as a gift; we hope that you feel that way as well!

Warm thanks for your letter.^[5] Now we look forward very much to Eberhard. He will tell us about the party, which has a special character every year. Don’t forget to talk a bit yourself about your youthful years with Harnack^[6] et. al. That era is so remote for us young folks. Both of us^[7] send warmest greetings to you.

In steadfast fellowship, your grateful
Fritz

[1.] Literary estate of Eberhard Bethge; handwritten; previously unpublished.

[2.] Bonhoeffer’s birthday.

[3.] Ruth von Kleist-Retzow, whose birthday was also February 4.

[4.] “Frank outspokenness.”

[5.] Letter not extant.

[6.] Regarding Bonhoeffer’s studies under Adolf von Harnack in Berlin at the beginning of the 1920s, see *DB-ER*, 66–68, and *DBWE* 10:621–26.

[7.] Fritz Onnasch and his wife Margret, neé Bethge.

176. To Sabine Leibholz^[1]

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February 2, 1940

Dear Sabine,

We are all together on our birthday^[2] evening; I came over for the evening, and we are thinking a great deal about all of you. Everyone is doing well. We were very pleased to receive your letters. Hopefully, next year we will celebrate together again. It is still very cold, and there is much snow here. Where Martin^[3] is, there is one (or two) petroleum stoves, nothing else. We all wish you a good and healthy new year. I will still buy something nice for my birthday from you and write you about it. I will already thank you now. Warmest greetings to you all, your

Dietrich^[4]**177. To His Parents**^[1]

February 14

My dear Parents,

You will be surprised that you still haven't heard anything from me. Since Saturday now we have been totally snowed in and cut off. Even the postal vehicle is not getting through anymore. Only through occasional sleds can we get anything here. (I am by the way always reachable by telegraph.) Sunday we visited a neighboring estate by sled. It was a gloriously long trip. When we returned it was -28,^[2] and yet it hardly felt freezing. Under these circumstances work is proceeding well. We received two cubic meters of wood as well as two tons of coal from the forester. So that will do for the next few days. It's naturally rather difficult to get supplies, but for the time being we still have enough to eat. Dear Mama, thank you very much for taking care of things in Schlawe. I received a car. That same night everything became snowed in. Despite all the discomfort, I wish that you both could

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[1.] Literary estate of Eberhard Bethge; handwritten; no address, but surely from Berlin; previously unpublished.

[2.] [Sabine Leibholz, of course, was Bonhoeffer's twin.—VB]

[3.] The reference is to Martin Niemöller, who was in the concentration camp in Sachsenhausen.

[4.] The signatures their parents and other family members follow.

[1.] *NL*, A 44/1(39); handwritten; no return address, but certainly from Sigurdshof. Partially reproduced in *GS*2:562.

[2.] [Celsius; this would be -18 degrees Fahrenheit.—VB]

spend a few days out here. If it were up to me, I believe that I would never again want to live in a city permanently. Thank you again so much for the lovely birthday present, which I found when I got here and which we are enjoying very much. How is Wilhelm doing?^[3]

Greetings to you all from your grateful
Dietrich

178. To His Parents^[1]

February 23, 1940

My dear Parents,

The chance just arose to send mail to Schlawe, so I want at least to send greetings from our wintry hermitage. Many thanks for the letter^[2] that came today. Everything here continues to go well; today it began to thaw. Now everything is even more impassable than before. No car can get through. And soon we will have terrible floods. The ground is still frozen so hard. How do these things look elsewhere in the country? We know almost nothing. I am very pleased that Diestel^[3] may stay on. In contrast I am rather disturbed with regard to Wilhelm.^[4] Hopefully, all will go well. I have now been here two weeks in a row. Thus I am getting around again to some work that I have been sitting with for some time.^[5] It is very wonderful to be able to work quietly, and one cannot be thankful enough for this, truly for each day.

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How are you be doing? Hopefully, we will hear something soon from Sabine.^[6] But with the present circumstances affecting the mail, one can't count on that at all.

Greetings to you all from your grateful
Dietrich

[3.] Wilhelm Niesel had been arrested on February 3, 1940, together with Erich Andler and Willi Praetorius. After his release on March 8, he was barred from Berlin on May 3, and forbidden to speak publicly throughout Germany [Reichsredeverbot—VB].

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (40); handwritten; no address, but certainly from Sigurdshof. Partially reproduced in *GS* 2:563.

[2.] Letter not extant.

[3.] Max Diestel. [In 1940 the consistory tried to force Diestel into retirement; Diestel was a member of the Berlin-Brandenburg Council of Brethren.—VB]

[4.] Wilhelm Niesel; see Bonhoeffer's February 14, 1940, letter to his parents, 1/177, ed. note 3.

[5.] The exegesis of Ps. 119; see 3/9.

[6.] Sabine Leibholz in London.

179. To His Parents^[1]

February 27, 1940

My dear Parents,

The letter from the army chaplaincy^[2] included the notification that according to a new regulation of the OKH^[3] only those people could become wartime chaplains “who have already proven themselves as soldiers on the front” and that according to this everyone else must be ruled out, therefore me as well. (The other side of the matter is that all pastors who have already served or are wartime officers have naturally been drafted with weapons and that therefore there’s nothing left for wartime chaplains!) Besides, the conscription of CC pastors^[4] and the reclaiming of those in the consistories to fill CC positions in the absence of CC pastors with the consistory people is leading ever more clearly to a destruction of the still-existing church-communities.

Here we have indescribable black ice following strong flooding. The meadows up to ten meters close around our house have become the most glorious skating rink. But it is a catastrophe for the fields, as well as for the wild animals.

Papa will certainly have heard in detail about the closing of the Pomeranian mental institutions.^[5]

Dear Mama, would you please purchase the soap for February on Eberhard’s soap card.^[6] I am sending a package with dirty laundry. We again have fuel for one week. How are things with you in this respect? How are Dohnanyis?

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Greetings from your grateful

Dietrich

Did Sabine^[7] write?

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (41); handwritten; no address, but certainly from Sigurdshof. Partially reproduced in *GS* 6:472–73.

[2.] Letter not extant; cf. *DB-ER*, 666.

[3.] Oberkommando des Heeres, or Army High Command.

[4.] [Confessing Church pastors.—VB]

[5.] This refers to the T-4 “euthanasia” program that began in September–October 1939 (named for the central office at Berlin’s Tiergartenstrasse 4)—the Nazi regime’s murder of so-called life unworthy of life, by which by August 1941 ca. 80,000–100,000 people were victims. See Schleunes, *Nationalsozialistische Entschlußbildung und die Aktion T4*. Cf. also *DB-ER*, 688–89, and *DBWE* 6:189–96.

[6.] The wartime soap rationing card.

[7.] Sabine Leibholz.

180. To Paula Bonhoeffer^[1]

March 1, 1940

Dear Mama,

Many thanks for the letters,^[2] which I am returning with this one. Above all, I was happy to hear that Sabine is indeed so fit and healthy. The move to L.^[3] will surely be worth it; they will get to know the people there, which always makes a difference. And the gentleman^[4] who invited Gert there is very influential and helpful, a friend of George.^[5] One can't be surprised that George himself is having some trouble.^[6] But he is wise and will certainly win out. I am not worried at all about that. I thought a great deal about an art history book^[7] but am not yet really clear: Amsler and Ruthhard in Berlin have a large volume (it is rather thin, however) *Dürer: Great Passion* twelve wood engravings.^[8] Also there will be some nice edition of the so-called *Green Passion* by Dürer. Otherwise one could also consider a work on the "catacombs," but the Schleichers themselves have very good reproductions of those. How would the book be that Klaus^[9] gave Papa for Christmas? Or the volume by Wolfgang Schöne: Dutch painting?^[10] That would additionally have a personal connection? There are fewer things of this kind, I believe. But Walter^[11] will certainly be able to advise you as well.

I am writing Gert^[12] during these days. Hopefully, it will arrive. I have the impression that my birthday letter did not arrive, but only the letter that followed afterward.^[13]

Today everything has frozen over again, after the streets yesterday were supposedly like streams. On the neighboring estate they opened up the potato clamp; all was frozen. That rumor is spreading around here, and

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (42): handwritten; no address, but certainly from Sigurdshof. Partially reproduced in *GS* 6:473–74.

[2.] From the Leibholz family via Switzerland.

[3.] St. Leonards-on-Sea; see Leibholz-Bonhoeffer, *Bonhoeffers*, 115–21.

[4.] Canon Griffith.

[5.] George Bell.

[6.] [Because of his ties to the German resistance, George Bell during the war defended "the other Germany" (i.e., the Germans who were critical of National Socialism) and came under harsh criticism in Great Britain.—VB]

[7.] Bonhoeffer's considerations were about a confirmation gift for Renate Schleicher.

[8.] Dürer, *Die große Passion*.

[9.] Klaus Bonhoeffer.

[10.] Schöne, *Die großen Meister der Niederländischen Malerei des 15. Jahrhunderts* (1939).

[11.] Walter Dreß.

[12.] Gert Leibholz.

[13.] Letter not extant.

everyone fears for their own. But perhaps those potatoes were poorly stored. The ground is said to be frozen down to one meter deep. So it will be some time before spring begins. What will this month bring?

I will write about my coming. It is not yet firm. Many greetings to you and my brothers and sisters

Your grateful
Dietrich

181. To His Parents^[1]

March 6, 1940

My dear Parents,

Many thanks for your letter^[2] from Potsdam. Hopefully, you will have been able to relax a bit there. Thanks as well for the packet with the hat and the other wonderful things in it. The coffee is very useful for my work. For two days now, we are again in deep snow and almost uninterrupted snowstorms. Now the thaw will have to start all over from the beginning. Agriculturally all this appears very terrible indeed. The people were already so happy about the few days of thawing; now they are quite depressed. Here the work goes until the fifteenth, and I don't know yet whether I will make it to the confirmation.^[3] I sent Ursula^[4] something yesterday to help with the children. Hopefully, it will arrive in good shape. She might need it now.

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Eberhard has not yet been examined.^[5] Dudzus wrote that he has been deferred due to the attest. He was examined by one of Papa's auditors.^[6] Otherwise nothing new.

Greetings to you from your grateful
Dietrich

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (43); handwritten card; no address, but certainly from Sigurdshof. Partially reproduced in *GS*6:475.

[2.] Letter not extant.

[3.] Renate Schleicher's confirmation on March 17, 1940.

[4.] Ursula Schleicher.

[5.] This is a reference to the physical examination and the possible conscription into the military.

[6.] After his summons to the military in February 1940, Otto Dudzus was able at Bonhoeffer's suggestion to show a medical attest written by Karl Bonhoeffer about his illness (Meniere's disease, with several fits of dizziness and vomiting), upon which he was released and only drafted two years later (letter from Dudzus to the *DBW* editor, April 9, 1994).

182. To Sabine and Gerhard Leibholz^[1]

March 7, 1940

My dears,

It is very pleasing that we continue to receive good news from you. I am, however, unsure whether my birthday letter reached you. The book by Waetzhold^[2] appears to have gotten there. Your birthday present to me is still pending, I will get it for myself when I am home again. I think it will be a book as well, for like you, I also find that one right now feels especially drawn toward good books. If I only knew more exactly what would particularly interest you! I find the idea of a children's book excellent. Could not my friend Dorothee,^[3] whom Julius^[4] also knows quite well, help Marianne find a publisher?^[5] Ask them sometime. In recent weeks I have lived totally secluded in my little forest cottage, could only reach the next village with snowshoes, without train, auto, or telephone connections. It was quite wonderful. Even up to today there is deep snow here. But it will not last much longer. I thought of you all again and again during the cold here. But you seem to have held up well without any particular illnesses.

In recent days I have again pondered and read a great deal about our old topic of discussion that we didn't bring to an end the last time we were together.^[6] To continue a conversation in written form is always somewhat awkward. But I continue to think that Brunner says wise things on the matter in his ethics, "Imperative and Order,"^[7] particularly in the notes. It's simply a matter of portraying thoroughly, first, the positivist and the idealist theories and then to show the limits of each, thereby advancing toward the biblical-Christian teaching based upon revelation. Here in my opinion a distinction must be drawn between the law within the creation and that within the redemption. To the first belongs the question of *jus naturale*,

[1.] *NL*, A 44,1 (44); handwritten; no address, but certainly from Sigurdshof. Previously published in *GS* 3:33–36. This letter was forwarded to the relatives in England by Erwin Sutz in Switzerland.

[2.] This is likely a reference to Wilhelm Waetzhold, *Dürer und seine Zeit* (1936).

[3.] Dorothy Buxton.

[4.] Julius Rieger.

[5.] Marianne Leibholz wrote and illustrated children's books.

[6.] During Bonhoeffer's visit to London, upon his return from the United States in July 1939.

[7.] Emil Brunner, *Das Gebot und die Ordnungen* (1932), published in English as *The Divine Imperative*; cf. esp. 269–74 and 629–32 in the English translation.

lex naturae (Tröeltsch).^[8] Are there principles of law in the creation that could be viewed as absolutely valid? Or is law bound to actual power? The doctrine of lex naturae, which underlies Catholicism, presupposes several legal entities sui generis (family, economy, etc. . . .), which all have one source, the Creator of the world.^[9] Protestant teaching has repeatedly critiqued this doctrine of lex naturae, because it fears in it a relativization of the recognition of God's will, which can only be known from revelation in the Holy Scripture. With that, the question of law becomes a question about the concept of revelation. Does God reveal himself in history (or does he remain hidden here, although present?) or solely in the Scripture that bears witness to Christ? The dangers of the first opinion are self-evident; it can lead to a complete relativization; history justifies itself (nonetheless, on this point the strict Reformation doctrine in Germany has always opposed Anglo-Saxon theology, which presumes a double revelation—in history and in Scripture). However, the danger of the second (strict Reformation thesis, although the opinions of Luther and Calvin themselves here waver!) is also clear: the risk of losing the possibility for finding some form of inner historical legal norms, which would mean a relativization of what is historical and created. So, on the one side: relativization of the revelation; on the other: relativization of the historical, the norms of creation. Both, however, must be avoided. That in my opinion is the crucial issue, and that is how the problem is posed at present. Now Karl^[10] did attempt to keep to the basis of the strict Reformation thesis and yet avoid the relativization of the historical. That is tempting indeed. He relates (in proper biblical fashion) all the orders of the created world strictly to Christ and says that they are to be understood correctly only in relation to him and must find their orientation in him. One must read this. The treatment of these problems must then in my opinion be followed by the question of the relationship of law, righteousness, and love (in the sense of the Sermon on the Mount). Do they exclude one another? Do they not necessarily belong (although as antithesis!) together? (that would be my opinion). Law that is oriented toward righteousness and [299] is a historical reality through power (and not an abstract idea!) is “the pedagogue leading up to Christ,” as it says in

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[8.] Ernst Troeltsch. Above all in his work *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (first German publication, 1912) Troeltsch analyzed the significance of natural law for the understanding of Christian social doctrine.

[9.] [This comment anticipates Bonhoeffer's doctrine of mandates, which he subsequently articulated in *Ethics*; see *DBWE* 6:17–22.—VB]

[10.] Karl Barth, *Church and State* (published in 1938 as *Rechtfertigung und Recht*).

Galatians [3:24].^[11] Although with regard to content, as Brunner explains very well, love essentially differentiates itself from law (renunciation of one's own right for the sake of God and one's neighbor),^[12] it^[13] can be practiced only within a legal order. Here was the great contrast between enthusiasm [Schwärmertum] and Luther. The enthusiasts wanted to build the world upon love, upon the Sermon on the Mount. Luther saw in this a confusion of God's realm and the earthly realm, which was bound to have the most dangerous chaotic consequences. For that reason Christianity, too, has something to say about law, although its essential meaning is to proclaim love.

It now appears to me that the ultimate meaning of all law on earth is to guarantee the possibility of love in the sense of Christianity, despite all the strictness to be achieved through power, without ever willing or being able to become identical to it.^[14] Law therefore is just as antithetical to love as it is necessary for its sake. (It is a strange concept of righteousness—and one that must be strictly distinguished from the ancient Aristotelian concept—when Luther, with the New Testament, characterizes our righteousness before God as “given,” as “reckoning Christ's righteousness” to us out of grace. Justice here means not *suum cuique*^[15] but rather submission to God, who himself is the holy righteousness (judge!) and love. Both revealed in the cross.)

Forgive this boring academic letter! But I just slid into writing! Now, however, I need to close. Say a warm hello to the children! Also to George, please.^[16] Do tell him that I am doing well and that I send greetings to him. Did you get around to writing Sutz^[17] in Wiesendangen? Do that sometime.

[11.] [The NRSV here reads “disciplinarian until Christ came,” but the translation in the text is much closer to the German and to the original Greek, and it also anticipates Bonhoeffer's argumentation in *DBWE* 6:173 that the natural is directed toward the future coming of Christ. The editor thanks Ilse Tödt for this insight.—VB]

[12.] Cf. Brunner, *Divine Imperative*, 450–53

[13.] [I.e., love.—VB]

[14.] [“It” here refers to love, i.e., law and love cannot be identical to one another.—VB]

[15.] This refers to the classical definition of righteousness in natural law according to the Roman jurist Ulpian: “*Iustitia est constans et perpetua voluntas ius suum cuique tribuendi*” (Justice is the constant and perpetual will to attribute to each his own right), *Digesten* I:1, 10. Cited in Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, 689.

[16.] George Bell.

[17.] Erwin Sutz.

By the way, he also has a good library. I am just writing him too. Next week I will be at our parents'. Renate is being confirmed.^[18] With all best wishes warmest greetings from your

Dietrich

Please also say a warm hello to Franz^[19] when the occasion arises! He too has access to libraries and an overview of what has been published.^[20]

[18.] Renate Schleicher's confirmation was on March 17, 1940.

[19.] Franz Hildebrandt. [Hildebrandt had emigrated to England.—VB]

[20.] Eberhard Bethge wrote a note in the margin: "One year ago we were constantly together! It is difficult now to imagine your new living conditions [since the Leibholzes had moved to St. Leonards-on-Sea—VB]. And that is truly a shame. Our thoughts of you over there lack some of the capacity to imagine details, but they are now especially intensely with you and preoccupied with everything that affects you. How are the children doing? How might they be adjusting to things? Please say hello for me. Warmest regards to you and your esteemed spouse, remembering you faithfully your Eberhard Bethge."