



LETTERS AND PAPERS
FROM PRISON

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER WORKS — READER'S EDITION

Letters and Papers from Prison

Letters and Papers from Prison

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Translated by Isabel Best, Lisa E. Dahill, Reinhard Krauss, Nancy
Lukens, Barbara Rumscheidt, and Martin Rumscheidt

Introduction by John W. de Gruchy

Supplemental Material by Victoria J. Barnett

Fortress Press
Minneapolis

LETTERS AND PAPERS FROM PRISON

Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works—Reader's Edition

Copyright © 2015 Fortress Press. All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in critical articles or reviews, no part of this book may be reproduced in any manner without prior written permission from the publisher. Visit <http://www.augsburgfortress.org/copyrights/> or write to Permissions, Augsburg Fortress, Box 1209, Minneapolis, MN 55440.

Cover image: Portrait of Bonhoeffer by Paul Huet

Cover design: Laurie Ingram

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Print ISBN: 978-1-5064-0274-1

eBook ISBN: 978-1-5064-0275-8

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences — Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

Manufactured in the U.S.A.

This book was produced using Pressbooks.com, and PDF rendering was done by PrinceXML.

Contents

Editor's Introduction to the Reader's Edition of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's <i>Discipleship</i>	vii
Prologue: An Account at the Turn of the year 1942–1943	1
Part 1: The Interrogation Period: April–July 1943	21
Part 2: Awaiting the Trial: August 1943–April 1944	97
Part 3: Holding Out for the Coup Attempt: April–July	339
Part 4: After the Failure: July 1944–February 1945	469
Epilogue: The Survivor Looks Back: Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer to His Children, Leipzig, June 1945	537
Study Questions	543
The Reader's Guide to <i>Letters and Papers from Prison</i> in the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works: A Guide to Related Texts and Resources	545
Index of Names	551
Index of Subjects	567
Index of Biblical References	611

Editor's Introduction to the Reader's Edition
of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers
from Prison*

John W. de Gruchy

When first published in 1951 Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers from Prison* was a slender volume of two hundred pages with an uncertain future. Its editor, Eberhard Bethge, a German Lutheran pastor and close friend of Bonhoeffer's, had yet to become well known as his biographer and interpreter. Now, as volume 8 of the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, *Letters and Papers from Prison* is considerably larger, thoroughly revised, freshly translated, and includes a great deal of previously unpublished material.

Letters and Papers from Prison has become a twentieth-century Christian classic that has attracted the interest of a wide circle of readers in many countries. It is also an essential text for anyone interested in understanding Bonhoeffer and the relevance of his legacy today. More specifically, *Letters and Papers from Prison*

documents the final two years of Bonhoeffer's extraordinary life. It is a poignant story of friendship and love, faith and hope, as the tide of history turned against Germany and Bonhoeffer's own life drew to a dramatic, lonely, and tragic close.

The Story in Its Context

With the fall of Stalingrad in February 1943, Germany's fate was virtually sealed. Soon the Russian and Allied forces would make their final push toward Berlin. At the same time the German resistance was growing in determination, and those in the conspiracy who were plotting Hitler's assassination were considering their options. Bonhoeffer had spent the previous two years working in the German military intelligence, which, ironically, was also the heart of the conspiracy in which he too was involved. But it was his other anti-Nazi activities, among them helping Confessing Church pastors evade military service, that aroused the interest and suspicions of the Gestapo. On April 5, 1943, he was arrested at his parents' home in Berlin. Also arrested with him were his sister Christine and brother-in-law Hans von Dohnanyi, all charged with the "subversion of the armed forces."

Dietrich was taken to Tegel military prison, and soon found himself in its alien, hostile environment, so different from the relative comforts of home. But worse by far was that he was now separated from his family, his fiancée Maria von Wedemeyer to whom he had only recently been engaged, and from his friend Eberhard Bethge who was shortly to be married to his niece Renate Schleicher. But they all anticipated that they would soon be reunited. After all, the Bonhoeffers were well connected, and the Nazi prosecutors seemed to have only circumstantial evidence on which to base their case.

For the first few months, Dietrich was only allowed to correspond infrequently with his parents, and all the mail was censored. As we

read the letters, we soon become aware that Berlin, though still far from the battle lines, was being subjected to increasing Allied bombing, making Dietrich anxious about the welfare of his loved ones. He put on a brave face, trying to hide his loneliness and circumstances from them. He was also concerned about his friend Eberhard who had been drafted into the military and would soon be sent to the Italian front where the Allied forces had landed and were advancing toward Rome. And as the bombs rained down on Berlin night after night, he was more immediately mindful of the needs of his terrified fellow prisoners and warders.

Yet outside life went on despite food rationing, the bombings, and growing inconveniences of all kinds. Bonhoeffer's nieces and nephews went to school, his father, though retired, continued to work as a neuro-physician, and his elder brother Karl-Friedrich continued his work as a physicist. Bomb-damaged homes were repaired, gardens planted, and weddings and birthdays celebrated. But hovering over everything in the family circle was the ominous cloud of the imprisonment and interrogations of Dietrich and Hans von Dohnanyi.

As the days dragged by, and the court proceedings and his trial began, Bonhoeffer developed strategies for survival. His prison cell became a hermitage in which the passing seasons of nature and the Christian year provided a semblance of structure to the loneliness and tedium of prison life, as did reading the Bible and the visits of his aging parents with parcels of food and books. Memories of better times and places sustained him, as did his remarkably extensive reading, and soon he was jotting down notes of his reflections on time and memory, music, friendship and marriage, biblical texts and hymns.

On July 20, 1944, the plot on Hitler's life failed. This was a critical turning point not only for the resistance but also for Bonhoeffer.

Even though the Gestapo did not yet know that he was involved, they were determined to root out all the conspirators on the orders of Hitler. Bonhoeffer's hopes of release faded. He now captured his feelings in poetry and drafted the outline for a book on the future of Christianity in a postwar secular age. Bethge, who had for so long been his conversation partner, resumed that role as these letters flowed between them. These are sometimes referred to as the "theological letters." The last surviving letter Bethge received was dated August 23, 1944. Several others came after that but were destroyed for security reasons. Bethge wrote his last letter to his friend on September 30, but it was not delivered.

Ten days earlier, on September 20, Gestapo commissioner Franz Sonderegger discovered files related to the conspiracy in Zossen, an outpost of the Military Intelligence. The discovery sealed the fates of Bonhoeffer, his brother Klaus, and his brothers-in-law Hans von Dohnanyi and Rüdiger Schleicher. On October 8 Dietrich Bonhoeffer was transferred to the Gestapo prison on Prinz-Albrecht-Straße. Later that same month Bethge himself was arrested as a possible accomplice, and taken from Italy back to Berlin under guard.

On February 7, 1945, Bonhoeffer was taken first to Buchenwald and then, passing through the village of Schönberg in Bavaria, to Flossenbürg concentration camp where he arrived on April 8. That evening he was tried by a hastily convened and rigged court and condemned to death. Early the next morning he was executed along with several other conspirators. The same day his brother-in-law Hans von Dohnanyi was executed in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, near Berlin. On April 22, his brother Klaus and his brother-in-law Rüdiger Schleicher, the father of Renate Bethge, were shot by the Gestapo near the Lehrterstraße prison in Berlin. A few days later Berlin was liberated and the war came to an end.

Soon after the war ended, Bethge circulated some of the

“theological letters” to a few of Bonhoeffer’s former students, and spoke about them to others within the circle of German theologians and pastors who had been influenced by Bonhoeffer. But with his friend no longer around to speak for himself, Bethge felt the need to share his final theological explorations with a wider readership. In the meantime he had already retrieved many of the other letters that had been safely hidden during the war, and which provided the more personal context in which the “theological letters” were written. These letters were first published in German under the title *Widerstand und Ergebung* (*Resistance and Submission*), which captures the heart of the story. Resisting the despair that so often threatened to break his spirit, Bonhoeffer had learned to trust and submit to the will of God.

The book immediately attracted attention in Germany, where Bonhoeffer’s “new theology” sparked off an intense debate. Then, in 1953, it was published in English, where the debate was equally lively but differently focused. If German theologians were interested in Bonhoeffer’s thoughts on the “nonreligious interpretation” of biblical concepts, the English pastors and their congregations were intrigued by Bonhoeffer’s proposals for the life of the church and spirituality in a “world come of age.” But there was still a great deal of material that lay dormant in Bethge’s files waiting publication if and when the time was right. This time came when in 1971 Bethge published a new and expanded version of *Letters and Papers from Prison* in which he included more letters of general interest. Then, in 1997, the new, critical German edition, of which Bonhoeffer Works volume 8 is the translation, was published. Bethge had completed his lifelong task with remarkable energy, dedication, and insight.

A Book in Four Parts

This new edition is divided into four parts as described below. In what turned out to be an editorial masterstroke, Bethge included as a Prologue an essay Bonhoeffer wrote before his arrest in December 1942. This was a Christmas letter to his co-conspirators in the resistance. Titled “After Ten Years,” it provides a bridge between Bonhoeffer’s final months of freedom and his imprisonment. In it he reflected on the years since Hitler came to power and the resistance into which he had been so ineluctably drawn.

1. The Interrogation Period: April–July 1943

For the first four months Bonhoeffer could only correspond with his parents; in his letters he downplayed his plight while supporting and encouraging them. He also sent a wedding sermon to Eberhard and Renate Bethge that arrived too late for that occasion. The sermon provides an insight into his conservative view of marriage and gender relations at the time. This is also evident in the correspondence that he also had with his fiancée in the months that followed; those letters have been published as *Love Letters from Cell 92: The Correspondence Between Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Maria von Wedemeyer, 1943–45*.

On July 30, Bonhoeffer was informed that the preliminary investigation into his case had been concluded, but he remained in custody. He had to learn how to accept that maybe things would not work out as he and his family and friends had hoped.

2. Awaiting the Trial: August 1943–April 1944

In the second phase of his imprisonment Bonhoeffer had additional letter-writing privileges, including permission to correspond with Maria. As all correspondence was censored, more sensitive messages to and from the family were encoded in the text. It was only on

November 18, 1943, that Bonhoeffer wrote to Bethge for the first time from prison. The letter was smuggled out with the help of a friendly guard who continued to act as a conduit for letters to Bethge over the ensuing months. Fortuitously, Bethge was in Berlin visiting his wife Renate when the first letter arrived. But in January 1944 he was sent to the Italian front just after the Allied troops had landed at Anzio, south of Rome.

Bethge's ten months in Italy coincided with the German army's retreat from the Allies, increasingly under partisan fire. He was assigned to a small Military Intelligence unit where he worked as a clerk for the commanding officer. Bonhoeffer's initial letters to Bethge reflected doubt about their future together, and spoke more openly about the actual conditions of prison life than did his letters to the family. As much as Bonhoeffer was interested in the ordinary things of life and experimenting with "creative writing," he told his parents that his "real work" in prison was his theological explorations. These now began to find expression in his letters to Bethge.

3. Holding Out for the Coup Attempt: April–July 1944

Reading between the lines during this third phase, it is evident that there was both great anxiety and expectation as the day for the assassination attempt against Hitler approached. But this was also the period during which Bonhoeffer's theological reflections gathered fresh vigor, as seen in his letter of April 30, 1944. Other "theological letters" followed in relatively quick succession. Together with his "Thoughts on the Day of Baptism of Dietrich Wilhelm Rüdiger Bethge" and the "Outline for a Book" (in part 4), they embodied Bonhoeffer's "new" theology from prison.

When Bethge returned to Berlin for the baptism of his son in May, he took with him all the letters he had received until then and buried them in the garden of his parents-in-law's home, adjacent to

that of the Bonhoeffer parents' house. Bethge also managed to visit Bonhoeffer. This led to a flurry of more letters, reflecting on the visit and what they had discussed. On returning to his unit in Italy, Bethge found several of Bonhoeffer's letters that continued the conversation about Christianity in a "world come of age." Soon after, in the letter of June 7, the first of Bonhoeffer's poems, "The Past," arrived. This unexpected venture into poetry took Bethge by surprise. Three more poems followed during that summer, expressing both Bonhoeffer's existential situation and some of the insights of his "new" theology.

4. After the Failure: July 1944–February 1945

Immediately after he heard the news of the failure of the July 20th plot, Bonhoeffer wrote his poem "Stations on the Road to Freedom." Despite his perilous situation he found new energy to get on with his theological work with enthusiasm. He was stimulated by an intensive program of reading books from the prison library and brought to him by his family. But he also drew deeply on his accumulated knowledge.

His major preoccupation was how to speak of God without the need for a religious worldview that was no longer credible, given the immense changes that had taken place in human endeavor over the past few centuries. Bonhoeffer was particularly challenged by the insights of modern physics, which made it impossible to fit God into the gaps of human knowledge. With this in mind he drafted his "Outline for a Book," an extended essay in which he took stock of the present situation of Christianity in "a world come of age," reflected on the meaning of Christian faith in this new historical context (the "nonreligious interpretation of Christianity"), and then offered some conclusions for the future of the church.

By "world come of age" Bonhoeffer meant that for vast numbers of Europeans influenced by the Enlightenment, there was no longer

the need for the “God-hypothesis” to explain reality and meet human need. This process, which would continue unabated and spread more widely, could not be addressed by an apologetic based on “ultimate questions” (such as despair, sin, and guilt) to which God alone was the answer. Such thinking reduced God to a *deus ex machina*, a “God from the machine,” who stepped in when everything else failed. Such thinking pushed God to the periphery of human affairs, to become the God of individual piety, bourgeois privilege, and a ghetto church, that is, the God of “religion.” Such an apologetic assumed a “religious *a priori*,” that is, a religious longing and a sense of weakness that could be appealed to in preaching the gospel. Bonhoeffer wanted to speak, rather, of God at the center of life and address men and women as responsible human beings.

The question of God had to do with “who Jesus Christ actually is for us, today,” the question that had increasingly provided the focus of Bonhoeffer’s theology. If we start with conceptions of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence, we will never arrive at a true knowledge of God. However, if we participate by faith in Jesus Christ as the one who “is there for others,” we are liberated from self and experience the transcendent in the mundane. That is truly the God of the Bible, and this is the meaning of Christ becoming fully human and dying on the cross. Only from this perspective is it possible to interpret key biblical concepts and the creed, and to engage in liturgical renewal in a nonreligious way. The God of the Bible is not the god of “religion,” but the “suffering God,” and this was the starting point for Bonhoeffer’s “worldly interpretation.”

The consequences are far-reaching. If Jesus exists only for others, then the church must not seek its own self-preservation but be “open to the world” and in solidarity with others, especially the oppressed and suffering. The problem of the “world come of age” was not just that educated elites had drifted away from Christian faith or

claimed their autonomy, but that “Jesus” had disappeared from view because the church was no longer “at the center of the village” in any meaningful way. “Heavily burdened by difficult, traditional ideas,” the church was making “no impact on the broader masses” (p. 485). As a first step Bonhoeffer proposed that “it must give away all its property to those in need” and that its ministers should not receive a state stipend.

The Bonhoeffer who emerged in the final pages of the prison letters embraced within himself both a genuine Christian commitment as well as a humanist interest in and knowledge of life in the world in all its complex richness, and in which the church would become a zone of freedom. In this way Christian life would become more truly human. This did not mean the superficial worldliness of the enlightened but learning to live fully in the world by throwing “oneself completely into the arms of God,” for this, he says, “is how one becomes a human being, a Christian.”

Just as Bonhoeffer’s “this-worldliness” is not banal or superficial, so the “church for others” does not surrender its identity or the profound mystery of its faith in Christ. For this reason the church, in being “open to the world,” has to recover the “arcane discipline” (*disciplina arcani*) of the ancient church, whereby the mysteries of the faith are protected from profanation. In the world the church should be known by its service and its work for justice and peace; but within itself it is sustained by the disciplines of worship, prayer, and the sacraments which, with the creed, remain hidden at the heart of the life of the church, not thrust upon the world in some triumphalist manner.

Bonhoeffer’s “new theology” was not the only development that took Bethge by surprise. He was also taken aback by the rather sudden experiment at writing poetry during the final few months of Bonhoeffer’s life, which occurred at the same time as he was

developing his ideas on being Christian and on the church in a world come of age. But whereas his theological explorations were focused on the future of Christianity, his poetry centered more existentially on his own experience in prison, his struggle with faith and doubt, his hopes and fears, and his sense of impending death. Yet a close reading of his poetry reveals that it complements his theological reflections. The poems are their counterpoint penned at the same time but more deeply personal and existential. Not only do they express his loves and fears, his hopes and crises, as well as his profound awareness of events beyond his cell and the suffering of others, but also his leaps of theological imagination. In doing so they speak directly to our own hopes and fears, our longing to know who we truly are and how to face death.

At the beginning of this Introduction we noted that *Letters and Papers from Prison* has become a Christian classic. We suggest that this is so because it tells the story of a remarkable man and family who lived through an extraordinary moment of history. And it does so in their own words in which the mundane, the intimate, and the profoundly theological are woven together in a way that continues to speak to us in our time.

Prologue:

An Account at the Turn of the Year 1942–1943

Prologue

An Account at the Turn of the Year 1942-1943

After Ten Years

Ten years is a long time in the life of every human being. Because time is the most precious gift at our disposal, being of all gifts the most ir retrievable, the thought of time possibly lost disturbs us whenever we look back. Time is lost when we have not lived, experienced things, learned, worked, enjoyed, and suffered as human beings. Lost time is unfulfilled, empty time. Certainly that is not what the past years have been. We have lost much, things far beyond measure, but time was not lost. Indeed, the insights and experiences we have gained and of which we have subsequently become aware are only abstractions from reality, from life itself. Yet just as the ability to forget is a gift of grace, so similarly is memory, the repetition of received teachings, part of responsible life. In the following pages I want to try to give an accounting of some of the shared experience and insight that have been forced upon us in these times, not personal experiences, nothing systematically organized, not arguments and theories, but conclusions about human experience—lined up side by side, connected only by concrete experience—that have been reached together in a circle of like-minded people. None of this is new;

rather, it is something we have long been familiar with in times gone by, something given to us to experience and understand anew. One cannot write about these things without every word being accompanied by the feeling of gratitude for the community of spirit and of life that in all these years was preserved and shown to be worthwhile.

Without Ground under One's Feet

Have there ever been people in history who in their time, like us, had so little ground under their feet, people to whom every possible alternative open to them at the time appeared equally unbearable, senseless, and contrary to life? Have there been those who like us looked for the source of their strength beyond all those available alternatives? Were they looking entirely in what has passed away and in what is yet to come? And nevertheless, without being dreamers, did they await with calm and confidence the successful outcome of their endeavor? Or rather, facing a great historical turning point, and precisely because something genuinely new was coming to be that did not fit with the existing alternatives, did the responsible thinkers of another generation ever feel differently than we do today?

Who Stands Firm?

The huge masquerade of evil has thrown all ethical concepts into confusion. That evil should appear in the form of light, good deeds, historical necessity, social justice is absolutely bewildering for one coming from the world of ethical concepts that we have received. For the Christian who lives by the Bible, it is the very confirmation of the abysmal wickedness of evil.

The failure of "*the reasonable ones*"—those who think, with the best of intentions and in their naive misreading of reality, that with

a bit of reason they can patch up a structure that has come out of joint—is apparent. With their ability to see impaired, they want to do justice on every side, only to be crushed by the colliding forces without having accomplished anything at all. Disappointed that the world is so unreasonable, they see themselves condemned to unproductiveness; they withdraw in resignation or helplessly fall victim to the stronger.

More devastating is the failure of all ethical *fanaticism*. The fanatic believes that he can meet the power of evil with the purity of a principle. But like the bull in the arena, he attacks the red cape rather than the person carrying it, grows tired, and suffers defeat. He traps himself in the insignificant and ends up in the trap of the cleverer one.

The man of *conscience* has no one but himself when resisting the superior might of predicaments that demand a decision. But the dimensions of the conflict wherein he must make his choices are such that, counseled and supported by nothing but his very own conscience, he is torn apart. The innumerable respectable and seductive disguises by which evil approaches him make his conscience fearful and unsure until he finally settles for a salvaged conscience instead of a good conscience, that is, until he deceives his own conscience in order not to despair. That a bad conscience may be stronger and more wholesome than a deceived one is something that the man whose sole support is his conscience can never comprehend.

The reliable path of *duty* seems to offer the escape from the bewildering plethora of possible decisions. Here, that which has been commanded is clutched as the most certain; the responsibility for what has been commanded lies with the one giving the command rather than the one who carries it out. However, duty is so circumscribed that there is never any room to venture that which rests wholly in one's own responsibility, the action that alone strikes

at the very core of evil and can overcome it. The man of duty will in the end have to do his duty also to the devil.

There is the one who determines to take a stand in the world by acting on his own *freedom*. He values the necessary action more highly than an untarnished conscience and reputation. He is prepared to sacrifice a barren principle to a fruitful compromise or a barren wisdom of mediocrity to fruitful radicalism. Such a one needs to take care that his freedom does not cause him to stumble. He will condone the bad in order to prevent the worse and in so doing no longer discern that the very thing that he seeks to avoid as worse might well be better. This is where the basic material of tragedy is to be found.

In flight from public discussion and examination, this or that person may well attain the sanctuary of private *virtuousness*. But he must close his eyes and mouth to the injustice around him. He can remain undefiled by the consequences of responsible action only by deceiving himself. In everything he does, that which he fails to do will leave him no peace. He will either perish from that restlessness or turn into the most hypocritical of all Pharisees.¹

Who stands firm? Only the one whose ultimate standard is not his reason, his principles, conscience, freedom, or virtue; only the one who is prepared to sacrifice all of these when, in faith and in relationship to God alone, he is called to obedient and responsible action. Such a person is the responsible one, whose life is to be nothing but a response to God's question and call. Where are these responsible ones?

Civil Courage

What really lies behind the lament about the lack of civil courage? In these years we have encountered much bravery and self-sacrifice

1. [Editor's Comment: The pejorative references to "Pharisees" in this sentence, and on page 233, reflect the theological anti-Judaism of Bonhoeffer's era.]

but almost no civil courage anywhere, even among ourselves. Only an altogether naive psychology would trace this deficiency back simply to personal cowardice. The reasons behind this are quite different. In the course of a long history, we Germans have had to learn the need for obedience and the power thereof. We saw the meaning and greatness of our life in the subordination of all personal wishes and ideas under the commission that came to be ours. Our gaze was directed upward, not in slavish fear but in the free trust that beheld a career in the commission and a vocation in the career. The readiness to follow an order from “above” rather than one’s own discretion arises from and is part of the justified suspicion about one’s own heart. Who would contest that, in relation to obedience, commission, and career, the German has again and again accomplished the utmost in bravery and life commitment. But he safeguarded his freedom—where in the world was freedom spoken of more passionately than in Germany, from Luther to the philosophy of idealism?—by seeking to free himself from self-will in order to serve the whole: career and freedom were to him two sides of the same thing. However, in doing so he misjudged the world; he did not reckon with the fact that the readiness to subordinate and commit his life to the commission could be misused in the service of evil. When such misuse occurred, the exercise of the career itself became questionable, and all the basic moral [sittlichen] concepts of the Germans were shaken. What became apparent was that Germans lacked still one decisive and fundamental idea: that of the need for the free, responsible action even against career and commission. In its place came the irresponsible lack of scruples, on the one hand, and self-tormenting scruples that never led to action, on the other. But civil courage can grow only from the free responsibility of the free man. Only today are Germans beginning to discover what free responsibility means. It is founded in a God who calls for the free

venture of faith to responsible action and who promises forgiveness and consolation to the one who on account of such action becomes a sinner.

On Success

Even though it is indeed not true that success also justifies the evil deed and the reprehensible means, it is similarly out of the question to regard success as something that is ethically wholly neutral. It so happens that historical success creates the ground on which alone life can go on. The question remains as to whether it is ethically more responsible to go to war like Don Quixote against a new age or, conceding one's defeat and freely consenting to it, finally to serve the new age. Success, after all, makes history, and the One who guides history always creates good from the bad over the head of the men who make history. It is a short circuit when the stickler for principle, thinking ahistorically and hence irresponsibly, simply ignores the ethical significance of success. It is good that for once we are forced to engage seriously the ethical problem of success. As long as the good is successful, we can afford the luxury of thinking of success as ethically irrelevant. But the problem arises once evil means bring about success. In the face of such a situation, we learn that neither the onlooker's theoretical critique and self-justification, that is, the refusal to enter into the arena of facts, nor opportunism, that is, disavowal and capitulation in the face of success, does justice to the task at hand. We may not and do not desire to act like offended critics or opportunists. Case by case and in each moment, as victors or vanquished, we desire to be those who are coresponsible for the shaping of history. The one who allows nothing that happens to deprive him of his coresponsibility for the course of history, knowing that it is God who placed it upon him, will find a fruitful relation to the events of history, beyond fruitless criticism and equally fruitless

opportunism. Talk of going down heroically in the face of unavoidable defeat is basically quite nonheroic because it does not dare look into the future. The ultimately responsible question is not how I extricate myself heroically from a situation but [how] a coming generation is to go on living. Only from such a historically responsible question will fruitful solutions arise, however humiliating they may be for the moment. In short, it is much easier to see a situation through on the basis of principle than in concrete responsibility. The younger generation will always have the surest sense whether an action is done merely in terms of principle or from living responsibly, for it is their future that is at stake.

On Stupidity

Stupidity is a more dangerous enemy of the good than malice. One may protest against evil; it can be exposed and, if need be, prevented by use of force. Evil always carries within itself the germ of its own subversion in that it leaves behind in human beings at least a sense of unease. Against stupidity we are defenseless. Neither protests nor the use of force accomplish anything here; reasons fall on deaf ears; facts that contradict one's prejudgment simply need not be believed—in such moments the stupid person even becomes critical—and when facts are irrefutable they are just pushed aside as inconsequential, as incidental. In all this the stupid person, in contrast to the malicious one, is utterly self-satisfied and, being easily irritated, becomes dangerous by going on the attack. For that reason, greater caution is called for when dealing with a stupid person than with a malicious one. Never again will we try to persuade the stupid person with reasons, for it is senseless and dangerous.

If we want to know how to get the better of stupidity, we must seek to understand its nature. This much is certain, that it is in essence not an intellectual defect but a human one. There are human beings

who are of remarkably agile intellect yet stupid, and others who are intellectually quite dull yet anything but stupid. We discover this to our surprise in particular situations. The impression one gains is not so much that stupidity is a congenital defect but that, under certain circumstances, people are *made* stupid or that they allow this to happen to them. We note further that people who have isolated themselves from others or who live in solitude manifest this defect less frequently than individuals or groups of people inclined or condemned to sociability. And so it would seem that stupidity is perhaps less a psychological than a sociological problem. It is a particular form of the impact of historical circumstances on human beings, a psychological concomitant of certain external conditions. Upon closer observation, it becomes apparent that every strong upsurge of power in the public sphere, be it of a political or a religious nature, infects a large part of humankind with stupidity. It would even seem that this is virtually a sociological-psychological law. The power of the one needs the stupidity of the other. The process at work here is not that particular human capacities, for instance, the intellect, suddenly atrophy or fail. Instead, it seems that under the overwhelming impact of rising power, humans are deprived of their inner independence and, more or less consciously, give up establishing an autonomous position toward the emerging circumstances. The fact that the stupid person is often stubborn must not blind us to the fact that he is not independent. In conversation with him, one virtually feels that one is dealing not at all with him as a person, but with slogans, catchwords, and the like that have taken possession of him. He is under a spell, blinded, misused, and abused in his very being. Having thus become a mindless tool, the stupid person will also be capable of any evil and at the same time incapable of seeing that it is evil. This is where the danger of diabolical misuse lurks, for it is this that can once and for all destroy human beings.

Yet at this very point it becomes quite clear that only an act of liberation, not instruction, can overcome stupidity. Here we must come to terms with the fact that in most cases a genuine internal liberation becomes possible only when external liberation has preceded it. Until then we must abandon all attempts to convince the stupid person. This state of affairs explains why in such circumstances our attempts to know what “the people” really think are in vain and why, under these circumstances, this question is so irrelevant for the person who is thinking and acting responsibly. The word of the Bible that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom declares that the internal liberation of human beings to live the responsible life before God is the only genuine way to overcome stupidity.

But these thoughts about stupidity also offer consolation in that they utterly forbid us to consider the majority of people to be stupid in every circumstance. It really will depend on whether those in power expect more from peoples’ stupidity than from their inner independence and wisdom.

Contempt for Humanity?

The danger of allowing ourselves to be driven to contempt for humanity is very real. We know very well that we have no right to let this happen and that it would lead us into the most unfruitful relation to human beings. The following thoughts may protect us against this temptation: through contempt for humanity we fall victim precisely to our opponents’ chief errors. Whoever despises another human being will never be able to make anything of him. Nothing of what we despise in another is itself foreign to us. How often do we expect more of the other than what we ourselves are willing to accomplish. Why is it that we have hitherto thought with so little sobriety about the temptability and frailty of human beings? We must learn to regard human beings less in terms of what they do and neglect to do

and more in terms of what they suffer. The only fruitful relation to human beings—particularly to the weak among them—is love, that is, the will to enter into and to keep community with them. God did not hold human beings in contempt but became human for their sake.

Immanent Justice

It is one of the most astonishing experiences and also one of the most incontrovertible that evil—often in a surprisingly short span of time—proves itself to be stupid and impractical. That does not mean that punishment follows hard on the heels of each individual evil deed; what it does mean is that the suspension of God's commandments on principle in the supposed interest of earthly self-preservation acts precisely against what this self-preservation seeks to accomplish. One can interpret in various ways this experience that has fallen to us. In any case, one thing has emerged that seems certain: in the common life of human beings, there are laws that are stronger than everything that believes it can supersede them, and that it is therefore not only wrong but unwise to disregard these laws. This helps us understand why Aristotelian-Thomistic ethics elevated wisdom to be one of the cardinal virtues. Wisdom and stupidity are not ethically indifferent, as the neo-Protestant ethics of conscience wanted us to believe. In the fullness of the concrete situation and in the possibilities it offers, the wise person discerns the impassable limits that are imposed on every action by the abiding laws of human communal life. In this discernment the wise person acts well and the good person acts wisely.

There is clearly no historically significant action that does not trespass ever again against the limits set by those laws. But it makes a decisive difference whether such trespasses against the established limit are viewed as their abolishment in principle and hence presented as a law of its own kind, or whether one is conscious that such

trespassing is perhaps an unavoidable guilt that has its justification only in that law and limit being reinstated and honored as quickly as possible. It is not necessarily hypocrisy when the aim of political action is said to be the establishment of justice and not simply self-preservation. The world *is*, in fact, so ordered that the fundamental honoring of life's basic laws and rights at the same time best serves self-preservation, and that these laws tolerate a very brief, singular, and, in the individual case, necessary trespass against them. But those laws will sooner or later—and with irresistible force—strike dead those who turn necessity into a principle and as a consequence set up a law of their own alongside them. History's immanent justice rewards and punishes the deed only, but the eternal justice of God tries and judges the hearts.

Some Statements of Faith on God's Action in History

I believe that God can and will let good come out of everything, even the greatest evil. For that to happen, God needs human beings who let everything work out for the best. I believe that in every moment of distress God will give us as much strength to resist as we need. But it is not given to us in advance, lest we rely on ourselves and not on God alone. In such faith all fear of the future should be overcome. I believe that even our mistakes and shortcomings are not in vain and that it is no more difficult for God to deal with them than with our supposedly good deeds. I believe that God is no timeless fate but waits for and responds to sincere prayer and responsible actions.

Trust

Few have been spared the experience of being betrayed. The figure of Judas, once so incomprehensible, is hardly strange to us. The air in which we live is so poisoned with mistrust that we almost die from it.

But where we broke through the layer of mistrust, we were allowed to experience a trust hitherto utterly undreamed of. There, where we trust, we have learned to place our lives in the hands of others; contrary to all the ambiguities in which our acts and lives must exist, we have learned to trust without reserve. We now know that one can truly live and work only in such trust, which is always a venture but one gladly affirmed. We know that to sow and to nourish mistrust is one of the most reprehensible things and that, instead, trust is to be strengthened and advanced wherever possible. For us trust will be one of the greatest, rarest, and most cheering gifts bestowed by the life we humans live in common, and yet it always emerges only against the dark background of a necessary mistrust. We have learned to commit our lives on no account into the hands of the mean but without reserve into the hands of the trustworthy.

The Sense of Quality

When we lack the courage once again to establish a genuine sense of boundaries between human beings and personally to fight for them, we perish in an anarchy of human values. The impudence that has its being in the contempt for all such boundaries is just as much a mark of the rabble as the inward uncertainty, haggling, and courting the favor of the insolent; making common cause with rabble is the way toward rendering oneself rabble. When one no longer knows what one owes oneself and others, where the sense for human quality and the strength to respect boundaries cease to exist, chaos is at the door. When for the sake of material comfort one tolerates impudence, one has already surrendered, there the floods of chaos have been permitted to burst the dam at the place where it was to be defended, and one becomes guilty of all that follows. In other times it may have been the task of Christianity to testify to the equality of all human beings; today it is Christianity in particular that should

passionately defend the respect for human boundaries and human qualities. The misinterpretation that it is a matter of self-interest, or the cheap allegation that it is an antisocial attitude, must be resolutely faced. They are the perennial reproaches of the rabble against order. Whoever becomes soft and unsure here does not understand what is at issue, and presumably those reproaches may well apply to him. We are in the midst of the process that levels every rank of society. But we are also at the hour of a new sense of nobility being born that binds together a circle of human beings drawn from all existing social classes. Nobility arises from and exists by sacrifice, courage, and a clear sense of what one owes oneself and others, by the self-evident expectation of the respect one is due, and by an equally self-evident observance of the same respect for those above and those below. At issue all along the line is the rediscovery of experiences of quality that have been buried under so much rubble, of an order based on quality. Quality is the strongest foe of any form of bringing everything to the level of the masses. Socially this means abandoning the pursuit of position, breaking with the star cult, an opening out upward and downward particularly in connection with the choice of one's friends, delight in private life, and courage for public life. Culturally the experience of quality signals a return from the newspaper and radio to the book, from haste to leisure and stillness, from distraction to composure, from the sensational to reflection, from the idol of virtuosity to art, from snobbery to modesty, from extravagance to moderation. Quantities compete for space; qualities complement one another.

Sympathy

We have to consider that most people learn wisdom only through personal experiences. This explains, *first*, the astonishing inability of most people to take any kind of preventive action—one always

believes that he can evade the danger, until it is too late. *Second*, it explains people's dull sensitivity toward the suffering of others; sympathy grows in proportion to the increasing fear of the threatening proximity of disaster. There is some justification in ethics for such an attitude: one does not want to interfere with fate; inner calling and the power to act are given only when things have become serious. No one is responsible for all of the world's injustice and suffering, nor does one want to establish oneself as the judge of the world. And there is some justification also in psychology: the lack of imagination, sensitivity, and inner alertness is balanced by strong composure, unperturbed energy for work, and great capacity for suffering. From a Christian perspective, none of these justifications can blind us to the fact that what is decisively lacking here is a greatness of heart. Christ withdrew from suffering until his hour had come; then he walked toward it in freedom, took hold, and overcame it. Christ, so the Scripture tells us, experienced in his own body the whole suffering of all humanity as his own—an incomprehensibly lofty thought!—taking it upon himself in freedom. Certainly, we are not Christ, nor are we called to redeem the world through our own deed and our own suffering; we are not to burden ourselves with impossible things and torture ourselves with not being able to bear them. We are not lords but instruments in the hands of the Lord of history; we can truly share only in a limited measure in the suffering of others. We are not Christ, but if we want to be Christians it means that we are to take part in Christ's greatness of heart, in the responsible action that in freedom lays hold of the hour and faces the danger, and in the true sympathy that springs forth not from fear but from Christ's freeing and redeeming love for all who suffer. Inactive waiting and dully looking on are not Christian responses. Christians are called to action and sympathy not through their own firsthand

experiences but by the immediate experience of their brothers, for whose sake Christ suffered.

On Suffering

It is infinitely easier to suffer in obedience to a human command than in the freedom of one's very own responsible action. It is infinitely easier to suffer in community with others than in solitude. It is infinitely easier to suffer publicly and with honor than in the shadow and in dishonor. It is infinitely easier to suffer through putting one's bodily life at stake than to suffer through the spirit. Christ suffered in freedom, in solitude, in the shadow, and in dishonor, in body and in spirit. Since then, many Christians have suffered with him.

Present and Future

To this day, it seemed to us that developing a plan for our professional and personal life was one of the inalienable rights belonging to human life. That has come to an end. Through the weight of circumstances, we have been put into the situation where we must forgo "worrying about tomorrow." But there is a crucial difference as to whether this results from the free response of faith, as the Sermon on the Mount states, or is coerced subservience to the demands of the present moment. For most people the enforced renunciation of planning for the future means that they have succumbed to living only for the moment at hand, irresponsibly, frivolously, or resignedly; some still dream longingly of a more beautiful future and try thereby to forget the present. For us both of these courses are equally impossible. What remains for us is only the very narrow path, sometimes barely discernible, of taking each day as if it were the last and yet living it faithfully and responsibly as if there were yet to be a great future. "Houses and fields and vineyards shall again

be bought in this land,” Jeremiah is told to proclaim—in paradoxical contradiction to his prophecies of woe—just before the destruction of the holy city; in light of the utter deprivation of any future, those words were a divine sign and a pledge of a great, new future. To think and to act with an eye on the coming generation and to be ready to move on without fear and worry—that is the course that has, in practice, been forced upon us. To hold it courageously is not easy but necessary.

Optimism

It is more sensible to be pessimistic; disappointments are left behind, and one can face people unembarrassed. Hence, the clever frown upon optimism. In its essence optimism is not a way of looking at the present situation but a power of life, a power of hope when others resign, a power to hold our heads high when all seems to have come to naught, a power to tolerate setbacks, a power that never abandons the future to the opponent but lays claim to it. Certainly, there is a stupid, cowardly optimism that must be frowned upon. But no one ought to despise optimism as the will for the future, however many times it is mistaken. It is the health of life that the ill dare not infect. There are people who think it frivolous and Christians who think it impious to hope for a better future on earth and to prepare for it. They believe in chaos, disorder, and catastrophe, perceiving it in what is happening now. They withdraw in resignation or pious flight from the world, from the responsibility for ongoing life, for building anew, for the coming generations. It may be that the day of judgment will dawn tomorrow; only then and no earlier will we readily lay down our work for a better future.

Peril and Death

In recent years we have become increasingly familiar with the thought of death. We ourselves are surprised by the composure with which we accept the news of the death of our contemporaries. We can no longer hate Death so much; we have discovered something of kindness in his features and are almost reconciled to him. Deep down we seem to feel that we are his already and that each new day is a miracle. It would not be correct to say that we die gladly—even though no one is unacquainted with that weariness, which ought not to be allowed to arise under any circumstances. We are too inquisitive for that, or, to put it more seriously, we would like to see something more of our scattered life's meaning. But we do not make of Death a hero either; life is too great and too dear for us to do so. Still more do we refuse to look for the meaning of life in danger; we are not desperate enough to do so and know too much of the treasures of life. We also know too well the fear for life and all the other destructive effects of unrelenting imperilment of life. We still love life, but I believe that Death can no longer surprise us. After what we have experienced in the war, we hardly dare acknowledge our wish that Death will find us completely engaged in the fullness of life, rather than by accident, suddenly, away from what really matters. It is not external circumstances but we ourselves who shall make of our death what it can be, a death consented to freely and voluntarily.

Are We Still of Any Use?

We have been silent witnesses of evil deeds. We have become cunning and learned the arts of obfuscation and equivocal speech. Experience has rendered us suspicious of human beings, and often we have failed to speak to them a true and open word. Unbearable conflicts have worn us down or even made us cynical. Are we

still of any use? We will not need geniuses, cynics, people who have contempt for others, or cunning tacticians, but simple, uncomplicated, and honest human beings. Will our inner strength to resist what has been forced on us have remained strong enough, and our honesty with ourselves blunt enough, to find our way back to simplicity and honesty?

The View from Below

It remains an experience of incomparable value that we have for once learned to see the great events of world history from below, from the perspective of the outcasts, the suspects, the maltreated, the powerless, the oppressed and reviled, in short from the perspective of the suffering. If only during this time bitterness and envy have not corroded the heart; that we come to see matters great and small, happiness and misfortune, strength and weakness with new eyes; that our sense for greatness, humanness, justice, and mercy has grown clearer, freer, more incorruptible; that we learn, indeed, that personal suffering is a more useful key, a more fruitful principle than personal happiness for exploring the meaning of the world in contemplation and action. But this perspective from below must not lead us to become advocates for those who are perpetually dissatisfied. Rather, out of a higher satisfaction, which in its essence is grounded beyond what is below and above, we do justice to life in all its dimensions and in this way affirm it.

Part 1:

The Interrogation Period: April–July 1943

Part 1

The Interrogation Period: April–July 1943

1. From Karl Bonhoeffer

Berlin-Charl[ottenburg] 9

April 11, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

I wanted to send you a greeting from us and tell you that we are always thinking of you. We know you and are therefore confident that everything will turn for the better, and hopefully soon. Despite all the anxiety we are now experiencing, we have the happy memory, to which we will hold on, of the cantata *Lobe den Herren*, which you rehearsed and performed with your brothers and sisters and the grandchildren for my seventy-fifth birthday. Hopefully, we can speak with you soon. Kindest regards from Mama, Renate, and her fiancée, and your old Father

With permission we have sent you a package on Wednesday the seventh, with bread and some other groceries, a blanket, and a woolen undershirt, and such.

2. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

April 14, 1943

My dear Parents,

Above all you need to know and indeed believe that I am doing well. That has really been true for the whole past ten days even though I was unfortunately unable to write to you until today. Curiously, those things that one usually imagines to be particularly unpleasant when in detention, that is, the various external privations, do in fact hardly matter at all. It is quite possible to satisfy one's morning appetite with dry bread—and by the way, I am also getting all kinds of good things!—and the cot does not bother me in the least. Between eight at night and six in the morning, one can get plenty of sleep. I have, in fact, been particularly surprised that, from the first moment, I have almost never had a craving for cigarettes. I believe that in all these things, psychological factors play the crucial role. The considerable internal adjustment demanded by such an unexpected arrest and having to come to terms and put up with a completely new situation—all this makes physical needs completely secondary and unimportant. I am finding this a truly enriching experience. I am not as unaccustomed as others to being alone, and it is certainly a good steam bath for the soul. What does or might torment me is the thought that you are fearful and worried about me, and that you are not eating and sleeping properly. Forgive me for the worries I am causing you, but I believe that this time it is less myself than an adverse fate that is to blame. As an antidote it is good to read and memorize hymns by Paul Gerhardt, as I am currently doing. By the way, I have my Bible and reading material from the library here, and now sufficient stationery as well.

As you can imagine, it is my fiancée for whom I feel particularly sorry during this time. It is a lot for her to bear after having just

recently lost her father and brother in the East. Being the daughter of an officer, she will perhaps find it particularly difficult to cope with my arrest. If only I could speak a few kind words to her. Now you will do it in my stead. Maybe she will come to Berlin sometime; that would be nice.

Two weeks ago today was the seventy-fifth birthday celebration. It was a beautiful day. The morning and evening chorale with the many voices and instruments still resonates within me: "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty. . . . What need or grief ever hath failed of relief?—Wings of His mercy did shade thee." That is indeed true, and something on which we may continue to rely with confidence.

Now spring is on its way with full force. You will have a lot to do in the garden. Renate's wedding preparations are hopefully going well. Here in the prison yard a song thrush sings most wonderfully in the morning and now also at nightfall. One becomes grateful for small things, and that too is an added gift for sure. Stay well! Always thinking with gratitude and love of you and all my brothers and sisters and friends.

Your Dietrich

At some point, could you please drop off the following items for me here: slippers, shoelaces (long, black), shoe polish, stationery and envelopes, ink, a tobacco ration card, shaving soap, as well as a sewing kit and another suit to change into? Many thanks for everything!

**3. From the Senior Reich War Military Prosecutor
to Karl Bonhoeffer**

Berlin-Charlottenburg

5 April 20, 1943

In response to your letter of April 17, 1943, regarding the pending criminal case against your son Dietrich Bonhoeffer, you are hereby informed that your application for a visitors' permit [Sprecherlaubnis] is denied.

Under the authority of
pp. signed Dr. Roeder
Reich War Court 18
Attested as correct.
Ladenig
Army Judicial Inspector

4. From Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer

Leipzig, East 27

Am Wasserwerk 7

April 23, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

The most obvious does not always come to mind first. Only just now in Berlin did I learn that one is permitted to write to you and thus send at least a signal that someone is thinking of you in your isolation. For this is all it can be, since there are so many more questions on one's mind, rather than the desire to tell you about all kinds of trivia. Of course, all of us are hoping very much that this time of testing will soon be over for you, and that you will be released soon. I have often

been in Berlin in the past couple of weeks. There is no need for you to worry about our parents. They are, of course, quite shaken but full of trust and confidence that the matter will soon be straightened out. Much of our conversation is about what you should do after you have been released. But, of course, you will also have a say in that.

At the moment our garden is quite magical. The children are out of school, and the two older ones hang around in it all day long. The two little ones are in bed with harmless sore throats. Grete is on the go all day long, busy from early morning until late at night, dealing with children, kitchen, house, garden, and rabbit hutch. I am mulling over a manuscript that I had intended to get ready for publication during the Easter vacation. But my thoughts often stray, and I end up thinking of you all. Keep up your good spirits. All the best.

As ever,

Your Karl Friedrich

5. From Hans von Dohnanyi

Good Friday 1943

My dear Dietrich,

I do not know if I will be allowed to send you this greeting, but I will try. Outside the bells are ringing for worship. They bring back memories of beautiful, good, and solemn hours we spent together in the Garnisonkirche and of many happy, cheerful, and carefree Easter days with children, parents, and brothers and sisters. You will feel the same way, and it takes great effort to keep these memories under control.

You cannot imagine how heavy it weighs on me to be the reason that you, Christel, the children, and my parents should have to suffer like this, and that my dear wife and you are deprived of your freedom.

Socios habuisse malorum may be a consolation, but the *habere* is a terribly heavy burden. Again and again I just feel compelled to ask “why?” a question that springs from having too little faith. If I knew that you all—and you personally—do not think badly of me, a load would be lifted from my mind. What would I not give to know that you are all free again. I would take everything on myself if you could be spared this ordeal. It was so good to be able to see you. I have also been allowed to speak to Christel—but what can you really say when other people are present? How extremely difficult, indeed impossible it is to open one’s soul and show one’s pure and tender emotions, which had been modestly hidden even from those closest to you. You know me well. We are, I believe, more than “just” brothers-in-law; you know how much my wife means to me. I simply *cannot* be without her, who has shared everything with me up to now. That at this very time I am not allowed to share with her the burden that we have to carry—who can truly fathom what that means? It certainly does not help the *cause*. I am just dumbstruck.

I now read the Bible a lot; it is the only book that prevents my thoughts from drifting off all the time. This morning Matt. 26–28, Luke 22–24, and Pss. 68 and 70. I had never noticed before the peculiar differences in the Passion Narrative between the two evangelists. How much I wish I could talk with you about this.

From Ursel I hear that the children are in Friedrichsbrunn. *That* for us is the place for a perfect vacation.

I am grateful for everything you have been and remain for my wife, my children, and myself. That is something you should know. Well, then, God be with you.

Your Hans

6. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

Easter Sunday
April 25, 1943

My dear Parents,

Today ten days have finally passed, and I am allowed to write to you once again. I would really like to let you know that I am celebrating a happy Easter here. What is so liberating about Good Friday and Easter is the fact that our thoughts are pulled far beyond our personal circumstances to the ultimate meaning of all life, suffering, and indeed everything that happens, and this gives us great hope. Since yesterday it has become wonderfully quiet throughout the building. One could hear many people call out "Happy Easter" to each other, and, without envy, one wishes that everyone who carries out their difficult duty in here be granted the fulfillment of that wish. In the silence I now also hear your Easter greetings as you are gathered together today with my brothers and sisters and are thinking of me.

Good Friday was Maria's birthday. I would really be worried about her if I did not know about her inner strength, with which she coped with the death of her father, her brother, and two of her cousins whom she especially loved. Now Easter will comfort her, her large family will strongly support her, and her work at the Red Cross keeps her fully occupied. Greet her warmly and tell her that I am very much longing for her. But also tell her that she should not be sad but be brave as she has been thus far. She is, after all, still so very young, which makes all this very hard for her.

But now, I first have to thank you very much for everything you have brought me and for Papa's and Ursel's greetings. You cannot imagine what it means to be told suddenly, "Your mother, your sister, your brother were just here and handed in something for you." Simply the fact that you were so near, and the tangible sign that you

are always thinking of me and for me—which of course I actually know—all this gives me a happiness that carries me through the whole day. Many, many thanks for everything.

I continue to be well, I am healthy, permitted to be outside for a half hour every day; and now that I am again allowed to smoke, I sometimes even forget briefly where I actually am! I am treated well and read a lot, besides the newspaper and novels especially the Bible. I don't yet have the concentration to work properly. However, during this Holy Week I was finally able to intensively study a section of the Passion Narrative, Jesus's high priestly prayer, in which I have had a long-standing strong interest as you know. I even managed to do an exegesis of several chapters of Paul's ethics for myself. This was very important for me. Thus I must still be very grateful. How are you doing, I wonder? Are you still enjoying the many beautiful birthday flowers? How about your travel plans? I almost fear that you will not take the trip to the Black Forest now, even though it would have been so good and necessary. In addition to all of this, there are now also the preparations for Renate's wedding. About this I would like to say that it is my express wish that Ursel not postpone the date by even a single day but rather let Renate marry as soon, as happily, and as lightheartedly as possible; anything else would only cause me pain. Renate knows, after all, with how many good wishes I think of her and how I share in her joy. In the last few years we have certainly learned how much joy and sorrow the human heart is able and forced to contain at the same time. Thus the sooner, the better. Please give her my love!

By the way, I would like to know how Maria's grandmother is doing. Please do not keep it from me if she has died. Both Maria and I have been very attached to her.

Now for a few requests: I would like the brown shoes or, even better, the tall black ones with shoelaces. The heels on my shoes here

are falling off. My suit is much in need of cleaning; I would like you to take it away and let me have the brown one in exchange. I would also like a hairbrush, lots of matches, a pipe with tobacco, pouch, and pipe cleaners, and cigarettes. As to my books: Schilling: *Moral*, volume 2, and a volume by Adalbert Stifter. Sorry for the trouble! Many thanks!

Surprisingly, the days are passing by quickly in here. It seems incredible to me that I have already been here for three weeks. I enjoy going to bed at 8:00 p.m.—supper is at 4:00 p.m.!—and I look forward to my dreams. In the past I never knew what a delightful gift they are. I dream every night, and they are always pleasant. Until I fall asleep, I recite the verse I memorized during the day. Then at six in the morning, I enjoy reading psalms and hymns, thinking of you, and knowing that you are thinking of me too.

By now the day has passed, and I only hope that you feel as peaceful as I do. I have read much that was good and thought and hoped much that was beautiful. It actually would be greatly reassuring for me if Maria could spend an entire day with you in peace and quiet sometime. Please allow her and also Renate to read this letter! In front of me are the brief notes from Papa and Ursel, and I read them again and again.

And now farewell. Please forgive all the worries I am causing you! Greet all my brothers and sisters and their children. Yours with all my heart, full of gratitude and love,
Dietrich

7. From Paula Bonhoeffer

Berlin-Charlottenburg 9

Wednesday after Easter, 1943

Twenty-fifth anniversary of Walter's death

My dear Dietrich,

I did not send the letter I wrote on Easter since Papa thought it would not be forwarded over Easter anyway. Thus I am adding a few lines today.

Yesterday I received a very nice letter from Maria. She sends you warm greetings. She is now taking care of patients with scarlet fever. However, she thinks she will be relieved in three weeks and intends to visit me on her first day off. Her attitude is wonderfully brave and confident. A true soldier's child!

Yesterday I myself came out with Susi to bring you the things you requested. Hopefully, I have met your wishes somewhat. You really must see to it that you conserve your strength. We still only have one letter from you and are eagerly waiting for the next one.

In fact, everything just happened too suddenly. Who would have thought it possible that something like this could happen to you. We are trying to come to terms with our old concepts of an arrest being a shameful thing. They only make life unnecessarily difficult, for one must understand that in these difficult times there is so much suspicion involved in the way people are judged, and how difficult it must be to remain unaffected by that. However, we are convinced that, once you hear the allegations that have been brought against you, you will be able to clear your name.

Today Ursula is at work decorating Renate's apartment. She is somewhat sad that not everything can be as beautiful as she would like to make it for her. I also intend to go over sometime at the end of the week to see how and whether I might be able to contribute

something from my old furnishings. May God continue to be with you in this hard time. Papa joins me in sending you our love.

Your Mother

The gorgeous flowers from Papa's seventy-fifth birthday are now gone as well. Thus everything has its season and its end.

8. From Rüdiger Schleicher

Berlin–Charlottenburg 9

April 29, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

Easter has passed, and daily life has returned to normal. We missed you very much during these days. We mostly worked in the garden, and the music took a backseat. Nevertheless, it was not absent altogether: I played in a quartet on Sunday night. But that was about it. In particular, the regular musical beginning to the day on Sunday morning fell somewhat short, not least because the children are not here.

But above all, you must know that our thoughts are with you. I want to tell you this explicitly here, even though I know that you yourself have sufficient strength to measure up to all the difficulties and perils of life. I hope and wish that you may soon be released and able to enjoy the ever more beautiful spring.

All of us are doing well. Hans Walter writes that he is very satisfied with his training in Nachod as a radio operator. Ursel is feverishly at work getting ready for Renate's wedding, which is to take place on May 15—as you already know. Hans Walter has been granted leave for the event. The three girls are still in Friedrichsbrunn with

Bärbel, Klaus, and Christoph. We expect them back this weekend; they wrote very enthusiastic reports from up there.

And now we send you our kindest regards. Stay healthy and keep up your spirits. As ever, your faithful
Rüdiger

9. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

May 4, 1943

My dear Parents,

Many thanks for the letters from Mama, Karl-Friedrich, and Rüdiger. I am so happy that you are calm and confident and also that Karl-Friedrich is able to visit you quite frequently. I am certain that it is a good thing for me personally to experience what I am going through. I also believe that no one is given a heavier burden than one is able to bear. What is most difficult for me is the fact that you are forced to share in carrying this burden. But the way in which you do it is, on the other hand, also a source of boundless happiness and strength for me. I am very happy that Maria has written you a letter filled with such courage and confident trust. Oh, how our life indeed depends completely on trust, and how impoverished life becomes without it. I am now learning daily how good my life with you has always been, and besides, I now have to practice myself what I have told others in my sermons and books.

Now after four weeks of imprisonment, the quick, conscious, internal reconciliation with my fate is being gradually complemented by a certain unconscious, natural acclimation to the situation. This is a relief, but it also has its problems, for one should rather not want or ought to get used to this situation; you will feel the same way.

You would like to hear more about my life here. One does not need much imagination to picture a cell; the sparser, the more

accurate. However, on Easter the *DAZ* printed a reproduction from Dürer's *Apocalypse*, which I put up on the wall, and some of Maria's primroses are also still here. Of the fourteen hours of each day, I walk for about three hours in my cell, many kilometers; also, a half hour in the yard. I read, study, and work. I especially enjoyed Jeremias Gotthelf again, with his clear, healthy, and quiet style. I am well and healthy.

The wedding at the Schleichers' is really close now. I will not be able to write again before the event. A few days ago I read in a book by Jean Paul that the "the only joys that can survive a fire are the domestic joys." If the two of them understand this—and I believe they already understand it well—then I can foresee only great happiness in this marriage, and I am already looking forward to being included in their domestic joys someday. They should read together *Geld und Geist*, by Jeremias Gotthelf, soon. It is better than any wedding toast I could give them. As a wedding gift I would like to give them the spinet, which is already half theirs anyway. Also, as I already told Ursel, I would like to make my contribution, whatever it may be, to the grand piano that they will hopefully get soon. With all my heart I wish them a very happy day and will be with them with many happy thoughts and wishes. I would also like them to think of me *only* with happy thoughts, memories, and hopes. If one experiences a personal hardship, one wishes that the genuine joys of life—a wedding is most certainly among them—retain their rightful place alongside the hardship. Very quietly I also hope that someday we shall all be celebrating Maria's and my happy day—but when?—seems like a fantasy to me at the moment, but it is a great and beautiful hope. For Ursel all this is, of course, a bit much. I would love to help her think everything through and move things around. Instead, she now has additional troubles because of us. Give my love to the whole family, especially to the bride and groom, and

I congratulate the parents on their twentieth wedding anniversary. They should take a few photos.

And now again many thanks for everything you brought me, for all your efforts, your thoughts, and your love. Wednesday is always an especially awaited and beautiful day. Also a few requests: one coat hanger, mirror, towel, washcloth, and, if it remains cold (it seems to be getting warmer today), one warm shirt and socks; also: Holl, *Kirchengeschichte*, volume 3: *Der Westen*, and things to smoke, whatever is possible, and matches. I too cannot understand that you are unable find my suit and jacket.

Can I assume that everyone knows about the engagement by now? I do trust, though, that it will stay within the family? However, since by my count “the immediate family” from both sides includes over eighty people, the news will most likely not remain secret for long. I just would have liked to comply with the request of Maria’s mother. Please give Maria my special thanks for her greetings! How nice that the grandmother is doing better. She has to carry a heavy burden too, with five sons and grandsons killed in action and seven more still fighting in the war. Please send her my warmest regards; I am sure that I am in her thoughts. Unfortunately, I did not get to thank Aunt Elisabeth for the Bach cantatas. Please do greet her warmly also.

I now often think of the beautiful song by Hugo Wolf, which we sang several times lately: “Over night, over night, joy and sorrow come, and sooner than you thought, they both leave you, and go to tell the Lord how you have borne them.” Indeed, everything depends on this “how”; it is more important than any external circumstances. It completely puts to rest the sometimes tormenting thoughts about the future. Now once again many thanks for everything you think, do, and carry in your hearts for me every day. Love to my brothers, sisters, and friends. Renate should really have a joyful, unclouded wedding day and be confident that even here I will be able to share

her joy! On the fifteenth, the very day, I am permitted to send my next letter; I will thus write it the day before the wedding.

By the way, if I am here in the facility on Wednesdays, I will always give you the dirty laundry to take back right away; otherwise it has to sit here for a week. I always need to be personally present when your package is opened.

I send you all my love, with the wish that all worries will soon be taken from you and all of us.

Your grateful Dietrich

I have just heard that one of my sisters delivered the package. Again, many thanks! From the contents of the package I can see that you have not yet received my letter of the twenty-fifth; I am very sorry for your sake. It seems that letters often take a long time. Do keep on writing. I think the cigars might be from Stettin. Many thanks.

10. To Hans von Dohnanyi

May 5, 1943

My dear Hans,

Your letter so surprised, delighted, and moved me that I must at least make an attempt to respond. Whether you receive this letter is not in my hands, but I fervently hope you will. For you must know that there is not an ounce of reproach or bitterness in me about what has befallen you and me. Such things come from God and God alone, and I know myself to be of one mind with you and Christel that our response to God can only be submission, endurance, patience—and gratitude. Thus every question of “why” falls silent because it has found its answer. Until recently, until Papa’s seventy-fifth birthday, we were given to experience so many good things together that it

would almost be impertinent if we did not also accept something difficult calmly and bravely—and with true gratitude. I know it is more difficult for you because of Christel and the children. But I know Christel well enough not to be worried even for a single moment about her inner stability; she would only wish that you do not worry about her. I would now also like to let you know—not to burden you, but only to cheer you up and to let you share in my joy—that since January I have been engaged to Maria von Wedemeyer. Due to the death of her father and her brother, the subject was not supposed to be mentioned until the summer, and I could only tell my parents. It is a difficult trial now for Maria, but Mama writes that Maria is courageous, happy, and confident, and this is a source of great strength for me. I am convinced that this experience is good for both of us, even if today it is still so impossible to understand. Thus rejoice with me!

I am reading, studying, and working a great deal systematically. In the mornings and evenings, I have peace and quiet to think of all the many people, at home and on the front, whom one always intends and ought to entrust to God daily. Needless to say, you and Christel are especially included. No, you shouldn't and needn't worry about us; there is Another who carries this sorrow for you. We must now simply let go of what we cannot accomplish and confine ourselves to what we can and should do, namely, be manly and strong in the midst of suffering, trusting confidently in God. You too will know the hymn by Hugo Wolf: "Over night, over night, joy and sorrow come, and sooner than you thought, they both leave you, and go tell the Lord how you have borne them."

Stay healthy and in good spirits! I gratefully remember the many pleasant hours at your home, the music, walks, enjoying the garden, games, and conversations. The children are well taken care of at the grandparents', and they are old enough to know what kind of

conduct they owe to themselves and to you. God keep you. I'm thinking of you faithfully every day.

Yours as ever,

Dietrich

11. Notes I, May 1943

Separation from people

 from work
 from the past
 from the future
 from honor
 from God

Different mental patterns of behavior toward the past . . . *forgetting* . . .
caesura experiences.

Fulfilled, unfulfilled, depending on *history*.

Self-deception, *idealizing* the past and about the present in a sober way instead of illusion.

fading of memories

self-pity

passing time—killing time

for the one who has overcome, humor,

smoking and the emptiness of time

memory of what is possible

although not correct.

The meaning of illusion

Understanding of the past—fulfillment, gratitude. Remorse
sense of time

not only what has been *understood* is said to be present?
thus past after all?

Possession

Gen. 3 Eccl. 3

Rev. 10 Matt. 6

Novalis

In expectations (youth) slowly—ascending,
then quickly descending

wall slogan
and Ps. 31:16

an old woman lets time slip quietly by
similarly in the gravest danger . . . serenity

What is freedom?
formally love
Regarding freedom in prison

Waiting—but with utter calm, for *death*, for example

time of day—farmer, but not “time as such”

! *Experience of time* as experience of *separation*—engaged couple

before God

the past: why: in one hundred years everything will be over
rather than: until recently

everything was all right? no *possession* (that outlasts time,

no *task*

flight from the experience of time while dreaming, shock when
waking up,

in a dream what is past = what is to come, timeless.

The ravages of time—the gnawing of time
healing time—scarring over, unde est memoria . . .

Emptiness of time despite it being filled—“Fulfilled” time is very
different

love

12. Notes II, May 1943

wall slogan—time as help—as torment, as enemy.
boredom as expression of despair.

Ps. 31:1

time

benefit of time: forgetting, scarring over

opposite: Irrevocability

Separation—*from what is past and what is to come*

“If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength
being small”

Prov. 31 laughs at the time to come

Matt. 6 do not worry . . .

waiting

boredom

happiness

work

Whatever still determines the present is remembered
easily, is recent . . . while an *event that happened equally
long ago can be infinitely distant.*

continuity with the past and the future interrupted

discontent—tension

impatience

yearning

boredom

night—deeply lonely

apathy

urge to be busy, variety, novelty

dullness, tiredness, sleeping—against it strict order as antidote

Fantasizing, distortion of past and future
suicide, not out of a sense of guilt, but because I am

practically dead already, the closing of the book,
sum total.

Do we remember pleasant things better?

Why is this so? Past pain is remembered as having been *overcome*, but pain that has not been overcome (unforgiven guilt) is still fresh and torments us in memory

overcoming in *prayer*

13. From Karl Bonhoeffer to the Senior Reich Military Court Prosecutor

May 9, 1943

To the Senior Prosecutor of the Reich Military Court
Honorable Sir:

In regard to the investigation against my son Dietrich Bonhoeffer, I submitted a request on April 17, 1943, for a permit to visit him. My request was denied on April 20 by the senior Reich military court prosecutor (StPl [RKA] III 114/43).

I hereby resubmit this request for myself and my wife, since my son has now been in pretrial detention for five weeks. I wish to point out that having been a member of the Senate of the Army Medical Service for over thirty years, I believe I can be trusted to comply with the existing regulations when visiting with my son. I can also vouch for my wife.

[Karl Bonhoeffer]

14. From Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

Berlin-Charlottenburg 9

May 9, 1943

My dear Dietrich,

We greatly enjoyed your letter of April 25, which arrived here on May 3. For it portrays you just as we imagine you in your current situation, calm and held by God's loving-kindness. . . .

The wedding is now this coming Saturday, and we intend to celebrate it joyously as you so expressly wished us to do. You are right; if a heart has the right disposition, it must have room for both sorrow and joy. On the evening before the wedding, Bärbel will bring the garland of roses, and little Christine, as a girl from the Mark Brandenburg, will bring salt and bread, and all the young people will sing the beautiful old folk song "Aennchen von Tharau," by Simon Dach, for them. Dorothee will bring the garland of myrtle. There may also be some chamber music. However, we will gather only after supper. The wedding, the ceremony that is, will be at 2:30 p.m.; it will be followed by a simple meal at the Schleichers'. Ursel has cleared out Christine's room for the event, decorated it with some pictures from your room, and already set the tables. It is amazing how many things can simultaneously find room in her heart and mind. . . .

We are very happy that you are able to continue doing serious theological work, even though you may perhaps lack the concentration for it sometimes. And how comforting is the "high-priestly prayer" in John 17. I have now read it once again with a great sense of gratitude. What Augustine said was indeed right: "The ear hears according to the disposition of the heart." Now Papa wants to add a greeting as well. God be with you,

Your Mother

Dear Dietrich,

I'd like to add a greeting to Mama's letter and to thank you for your letter of April 25. It was very reassuring for us to learn that you are healthy, that your accommodations are tolerable as far as the physical aspects are concerned, and that you also have the opportunity to occupy your mind. It is unhealthy to be dependent solely on meditation, even for someone who enjoys being alone, for it is contrary to our nature as human beings, who, after all, have been given language as a means of communication. We very much hope that we will soon be allowed to speak with you and see you, so that we are able to convince ourselves that your condition is tolerable. Best of all would be if you came yourself and surprised us at Renate's wedding. Mama has written you about the preparations. As for myself, there is little to report. I have answered the 160 birthday greetings, a somewhat arduous task for one who wants to avoid printed thank-you cards and is not in a writing mood. Kind regards,
Your Father

**15. From the Senior Reich Military Court Prosecutor
to Karl Bonhoeffer**

Berlin-Charlottenburg 5

May 10, 1943

At this time a permit to visit your son cannot be granted to you and your wife, since this does not appear to be in the best interest of the investigation.

Under the authority of
pp. signed Dr. Roeder

Prepared:
Ladenig
Army Judicial Inspector

16. From Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer

May 15, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

Your letters from prison are always a great joy for us. We eagerly wait for the ten days to pass, when you are allowed to write again; or to put it a better way, we always quietly hope that your next letter will be made obsolete by your own reappearance. By now it is, indeed, about time that they let you out.

From your letters I have now also learned that you are secretly engaged.

You cannot imagine how happy this made me. I basically feel sorry for every unmarried man, even if this confession sounds ridiculous. But of course, in your case, as I see it, there were special circumstances. You do not belong to those who by disposition are destined to remain bachelors. Especially with the difficulties your profession entails nowadays, you need a good, astute, and competent wife. In the meantime, Ursel has told me many nice things about your young bride, and our parents, who I assume already knew about this, are also very happy about her.

So I too hope that I shall have a chance to meet her soon. In thinking about your bride, however, you must find your current situation especially odious, and I really admire the equanimity with which you accept it as a misfortune without any kind of reproach.

Today is the wedding at the Schleichers'. As you wished, it has turned into a real celebration after all. Recently Hans-Walter was here with us for a few hours on his way home. He is tanned and well nourished and, in his air-force uniform, was suitably admired by the boys.

He is on leave for the wedding, which makes me very happy for Ursel. Everyone here is healthy. Be as well as is possible and make

sure that you get out soon so that you are not cheated out of a beautiful spring entirely.

With love from all of us,

Your Karl Friedrich

17. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

May 15, 1943

My dear Parents,

When you get this letter, the busy days of preparing for and celebrating the wedding will already be long gone, as will the yearning I feel to be there. What will have returned instead is the quiet joy and confidence that the two of them have now found their happiness. The Schleichers will miss Renate very much, but they can know that she is in the best, most loving, and faithful hands imaginable. They have gained a son who is a full member of the family and who will bring them nothing but joy. Today I recall with gratitude many wonderful past years and times, and I share in everyone's joy. I am now eager to hear what the Scripture text for the wedding was. The most beautiful one I know is Rom. 15:7. I have used it often. What gorgeous summer weather they have! As a morning chorale they will thus probably sing "Die güldne Sonne," by Paul Gerhardt!

After a longer interlude I received your letter of the ninth rather quickly, on May 11. Many thanks. Anyone whose parental home has become such a part of himself, as it has for me, experiences each greeting with a special sense of gratitude. If only we could at least briefly see or speak with each other. This would greatly ease the internal tension. For it is, of course, difficult on the outside to imagine realistically what being in prison is like. The situation as such, that

is, the individual moment, is in fact often not so different from being someplace else. I read, reflect, work, write, pace the room—and I really do so without rubbing myself sore on the wall like a polar bear. What matters is being focused on what one still has and what can be done—and that is still a great deal—and on restraining within oneself the rising thoughts about what one cannot do and the inner restlessness and resentment about the entire situation. However, I have never understood as clearly as I have here what the Bible and Luther mean by “temptation” [Anfechtung]. The peace and serenity by which one had been carried are suddenly shaken without any apparent physical or psychological reason, and the heart becomes, as Jeremiah very aptly put it, an obstinate and anxious thing that one is unable to fathom. One experiences this as an attack from the outside, as evil powers that seek to rob one of what is most essential. But even these experiences may be good and necessary in order to learn to understand human life better.

I am currently trying my hand at a small study on the “sense of time,” an experience likely characterizing pretrial detention. One of my predecessors scribbled above the cell door: “In one hundred years everything will be over,” as his attempt to cope with this experience of the empty time. But there is much to be said about this, and I would enjoy talking it over with Papa. “My times are in your hand,” Ps. 31, is the biblical answer to this question. But the Bible also contains the question that threatens to dominate everything here: “Lord, how long?” Ps. 13.

I continue to do well and must be grateful for the past six weeks. I am especially happy that Maria’s mother came to see you. Is there any news yet from Tunis about Konstantin? This is very much on my mind as I think of Maria and her whole family. If only it won’t take too long until I see Maria again, and we can get married! She really

needs to get some rest sometime soon, and we also have all kinds of earthly wishes!

I just now received the packet of laundry back; you can't imagine how much joy and strength I derive from even this indirect connection. Many thanks. Please give my special thanks to Susi for all the help she's giving you these days. I am also happy that you managed to get the asthma drops again. They are very soothing. I have already managed to get a mirror in here. I would be grateful for some ink, stain remover, Laxin, two pairs of briefs, a string vest, the repaired shoes, and shirt collar buttons. It will probably become very hot once the thick walls have thoroughly absorbed the heat of the sun; up to now it is still very pleasant. I hope that Papa won't give up smoking altogether for my sake now! Many thanks, by the way, for the book by Jeremias Gotthelf; in two weeks I would enjoy getting Gotthelf's *Uli der Knecht*, which Renate has. By the way, you ought to read Gotthelf's *Berner Geist*; if not the whole book, at least start reading it. It is something very special, and I'm sure you will find it interesting! I recall that the old Schoene always praised Gotthelf highly, and I'd be inclined to suggest a compilation of excerpts [Brevier] from Gotthelf's writings to the Dietrich publishing house. Adalbert Stifter's background is also primarily Christian—his forest descriptions, by the way, often make me yearn for the quiet forest meadows near Friedrichsbrunn. Stifter is not as strong as Gotthelf, yet he has a wonderful simplicity and clarity that gives me great joy. Oh, if only we could once again talk together about all of this! Despite all my sympathies for the *vita contemplative*, I am nevertheless not a born Trappist monk. Anyhow, a time of enforced silence may be a good thing. After all, Catholics claim that the most effective scriptural expositions come from the strictly contemplative orders. By the way, I am reading the Bible straight through from the beginning and am just coming to Job, whom I especially love. I am also still reading the

Psalms daily as I have done for years. There is no other book that I know and love as much. I am no longer able to read Pss. 3, 47, 70, and others without hearing them in the musical settings by Heinrich Schütz. Thanks to Renate, who introduced me to this music; it has become one of the greatest enrichments of my life.

Please give Ursel my warmest good wishes on her birthday; I often think of her. Greet all the siblings, children, and friends, and especially the young married couple. Hopefully, Maria will come to see you soon. I feel so much a part of all of you that I know we are all joined together in experiencing, bearing, thinking, and doing things for one another, even though we have to be separated. Thanking you every day and every hour for all your love and care,
Your Dietrich

Of course, also give my greetings to Aunt Elisabeth and Maria's grandmother together with her whole family.

18. Wedding Sermon from the Prison Cell

Eph. 1:12 “—so that we . . . might live for the praise of his glory.”

A couple is entitled to welcome and celebrate their wedding day with a feeling of incomparable triumph. When all the difficulties, impediments, obstacles, doubts, and hesitations have not been brushed aside, but honestly faced and worked through—and it is certainly good if not everything goes all too smoothly—then both have indeed won the decisive triumph of their life. By saying yes to each other, they have freely decided to give their whole life a new direction. They have in joyful certainty defied all the doubts and reservations that life raises against any permanent bond between two people, and by their own action and responsibility conquered a new

land for their life. Every wedding must in some way resound with the jubilation that human beings can do such great things; that they have been given such unimaginable freedom and power to take the helm of their lives in their own hands. The happiness of the couple must include the sense that the children of this earth are properly proud of the privilege to be masters of their own destiny. It is not good to speak here all too quickly and submissively of God's will and guidance. It is first of all, simply and unmistakably, your thoroughly human will that is at work and celebrates its triumph here. The path upon which you embark is first of all very much the path you have chosen yourselves. What you have done and do is first and foremost not something pious but something thoroughly of this world. This is why you yourselves and you alone carry the responsibility for it, a responsibility that no one can take from you. More precisely, you, Eberhard, have been given the entire responsibility for the success of your undertaking, with all the happiness that such a responsibility entails; and you, Renate, will help your husband and make it easy for him to bear this responsibility and in doing so will find your own happiness. It would be an escape into false piety if today you did not have the courage to say: it is *our* will, it is *our* love, it is *our* path. "Iron and steel they may decay, but *our* love will ever stay." You long to find in each other the earthly bliss that consists, in the words of the medieval song, in comforting each other in body and soul. This longing is proper both in human and in God's eyes.

Certainly you two have every reason, if anyone ever did, to look back with extraordinary gratitude on your life thus far. The joys and beautiful things in life have practically been heaped upon you. You have succeeded in everything. The love and friendship of those around you have fallen into your lap. Your paths have for the most part been straightened before you embarked on them. In each life situation you were able to feel sheltered by your families and friends.

Everyone only wished for your best. Finally, you were allowed to find each other, and today you have been led to the goal of your desires. As you know yourselves, no one is able to create and choose such a life by oneself; rather to some it is given and to others it is denied. And that is just what we mean by God's guidance. Therefore, as jubilant as you are today to have arrived at the destination of your own will and own way, so will you in equal measure be grateful for God's will and God's way that has led you here; and as confidently as you today assume the responsibility for what you are doing, just as confidently you may, and will, lay it in God's hands.

Today God gives his yes to your yes, God's will consents to yours, and God grants you and affirms your triumph and jubilation and pride. But in so doing, God is also making you instruments of his will and plans for you and for other people. Indeed, in unfathomable generosity God speaks his yes to your yes. But in so doing, God does something entirely new: from your own love—God creates holy matrimony.

God is the founder of your marriage. Marriage is more than your love for each other. It has a higher dignity and power, for it is God's holy institution through which God wishes to preserve humanity until the end of time. In your love you see only each other in the world; in marriage you are a link in the chain of generations that God, for the sake of God's glory, allows to rise and fade away, and calls into God's kingdom. In your love you see only the heaven of your own happiness; in marriage you are placed and given responsibility within the world and the human community. Your love belongs only to you personally; marriage is something beyond the personal, an estate [ein Stand], an office. Just as it takes a crown to make a king and not just his will to reign, so it takes marriage and not just your love for each other to make you a married couple both in human and in God's eyes. Just as you first gave the ring to each other and now receive it once

again from the hand of the minister, so your love comes from you, and your marriage comes from above, from God. As God is higher than human beings, so the sacredness, the rights, and the promise of marriage are higher than human beings, so much greater is the holiness, warrant, and promise of marriage than the holiness, warrant, and promise of love. It is not your love that upholds marriage, but from now on it is marriage that upholds your love.

God makes your marriage indissoluble. “What God has joined together, let no one separate.” In marriage you are joined together by God; it is not something you do, but it is God who does it. Do not confuse God with your love for each other. God makes your marriage indissoluble and protects it from any internal or external danger. God wills to be the guarantor of its permanence. To know that no power in the world, no temptation, no human weakness can separate what God has joined together is an abiding source of joy; indeed, those who know it may say with confidence: what God has joined together, no one can separate. Free from all the anxiety that is always inherent in love, you may now with certainty and full of confidence say to each other: we can never lose each other; through God’s will we belong to each other until death.

God establishes an order, within which you are able to live together in marriage. “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives” (Col. 3). With your marriage, you establish a home. This requires an order, and this order is so important that it is established by God himself, since without it everything would be in disarray. In everything you are free to establish your home, but in one thing you are bound: the wife is to be subject to her husband, and the husband is to love his wife. Thus God gives to husband and wife the honor that belongs to each of them. It is the wife’s honor to serve the husband, to be his helpmate, as the creation story puts it. Likewise, it is the husband’s honor to sincerely

love his wife. He “leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife”; he “loves her like his own flesh.” A wife who seeks to rule over her husband dishonors herself and her husband, just as a husband who lacks in love for his wife dishonors himself and his wife. Both despise the honor of God that is to rest on marriage. Times and conditions are unhealthy when the wife’s ambition is to be like the husband, and when the husband considers the wife merely a toy of his freedom and desire for power. It is the beginning of the disintegration and decay of all the orders of human life when the wife’s service is considered a demotion, indeed, an affront to her honor, and when the undivided love of a husband for his wife is considered weakness or even stupidity. The place to which God has assigned the wife is the home of the husband. While most people today have forgotten what a home can mean, for others of us it has become especially clear in our own time. In the midst of the world, the home is a realm of its own, a fortress amid the storms of time, a refuge, indeed, a sanctuary. It is not built on the shaky ground of the changing courses of public and private life, but it rests in God, which means that God has given it its own meaning and value, its own nature and right, its own purpose and dignity. It is established by God in the world—despite what may happen there—as a place of peace, quietness, joy, love, purity, discipline, reverence, obedience, tradition, and, in all of these, happiness. It is the wife’s vocation and happiness to build this world within the world for the husband and to be active there. Blessed is she if she recognizes the greatness and richness of this her vocation and task. The realm of the wife is not what is new but what endures, not what changes but what remains constant, not what is loud but what is silent, not words but action, not giving orders but persuading, not desiring but possessing—and all this infused with and sustained by the love for her husband. Proverbs says, “The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack

of food. She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life. She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands. She rises while it is still night and provides food for her household and for her servant-girls. . . . She opens her hand to the poor, and reaches out her hands to the needy. . . . Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. Her sons rise up and call her happy; her husband too, and he praises her: ‘Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.’” The happiness that a husband finds in a proper wife, or one who is “virtuous” and “wise,” to use biblical terms, is praised in the Bible again and again as the greatest earthly happiness altogether—it “is far more precious than pearls.” “A virtuous wife is the crown of her husband.” However, the Bible is equally clear about the misfortune that befalls the husband and the entire home through a perverse, “foolish” wife.

If the husband is now called the head of the wife, even with the special addition “just as Christ is the head of the church,” then our earthly conditions are imbued with a divine radiance, which we are to recognize and honor. The honor that is here assigned to the husband consists not in his personal skills and capabilities but in the office given to him by his marriage. His wife ought to see him as being clothed in this honor. For himself, however, this honor entails the highest responsibility. As the head he bears the responsibility for his wife, for the marriage and the home. His task is to care for and protect the family members; he represents the home in the world; he supports and comforts the family members; he is the master of the home who exhorts, punishes, helps, comforts, and stands before God on behalf of his home. It is good, because it is divinely ordered when the wife honors the husband in his office, and when the husband really exercises his office. “Wise” are those husbands and wives who understand and keep God’s order; “foolish” are those who think

they can replace it with another order based on their own will and intellect.

God has endowed marriage with a blessing and with a burden. The blessing is the promise of offspring. God allows human beings to participate in God's unending work of creation. It is nevertheless always none other than God who blesses a marriage with children. "Children are a gift from the Lord" (Ps. 127:3), and we ought to recognize them as such. It is from God that parents receive their children, and it is to God that they in turn ought to lead them. This is why parents have divine authority over their children. Luther speaks of God investing parents with a "golden chain," and keeping the fourth commandment has the special scriptural promise of a long life on earth. However, because human beings live on earth, and for as long as they do, God has given them a reminder that this earth stands under the curse of sin and is not the ultimate reality. Over the destiny of wife and husband lies the dark shadow of a word of divine wrath; it is weighed down by a divine burden, which they must bear. The wife is to give birth to her children in pain, and the husband, in caring for his family, is to reap many thistles and thorns and must work by the sweat of his brow. This burden is meant to lead husband and wife to call upon God and to remind them of their eternal destiny in God's kingdom. The earthly community is but a first beginning of the eternal community, the earthly home an image of the eternal home, the earthly family a reflection of God's fatherhood over all human beings, who are children before him.

God gives you Christ as the foundation of your marriage. "Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Rom. 15). In a word: live with each other in the forgiveness of your sins without which no human community, let alone a marriage, can last. Do not antagonize each other by insisting on being right, do not judge and condemn each other, do not feel

superior over each other, never blame each other, but accept each other as you are, and forgive each other daily and sincerely. You are establishing a pastor's home. Your home is to spread a radiance and strength into many other homes. The life a pastor's wife takes on is a life of special sacrifice. Many things that are related to his office the husband must bear alone. For it is he who exercises the office, and the office is, for the sake of God, confidential. All the greater must be his love for his wife; all the more must he allow her to participate in everything in which he can let her participate. Likewise, the pastor's wife will do all the more to ease his bearing of the office, to be a support and helpmate to him. But how can both of them as fallible human beings live in the community of Christ and do their part unless they each constantly pray and receive forgiveness, unless each helps the other to live as a Christian? Here very much depends on the right beginning and daily practice. From the first day of your marriage to the last, let this hold true: accept each other . . . *to the praise of God.*

Thus you have heard God's word for your marriage. Thank him for it. Thank God for having led you thus far and pray that he may establish, strengthen, sanctify, and keep your marriage, so that in your marriage you "might live for the praise of his glory." Amen.

19. From Susanne Dreß

May 15, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

When I drop off the things out there in Tegel every week, I am always glad to hear that you are well, and I almost have the feeling that I've visited you. The physical proximity does make a big difference even though time and again one is gratefully aware of how

little our inner bond is affected by the external separation. Today we celebrated Renate's wedding; the twenty years since the wedding of Ursel and Rüdiger have certainly gone by very quickly. Tine is the same age as I was then, so the bridesmaids were rather young. Michael and Cornelie carried the train, and Andreas and Walter scattered flowers. Eberhard's three siblings all came, and Hans-Walter also was there on leave. . . .

We now have windowpanes and walls again; only the painter must still come. The last air-raid alarm was quite peaceful here, although it began very quickly. By the time I had managed to get the children downstairs, the worst was over. . . .

Affectionate regards from

Your Suse

20. From Paula Bonhoeffer

Berlin-Charlottenburg 9

May 16, 1943

My dear Dietrich,

Many thanks for your third letter, which we received two days before the wedding. By now you have hopefully received the letter from Renate and the letters from Maria and her grandmother. She sent a gorgeous bouquet of lilies of the valley from her garden, which stood on the table in front of the bride and groom. Today the guests are planning to leave, unfortunately including Hans Walter, who was granted furlough only from Thursday to Sunday. But he looked quite well and has enjoyed the days tremendously. The evening before the wedding I had all the guests over for a simple supper at our house, and at eight o'clock we then went over to the Schleichers. There the girls first danced the bridesmaids' circle dance around the

couple. Next, Bärbel recited my mother's beautiful poem and gave Renate the garland of roses as a final farewell gift from her days as a maiden. Then Thomas and little Cornelia danced the "Ring-a-Ring o' Roses, I'm Dancing with My Wife" in a most charming way. Little Christine, dressed as a maiden from Mark Brandenburg, brought salt and bread. After a break, Mrs. Lassar sang a selection from the Cornelius wedding songs and some songs from *Frauenliebe und Leben*, and then Thomas and his parents played the Mozart trio. It is indeed pure joy to hear the boy play, how he holds back when the other instruments have their turn, and how he comes to the fore and develops the theme when it is the piano's turn. At age eleven this is probably something very rare.

Thus the evening concluded, and even though you were not physically present, you were among us. And it was the same during the wedding. The minister spoke very well and very seriously, perhaps a little too seriously for such a young woman. He emphasized the responsibility of a marriage perhaps more than its happiness. However, I told myself that it is perhaps not really his task to talk about that aspect; each person bears that within himself. Little Renate looked very attractive, wearing the long, slender white wedding dress with the train, which I and all my daughters had worn before her, and the simply arranged veil with the round, delicate myrtle garland. Michael and little Cornelia carried the train, and Andreas and Walter scattered flowers. The couple, as you can imagine, had selected many beautiful verses, and we sang much and well.

The table for the wedding dinner was set in the large room upstairs. Ursel had arranged everything in a truly delightful way. What she accomplished was amazing. Rüdiger then gave a toast to the couple and welcomed the new family. Then Papa toasted the generation of the grandchildren—and finally Eberhard's brother Hans

also said a few kind words to the couple. He had come from Prague with his wife and child. Christoph has two weeks of vacation.

Soon after dinner, the couple had to leave. Afterward the young people, under the leadership of Uncle Jörg, danced for a while. Then we moved on to the lovely old folk songs, closing with the beautiful “Hört, Ihr Herrn, und laßt Euch sagen.”—And in the morning, let me add, we sang “Die güldne Sonne” and “Nun danket alle Gott” in front of little Renate’s room. So, now you have been able to relive the day during which your thoughts must certainly have constantly sought and also found us. I thought you would enjoy this even though I have been a little detailed.

In the meantime, you have also received additional packages from us. I never quite know whether I am sending the right things. Please tell us always what you would like in your letters, which are unfortunately so very rare. We intend to inquire whether you might be allowed to write more often. Papa is, after all, seventy-five years old and is sometimes worried about your health. And since your letters are being read, this cannot harm the investigation. Now may the good Lord continue to keep you and never forsake you! This being my comfort,
Your Mother

Papa will write in a few days; he is very busy.

21. From Karl Bonhoeffer

Berlin-Charlottenburg 9

May 25, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

It has definitely been very reassuring for us to be able to speak with

you the other day, to see with our own eyes that you are physically quite well and that you are bearing the awful trial that has been imposed upon you with internal composure and the confidence that comes from a clear conscience. Since then, we had the pleasure of a visit from your fiancée and her mother on Sunday. Mama will write to you in more detail. Of course, I had already met your fiancée before. She is a likable, clever girl whom we again enjoyed very much. The mother, by the look of her eyes and her facial expression, often reminds me of her grandfather, our old Silesian provincial governor, who was such an extraordinarily likable figure. She has apparently also inherited from him the gift of storytelling. Mother has a lot of work at the moment since Lotte had to go off to see her mother, who had a femoral neck fracture. She is now in the hospital, as her physician has written to me, so I hope that Lotte is now able to come back. All of us in the immediate family are healthy. Both of Emmi's little ones are in Friedrichsbrunn. Suse is also thinking about sending her children there. But we just had three air-raid-free nights, which helps us forget our worries. I am afraid, however, that the few seemingly useless air-raid warnings were due to surveillance flights, and that something very unpleasant is still coming.

I hope that we will be able to see each other again soon, either in prison or here with us after your release, which, after seven weeks now, should certainly also be within the realm of possibility. Mama is going to write as well.

Affectionately,

Your Father

22. From Paula Bonhoeffer

Berlin-Charlottenburg 9

May 25, 1943

My dear Boy,

I would like to tell you today about Maria's visit. She traveled on Saturday night and came to visit us with her mother at eleven o'clock, bringing us gorgeous red roses from their garden. She has lost still more weight but looks healthy and well despite her training, which is truly rather tough (although she won't admit it).

We then sat in the garden with a glass of Tokay. After an hour we were joined by Karl Friedrich and Rüdiger and Ursel. Then we went inside to look at the pictures, especially the portraits, but Maria also wanted to see pictures of the whole family and very quickly memorized the names of our eighteen grandchildren. Still before lunch, I went upstairs with her to your room. Of course, I had tidied it up a little, although not too much so that she will know what to expect later on. But she found it fabulously neat. Mothers are apparently more critical than fiancées, and that's how it should be. Maria took her time to look at all the small items and mementos from your travels and found it so cozy up in your room that she didn't want to come back down for lunch. To mark the occasion I had made a special effort for lunch. I am telling you this, hoping it won't make your mouth water—a green spring-pea soup, veal cutlets (we saved up during the week) with green beans (the last can!), tomatoes, and iced strawberries, which I was just able to get. Isn't that nice!

Then we had coffee in the garden, and at three o'clock they had to leave. Karl-Friedrich took them to the railway station. Maria once again brought some butter and her mother some of the good sausage. We always divide everything between you and Hans. Now, as Papa already wrote, the visit was truly a joy, and we are grateful to you for

bringing such a dear daughter-in-law into our family. Even though she is still very young, her entire attitude already speaks of being very dependable, hardworking, and warmhearted. Her mother, who during this year has experienced so much hardship, is indeed to be admired in how she sees the responsibilities for the household and children, which she now faces alone, and how through this she is coping with the grief for her husband and son.

Maria was, of course, also interested in seeing your books and folders, but the time was too short for that. I think she will come back soon some Sunday. I told her that you are very enamored with Gotthelf's writings. She unfortunately doesn't get around to reading anything at all at the moment. I told her that in her free time it's better for her to catch up on her sleep, and that you would have the pleasure later of reading these texts together with her. We have now begun to read *Berner Geist und Zeitgeist* and found it very interesting indeed; the problems truly provide food for thought. In the next package, we will include *Uli der Knecht*, by Gotthelf, which you had requested. I hope you enjoy it. But I don't have any idea at all what theological or other academic books you would like and forgot to ask. I will now close where Papa began. It was a great, great joy to see you again, and to see you *the way you were!* I can well imagine what you are going through on your own. Whenever I entrust you to God in prayer, I give thanks that you are receiving the strength to cope with it in the way you do. May God continue to help us all in these hard times of war.

Your confidently hopeful Mother

23. From Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer

Leipzig
May 30, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

One week ago today I stopped in Berlin on my way from Hamburg, where I had been on business. I was especially fortunate in that your fiancée and her mother had announced their visit at our parents' home for that day. So I got to know her earlier than I had anticipated. For you it must be very strange that she is now getting acquainted with the family and that you are not present. These are somewhat crazy times for sure. As you can obviously imagine, we all liked her very much. She told us many things about her work in Hanover. She is apparently one of those people who always pick the most difficult and exhausting tasks and who pay no attention at all to themselves. The modest and matter-of-fact way she talked about it impressed me very much. I thoroughly scolded her for saving up her weekly ration of butter for you and for not setting aside the few coffee beans, which she had been given by a patient, for her own night shifts. I trust it was what you would have wanted me to do. Her mother too is apparently an extraordinary woman. I accompanied her on some errands around town during which we talked a bit about both our families. At any rate, now that I have come to know the new family circle you are entering, I can once again congratulate you very much. By the way, as far as I know, no one apart from the family knows anything of this yet.

I wonder just how you might be doing. Have you become somewhat accustomed to the situation? It is, of course, impossible to imagine all that without having experienced it—and once released, one probably forgets very quickly how it was. Were you cold during the last few weeks? The rooms at home were rather cold if one

couldn't move about. Hopefully, this will really be the last letter I have to write to you in prison. Here we have not yet said anything to the children about it. I think they consider me somewhat peculiar since I always ask for homemade cookies and candies when I travel to Berlin.

With many regards from Grete and myself,

Your Karl Friedrich

24. From Paula Bonhoeffer

Berlin-Charlottenburg 9

June 2, 1943

My dear Boy,

I am sure you must have been keenly waiting for a letter from us. I, in turn, had expected your last letter to be returned by Karl-Friedrich so that I could answer it. We always send your letters to him. Now, today, we received mail from him, but he unfortunately did not include your letter. He writes how his thoughts are with you every day, and how he daily hopes for a message that you are back home. He will come here soon himself, since he has some business in town. He writes that all is well with them. Grete was running around all day looking for groceries, sewing and mending for the children, feeding them, and giving them a thrashing as needed; in short, all is in order! In the meantime, you will have received letters from Maria and your mother-in-law, which you must have enjoyed. Today she sent you another small parcel. You ask whether we talked about the wedding. Now that the engagement has become more widely known, I believe your mother-in-law no longer has any reservations, even though she had, of course, meant to keep it all a secret because of her deep mourning. So let us leave it up to God to decide when he wants to

bring you together. You do have the blessing of us all. It is quite good that Maria has work to do that keeps her busy all day and makes the time pass better—which brings us again to the question about the sense of time. Papa is still trying to remember what and where he has read something on this subject. I always think a vivid experience seems more recent than one that is less impressive. I thus still see the moment of your “arrest,” which was utterly improbable to me, as if it had happened yesterday. However, the days since then, which I have lived with you only in my thoughts, all blur together, and I hardly know how much time has passed. I always end up thinking that I don’t understand any of this, and that everything is bound to clear up, and your statements will be found credible.

Today three small, used “Calderon” volumes that you ordered arrived from the bookshop. I am putting them in the package. I’ve also put in Reuter’s *Ut mine Stromtid*, which I love so much. It takes a little patience initially but then becomes quite understandable, and one really gets something out of it. I also include a book with “chess problems,” so you can perfect your skills. . . .

Perhaps you know from the newspaper that Aunt Friedchen, Uncle Paul’s ninety-three-year-old mother, has died. She was buried here in Westend. Döring preached on the text: “A little while you will mourn, but your mourning will turn into joy.” Her end was not difficult. At four o’clock, the children were called. She spoke with all of them before telling them at the end: “Do love one another.” Then with a quiet, “I can’t any longer,” she passed away. She was a human being full of kindness and love, and I have never heard her utter a harsh or unfriendly judgment of others. God must certainly have loved her too. . . .

You will be happy to know that Hanna Cauer is now passing on one of her two pianos to Renate. Your grand piano that you loaned out has survived the air raid intact even though the houses

on both sides caught fire. If only I could hear you play again soon! Meanwhile, let's not get nervous but try to keep up our spirits. Perhaps we will soon see each other again after one of your interrogations. May God protect you, my boy! Papa, your brothers and sisters, and the young couple send lots of love.
Your old Mother

25. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

Ascension Day, June 4, 1943

My dear Parents,

I had already finished a long letter to you when, just now, the mail brought the letters from Maria and my mother-in-law and with them an indescribable joy into my cell. Thus I have to start the letter all over again and especially ask you to write and thank both of them right away. You can imagine how I feel not being able to do so myself. Maria writes with such happiness about the day with you, and yet how difficult it must have been for her despite all the love you showed her. How she copes with everything is a miracle, and for me a source of happiness and an example beyond compare. The sense of being completely unable to stand by her would often be almost unbearable if I did not know that, in thinking of her, I can really be at peace. I do hope, far more for her sake than mine, that these hard times won't last too terribly long. However, I am certain that these months will someday prove infinitely important for our marriage, and for this I am grateful. I can hardly express how much I was touched by the letter from my mother-in-law. Since the very day I was arrested, I have been tormented by the thought of having inflicted on her even more trouble in addition to all the sorrow of the past year. And now she has taken these very troubles that have

befallen us as the occasion to shorten the waiting period, and with that made me happy. I find myself truly humbled and grateful in the face of such great trust, inner goodness, and magnanimity, and I will forever hold this to her credit. This is basically the spirit that I have always sensed in the homes of this family and that so touched me long before I had any premonition about my future happiness. And by now I have also learned from your and Karl Friedrich's letters that you do like Maria; of course, it couldn't be otherwise. Indeed, she will be a very good daughter-in-law for you and will certainly soon feel as much at home in our family as I have already felt a part of her large family for several years. I am very happy that Karl Friedrich accompanied my mother-in-law when she went downtown, and that the two of them thus had the chance to become a little acquainted with each other. It's also very nice of him that, in my stead, he appealed to Maria not to save her rations for me since, given her demanding work, she really needs them herself.

I thank you very much for your letters. As far as *I* am concerned, they are always too short, but I do understand, of course! It is as if the door of the prison cell opened for a moment, and I experienced with you a slice of life on the outside. The longing for joy in this somber building is great. One never hears any laughter. Given what they witness, even the guards seem unable to laugh. One therefore makes the fullest use of all internal or external sources of joy.

Today is Ascension Day, that is, a great day of joy for all those who are able to believe that Christ rules the world and our lives. My thoughts travel to all of you, to the church and the worship services from which I have been separated for so long now, but also to the many unknown people who move through this building, bearing their fate in silence. Again and again, these and other thoughts truly keep me from taking my own minor privations too seriously. Doing so would be very unjust and ungrateful.

I have just written some more on the “sense of time,” and I enjoy it greatly. One writes more fluently from direct experience and feels liberated. Many thanks, Papa, for Kant’s *Anthropologie*, which I have now read. I was not familiar with it. I found many very interesting things in it, but it remains a rococo-like rationalistic psychology that simply ignores many essential phenomena. Can you send me something good on the forms and functions of memory? I am very interested in it in this connection. Kant’s interpretations of “smoking” as self-entertainment are quite delightful.

I am very happy to know that you are now reading Gotthelf; I’m sure you would enjoy his *Wanderungen* just as much—I think Susi has it. With regard to academic books, I very much enjoyed Uhlhorn’s large *Geschichte der christlichen Liebestätigkeit*, and Holl’s *Kirchengeschichte* reminded me of his seminars.

Actually I am reading some Stifter nearly every day. The sheltered and concealed life of his characters—he is so pleasantly old fashioned in exclusively portraying sympathetic characters—has something very soothing in this atmosphere and focuses one’s thoughts on the essential purposes in life. Here in the cell one is both outwardly and inwardly led back to the most basic things in life; thus, for example, Rilke was no help at all. But maybe one’s intellect also suffers somewhat from the constriction under which one lives?

Just this moment—it’s Friday by now—I received your *wonderful* spring package with the first produce from the garden. For this package, as for the previous one, I again greatly thank you and everyone who had a hand in it. How much longer will you still be burdened with this trouble and care for me—who can know?

When it’s convenient, I would like to get Hoskyn’s *Riddle of the New Testament* (stands on the shelf above my bed), also some cotton wool since it is sometimes rather noisy at night.

I hope to receive another letter from you any day now. Please do always write everything you know about Maria. How nice that Karl Friedrich and the Schleichers were there too when she visited the other day. The Schleichers, of course, also know her older sister Bismarck, and you might remember her brother Max, whom I confirmed in Stettin and who died on the front. Please always convey my warmest regards to her grandmother.

Hardly an hour passes in which my thoughts do not wander from the books to all of you, and a reunion after my release will be unimaginably wonderful. Until then, let us remain patient and confidently hopeful. I am very sorry that you now can't travel at all and relax a little. Are you feeling reasonably well? I am feeling fine, continue to be healthy, eat enough, get tolerable sleep, and time still passes very quickly. Please give my regards to my brothers and sisters, the children, and friends. With deep gratitude and affection,

Your Dietrich

26. From Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

Berlin-Charlottenburg 9

June 8, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

We had actually hoped to have a letter from you yesterday or the day before. Since none has arrived today, I decided to write to you without waiting any longer. We hope that the delay is not caused by any health problems on your part. We cannot complain about our own health. Our life essentially goes on in thoughts of you and Hans. . . .

On Sunday we attended the installation service for Walter Dreß. It was a beautiful and dignified celebration. Afterward we had breakfast

there with a small circle of their relatives and friends. Among them was the uncle who is the presiding judge at the Supreme Court, whom I had not seen since I worked for the Lubbe trial. Suse had once again arranged everything very nicely despite the difficulty of the times.

With regard to myself, there is not much to report. I am happy to have plenty to do. For academic work, I have less time than I would like. In the evenings I sometimes read Gotthelf's *Berner Geist* to Mama. Recently, I received a request to allow myself to be recorded on film with a soundtrack, for the film archive of notable personalities ["Filmarchiv der Persönlichkeiten"], which has recently been set up at the Ministry of Propaganda. The purpose would be to preserve "a portrait of myself for future times." I believe it is sufficient for my picture to be preserved within the family.

Affectionately,

Father

Dear Dietrich,

I would just like to add a greeting, so that you may get it by Pentecost. I assume that in your situation the holidays are emotionally especially difficult. I will write more as soon as your letter gets here. We are thinking of you so much, and in my mind I write to you daily. However, one must, of course, not overtax the censors. May you have a blessed Pentecost.

Affectionately,

Your Mother

27. From Paula Bonhoeffer

Berlin-Charlottenburg 9

June 10, 1943

My dear Boy,

My brief note added to Papa's letter should not be the only Pentecost greeting from me. I firmly trust that, even in your solitude, you will be able to celebrate a beautiful Pentecost, for you are, of course, not alone. You do know that all of us are gathered around you in our thoughts. Together let us remember the old Pentecost hymn that says: "Descend on us in fullness, until comfort may return, and all harm be overcome." In the garden a peony is actually about to bloom for Pentecost, the first time ever! . . .

Your letter of the fourth has just arrived. We had been awaiting it eagerly. It is always a joy for us to see how your inner calling as a pastor and theologian is being confirmed for you, even in these hard times. I will see to it that Maria gets your letter before the holiday. . . .

Tomorrow another package will be on its way to you, and we pack all our love into it. Everyone is thinking about what to contribute, even the little ones. That accounts for the few sweets today. They all ask so often about you, about when you will finally return home. We are so grateful that you are healthy. After Pentecost we will try again and see whether we might visit you again at the military court like last time. Maybe it's possible. We certainly don't talk about anything bad with one another, but it apparently takes too much time for Dr. Röder. At any rate, I hope we will get the permission.

I wanted to send you *Ut mine Stromtid*, by Reuter, but couldn't find it, and am now sending you *Festungstid* instead. I hope that, as you read, you get used to the dialect, and then, I think, you will get much pleasure out of Reuter. I am also sending *Häuser über dem Rhein*, a

novel that we very much enjoyed, as you know. I trust it will interest you too. I am not sure whether Papa will find something suitable on “memory” by tomorrow; if not, by next time.

The current weather must actually suit you quite well since we have such moderate temperatures. However, when it’s overcast like the last few days, I often wonder whether it is not too dark for you to read and write. . . .

I still want to tell you about Walter’s installation service. He was installed by Messow, Text: “You did not choose me but I chose you.” Messow spoke very simply and beautifully, and I liked it very much. Walter then also spoke well and briefly on the verse, “Everything belongs to you, but you belong to Christ.” One had the impression that the congregation likes him. Their apartment was decorated with many beautiful flowers. Karl Friedrich plans to visit us after Pentecost. It’s only becoming apparent now, really, how much he is attached to you, and he truly enjoyed Maria. With the limited train service, I’m rather doubtful whether Maria’s visit will work out. If not, then I’m sure sometime soon, and then the other family members should come and meet her as well. I just thought everything at once would be too much for her.

May God continue to keep you and give you the strength necessary to make people believe you. Then everything must turn out well. With loving hugs,
Your Mother

28. From Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer

June 12, 1943

Dear Dietrich,
Your letter from Ascension Day just arrived, and since it is Saturday

afternoon, I have time to respond right away. I have not been in Berlin in the meantime and have also had no news from there. This must mean you are still “inside.” For when you get out, we will, of course, get a call or a telegram right away.

But what is worth telling you? Perhaps that, in spite of everything, we did make summer plans and that I’ve once again registered Grete and the children for three weeks at Tempelburg. I hope that this year the summer will be a little warmer than last year so that the boys will finally learn to swim. Up to now it doesn’t look like it. I will not be able to come along this year. That’s unfortunate, since last year I really liked it very much down there. Grete doesn’t have much enthusiasm for this undertaking, but I’m sure getting some rest will be good for her. Maybe I will hike for a few days if accommodations can still be arranged and it won’t burn too many calories. For one cannot afford to work up a big appetite by just hiking.

Recently we had Benedikt’s boy staying with us for a week. He had had an appendectomy and needed to recuperate before joining the army. He volunteered to enlist, as you probably heard. At sixteen he is still really a baby, a featherweight. For our two older boys, it was marvelous, of course. His head was full of nonsense, and he slept with the boys in the same room. They got up one night to stink up the house with hydrogen sulfide, a plan that, alas, didn’t succeed. Other assaults on our pedagogical efforts also came to naught. Despite their having installed electrical alarms, we uncovered their schemes. This fits in well with Karl’s reading, which consists mainly of Karl May. At any rate, we were quite happy when, without major damage, the visit came to a natural end. But for our two boys that week will most likely forever remain a glorious memory. . . . Martin recently came home from school all beaming and said he had to tell us something truly wonderful. He made us really curious, for bringing home an

excellent mark was unlikely. What did it turn out to be? “I now have a friend. . . .”

I recently came across the little book *Weltwirkung der Reformation* (1942), by Gerhard Ritter. I read it with great interest and also read sections to Grete in the evening. Next time I’m in Berlin, I will try to find out if you’re familiar with it and then include it in the package, and perhaps also a freshly published collection of lectures on modern physics, or rather the philosophy of nature; but I first have to read it a little more carefully myself in order to decide whether you would get something from it. Recently, Christoph closed a letter to Hans with the phrase: “Hoping for a reunion soon.” This being our sentiment as well, we both send our warmest greetings and best wishes.

Your Karl Friedrich

29. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

Pentecost 1943, June 14

My dear Parents,

Now, after all, still separated, we celebrate Pentecost, the church festival that is in a special way a celebration of community. When the church bells rang this morning, I felt a great longing to be in a worship service. But then I did what John did on Patmos and celebrated such a good worship service on my own that I didn’t feel the loneliness at all, for each and every one of you was a part of it, as well as the congregations in which I have celebrated Pentecost in the past. Every few hours, since last evening, I recite and enjoy Paul Gerhardt’s Pentecost hymn with the beautiful stanzas, “Du bist ein Geist der Freude . . .” and “Gib Freudigkeit und Stärke . . .” as well as the Scripture verses: “He who does not stand firm in adversity, is not strong” (Prov. 24), and “God did not give us a spirit of cowardice,

but rather a spirit of power and of love and of prudence” (2 Tim. 1). I have also thought a lot again about the peculiar story of the “miracle of tongues.” That the Babylonian confusion of languages, through which people are no longer able to understand one another because each speaks his own language, is to end and be overcome by the language of God, which each human being understands and through which alone people are also able to understand one another again, and that the church is where this is to take place—all these are indeed very deep and important thoughts. Leibniz wrestled all his life with the idea of a universal script that was to represent all concepts, not by words but with clear and obvious signs—an expression of his desire to heal the fractured world of his day—a philosophical reflection of the Pentecost story.

It is now again completely quiet in the building, only the steps of the prisoners pacing their cells are audible, and how many desperate and un-Pentecostal thoughts might they carry around with them. Were I the prison chaplain, I would on such days go from cell to cell from early in the morning until late in the evening; then much would happen.

Thank you very much again for the letters from you, Karl Friedrich, and Ursel. All of you are waiting as much as I do. I must confess that, in some region of my subconscious, I had hoped that by Pentecost I would be free again, though consciously I always forbid myself to set specific dates. Tomorrow it will be ten weeks—this is not what we had naively imagined “temporary” arrest would be. But in any case, it is a mistake to be as ignorant of judicial matters as I am. I am only now becoming aware how different the atmosphere is in which a jurist must live compared to that of a theologian. But that too is instructive, for each is appropriate, I presume, in its respective place. We just don’t have any other choice now but to wait with as much patience as possible and not become bitter, trusting that everyone is

doing what he can to bring about a speedy resolution. Fritz Reuter puts it beautifully: “No life flows so smoothly and gently that it would not at some time hit a dam and move in circles, or that people would not throw some stones in the clear water; well, mishaps happen to everyone—one just has to ensure that one’s water remains clear, that it can mirror the reflection of heaven and earth”—that basically says it all.

I was really thrilled when, the day before yesterday, both of you handed in the Pentecost package downstairs. It is odd how just knowing that you were physically nearby brought everything, home and your whole life, very close to me again, when sometimes they recede into an unreal distance. For this I thank you very much and also for the package, which again was much appreciated; I was especially excited about the yellow pudding that keeps so well.

I received another lovely letter from Maria. The poor thing always must write now without receiving a direct reply from me. This must be hard, but I am happy about every word from her, and every little detail I find interesting because it makes it easier to share in her life. I thank her very much for it. In my bold dreams I sometimes already imagine what our future home will look like.

The study on the sense of time is practically done. It now has to sit for a while; we’ll see how it will survive that.

It is Whit Monday. I was just sitting down to a lunch of turnips and potatoes when, completely unexpectedly, your Pentecost package was handed in by Renate. There are really no words to describe how happy such things make me. Despite the deep certainty about our connection in spirit, the spirit [Geist] nevertheless always seems to have an unquenchable desire to make visible this connection of love and thinking about one another, and then the most material things become bearers of spiritual realities. I believe this is analogous to the desire in all religions to have the spirit become visible in the

sacrament. Please give my special thanks to Renate for this special treat. I wish her much daily joy in her marriage and in her calling. How wonderful that they will get a grand piano; being able to make music with them again will be one of the most special moments after I am released. I am very grateful for any smoking supplies. Now let us hope that everything will soon come to a conclusion. Please give my love to Maria and my brothers and sisters. Always thinking of you with gratitude and love,
Your Dietrich

I would still like some cotton wool; the “Oropax” gives me such a dull feeling in the head.

30. From Paula Bonhoeffer

June 15, 1943

Dear Dietrich,
Now Pentecost has come and gone. How much we all missed you. On Pentecost Sunday, we had a very quiet afternoon in the garden. I wrote to Maria, her mother, and her grandmother, and in the evening Papa then read to me again from the *Berner Geist und Zeitgeist*. Both of us really enjoy it. . . . Hopefully, you too derived a little joy from the package that Renate and her husband brought you for Pentecost. Of course, it's not the contents that are the main thing but the knowledge that others are thinking of you; and you can believe me when I say you are *very* close to our hearts, not just those of your father and mother and your fiancée, but of all your brothers and sisters and their families. None of us can comprehend that you find yourself in this situation, being as law abiding as you are. We therefore don't even know where to begin to unravel this

mystery. We just constantly return to the comforting conviction that everything must be resolved soon, and you will soon be back home again.

Today we will again ask for a permit to visit. We want to see you again very much and to find out how you are coping with the long imprisonment, especially because of your asthma. Hopefully, we will get the permission. We are old people, after all, and the pressure on Papa on top of his exhausting work is a bit much. How could we ever have imagined a retirement like this after a full life's work in profession and family. . . .

In the garden everything is thriving, but it also is a lot of work. I will now bring you strawberries from the *garden!*

I am happy to have found your suit and the light jacket, by the way, and will bring you the jacket. But where is your fourth clothing ration card? Didn't you mention to me just before Tegel that you were missing it? Where could I look for it? How about sending you the light gray trousers? Today I mended your brown sports trousers. You had worn them rather thin there by sitting so much! Wouldn't you perhaps also like some light loafers?

This time I'm bringing you Grandfather Hase's *Ideale and Irrtümer*. I have asked the grandmother for the book on the senior Kleist-Retzow.

And now may God keep you. With affectionate greetings from all of us, and always with you in my thoughts,

Your Mother

We have just learned that Maria has been transferred to be a nurse here at the Augusta hospital. She is already here and will join us for a meal. Greetings,

Father

31. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

June 24, 1943

My dear Parents,

I am starting the letter today even though I hope to see you in person tomorrow. In the week after Pentecost, I received many letters, which I enjoyed very much. First yours, which continue to be so very reassuring for me, even though I can't get over the fact that you have had to suffer with me in my misfortune for such a long time. Then there was Maria's letter, which, with its fairy-tale-like dreams for the future, really cheered me up. But Hans-Walter also gave up some of his brief moments of being off duty to write me a letter, for which I especially thank him; good that he is now so close to Berlin. Christoph in his letter shared some nice tales from Sakrow. If only the children were soon relieved of this stress. In the last package little Michael even sent his sweets to his imprisoned godfather. Although he must never do this again, I do think this sacrifice—for that's what it really is for such a little lad—will stay in his memory, and that it gave him as much joy as it gave me. When I'm free again, I want to fulfill some special wish of his; let him start thinking about it. Karl Friedrich also wrote another nice letter. I've probably already sent my thanks for Ursel's letter. From the packages I continually recognize how the whole family contributes, siblings and children, as well as Maria's family. All ought to know how much I thank them for it; it is truly helpful. In such hard-pressed times, it is such a treasure to have such a large, close-knit family in which everyone trusts and supports one another. When pastors previously were arrested, I sometimes thought it would be easiest to endure for those who are single. At the time I did not know how much the warmth that radiates from the love of a woman and a family means in the cold air of imprisonment, and how in such times of separation the feeling of unconditionally belonging

together even grows. I was happy to hear about Walter's installation; I forgot to congratulate him recently on the occasion and also on his birthday. I am also happy for Susi, who had already become so attached to the congregation and done so much for it.

Mama's and Grandmother's letters just arrived, and I thank you very much for them. The reports about strawberries and raspberries, about school holidays and vacation plans, actually make me feel for the first time that summer has really arrived. In here I'm hardly aware of the seasons. I am happy about the mild temperatures. Some time ago a tit had her nest with ten young ones in a small shed here in the courtyard. I enjoyed it every day until, one day, a heartless fellow destroyed everything; some tits lay dead on the ground—incomprehensible. During my walks in the courtyard, I also enjoy a small ant hill and the bees in the linden tree. Watching them, I'm sometimes reminded of the story by Peter Bamm, who is on a beautiful island where he also encounters all kinds of pleasant and not so pleasant people; responding to a nightmare that a bomb might destroy everything, his first thought is: how sad for the butterflies! It is presumably the awareness of nature's undisturbed, quiet, and free life that gives prisoners a very special—probably somewhat sentimental—relationship with animals and plants. Only my relationship with the flies in my cell still remains completely unsentimental. Prisoners are probably inclined in general to react to the lack of warmth and comfort they experience in their environment with an excessive heightening of their emotional side and may easily overreact in all personal and emotional matters. In such cases it is always good to restore one's levelheadedness and sense of humor by taking a cold shower in order not to lose one's balance. I believe that the Christian faith, properly understood, is especially effective in rendering this service. Papa, you know all this very well from your

long experience with prisoners. I myself still don't know what the so-called prison psychosis is; I can just vaguely imagine what leads to it.

I will shortly return my smoking ration card to you. In here, I hardly get any cigarettes anymore, only very bad smoking tobacco! Maria's and Mother's cigarettes were magnificent. I have read Grandfather's *Ideale and Irrtümer* with great pleasure; I also enjoyed Stifter's *Nachsommer* very much. You must read *Waldsteig*, by Stifter, and *Uli*, by Gotthelf, sometime; they are really worthwhile.

I am just returning to my cell and have seen Maria—an indescribable surprise and joy! I had been told just one minute in advance. It is still like a dream—really an almost incomprehensible situation—how we will remember this someday! Everything one is able to utter in such a moment is, of course, so trivial, but that's not the most important thing. It was so brave of her to come. I had not dared at all to suggest she should, since for her it is so much more difficult than it is for me. I know my situation, but for her everything is incomprehensible, puzzling, terrible. What will it be like, when this evil nightmare will someday be over. And now, to make the joy complete and as an echo from this morning, Maria's and Mother's letters have also just arrived. How fortunate I still really am! Please let them know that this is what I tell myself every day.

We will likely be allowed to see each other next week. I am looking forward to it. Maria enjoys her visits with you, and she talked so happily about the Schleichers. For this I am very grateful. And now please give most affectionate regards to all my brothers and sisters, the children, and the friends. Thinking of you always with great affection,

Your grateful Dietrich

32. From Paula Bonhoeffer

June 27, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

We were very happy that you were able to see and talk to Maria, even though I was a little worried right away that now it would probably not work out for us. However, it is perhaps a good thing for us to get a little bit used to this, and we were told by Captain Maetz that it will be possible at the beginning of next week. . . . Maria was overjoyed by the reunion and had to tell us everything, of course. I assume she also told you about us, as she said.

Right now, we are seriously considering whether we actually shouldn't have the most beautiful of our pictures taken out of their frames and moved to a less dangerous area. A man from the museum would help us. Our air-raid shelter is so full already. And now even the single window is to be bricked up. Papa is already over seventy, so I think I shall stay with him upstairs, come what may or must. Once the window is closed up, it will, of course, also be impossible to take the stuff out. I'm also wondering what to do with your many books in the attic. I would like to send the most important books away as well but am not able to decide this on my own. Couldn't you write a list sometime indicating approximately where to find them? But maybe your absence really won't last much longer now. We come to the end of every week disappointed, thinking once again, "not yet," and who knows how many more weeks we have to live at our age—for war years count double, as they say. I have the feeling it's "fourfold."

It's nice that you completed your study on the sense of time. I'm looking forward to reading it someday. . . .

In the garden everything is growing now, though the sparrows are eating the peas again. Beans, tomatoes, and potatoes are thriving,

and Papa hopes for a good grape harvest. And then this year, we also planted corn and tobacco! . . . On the ninth the Schleichers and Karl-Friedrich's family will travel to Tempelburg. Then the young couple will live next door in the Schleichers' home. If only you would be back by then, and you could make some music together! On July 1, Emmi and the children will go to Friedrichsbrunn. Then it will be a little quieter around here for a change. . . . Whatever else is happening in the world, you will probably learn from the paper. For I take it that you are reading the "Daz" as well. Papa sends his affectionate greetings, and both of us are very much looking forward to seeing you again. Hopefully, we will get word in good time so that we can be contacted. May God continue to keep you, my dear boy.

With much affection,
Your Mother

33. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

Sunday, July 3, 1943

My dear Parents,

When the bells at the prison church begin to ring at six o'clock on Saturday evening, it is the best moment for me to write home. What a strange power church bells have over us and how haunting they can be. So many of life's moments are connected with them. All discontent, ingratitude, and selfishness melt away. All at once you are surrounded by good memories, as if by benevolent spirits. I'm always first reminded of quiet summer evenings in Friedrichsbrunn, then of all the various congregations in which I have served, then of the many beautiful celebrations at home, weddings, baptisms, confirmations—tomorrow my godchild will be confirmed!—it isn't

possible to list everything that comes back to life in this way. But only thoughts that are very peaceful, full of gratitude and confident hope. If only one could be of more help to other people!

The past week has been filled with much quiet work and good books, and also with letters from you and Maria, and today with your wonderful package. I am a little concerned that your windows in the air-raid shelter are to be bricked up. I feel you shouldn't under any circumstances consent to this. It would block the only exit, which is certainly not intended. I have spoken about it with the captain here, and he himself successfully refused. It's just the rigid implementation of a regulation that is not applicable to your house at all. Rüdiger ought to help you a little with this. I can understand, of course, that you now plan to stay upstairs during alarms, but I find it disconcerting. So it must be sorted out. It's certainly possible to cover the window with a thick layer of sandbags.

To part with the beautiful pictures would be sad. But perhaps it's the right thing to do, ferocious as the attacks seem to be right now. I do hope to be able to take care of my books myself to save you the trouble. Perhaps the large folders with Rembrandt reproductions should be stowed away in a safe place.

Maria has written to me about interior-decorating questions, which made me incredibly happy. The sketches of the furniture in her room I find very darling. I am happy for all of them that she is now able to be at home for a while. . . . Please ask her whether she might not want to try the lute instead of the violin, if she really feels there is no prospect for the violin. In that case, however, she would have to study some harmonics at the same time. It would really be nice if this were possible. . . . Please also thank her for her letter and the pictures. I would very much like an enlargement of the picture of her in Ruth-Alice Bismarck's wedding procession; it is so lovely; the dress too I find especially beautiful. She baked such a gorgeous cake

for me, by the way, that it was already a feast for the eyes and later even more a feast for the stomach; my only regret was that I could not offer you some of it, Mama!

Just to keep you up to date, not because I think it's really worth mentioning, I should tell you about my lumbago. Although it isn't severe, I've already had it for three weeks, which is somewhat annoying. The stone floor is probably to blame. All conceivable remedies such as electric light baths [Lichtbäder] and footbaths have been tried but with no success at all.

A quarter of a year has now passed in custody. From my student days I recall Schlatter telling us in his ethics lectures that one of the civic duties of a Christian was to endure a pretrial detention with calmness. At the time these were empty words for me. Over the past weeks I have sometimes thought of them. And now, with the same calmness and patience as we have thus far, let us continue to endure the remaining time imposed on us. In my dreams I am, more than ever, already back with you in freedom.

The fire lilies have been gorgeous. The blossoms open slowly in the morning and only last for the day. The next morning new ones open. The last ones will probably be gone the day after tomorrow.

Just now I am returning from my visit with you. It was once again so wonderful; I am deeply grateful for the opportunity. I keep thinking particularly of Renate. You both have already had enough experience of this with my sisters that you can make things easier for her. I am really very happy. Goethe's mother, by the way, was barely eighteen years old when he was born. Please do give her my special regards. Greetings to my brothers and sisters, and the children too; I think there is not one among them who does not come to my mind at least once every day. I was especially happy to hear that the grandmother is so well again. If only you would be freed from your worries soon and be able to travel. That is my constant wish. Again

with thanks for everything and much love to you,
Your Dietrich

34. From Karl Bonhoeffer

Berlin-Charlottenburg 9
July 11, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

There has not been much family news since we saw and spoke to each other on Monday. Yesterday, Grete and the four children left for Tempelburg after staying with us overnight. Karl-Friedrich is still teaching and was thus unable to come along. . . . Did you find anything useful for your project in Heidegger's *Phänomenologie des Zeitbewußtseins*? For a clinical psychiatrist, it is difficult reading, almost too difficult. For you it will be less difficult since you grew up with the more recent philosophers. I would rather stay with Stifter's *Nachsommer*, which you recommended. The "Einkehr" chapter very much reminds me of the *Mappe des Urgroßvaters*, where Stifter also introduces the visit to an unknown home with a lovely description of the garden. Maria wrote that she has requested permission for a visit. Hopefully, her wish will be granted. We hope to receive a letter from you soon. Mama sends her love. She will write before long.

Much love,
Father

35. From Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer

July 11, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

Hope does not disappoint! Every time I sit down to write you, I am hoping that the letter won't even get to you because you'll already have been released. Since the last time I was in Berlin for business, our parents were able to speak with you, an event that probably nourished you throughout last week. I was very happy that their impression of you was reassuring and obviously good for them.

I am a bachelor for the moment. Grete and the children left for Tempelburg the day before yesterday. They left, all having to stand in the terribly crowded train aisle! In Berlin they spent a day and a night with our parents, for whom it was hopefully not just exhausting but also somewhat enjoyable. After all, it was quite a crowd of lodgers. I am now enjoying the complete tranquility and lack of interruptions. During the day I reworked my lecture and once again brought it "up to date." I also worked in the garden for several hours. Our pear tree had never borne any fruit before, and last year we thought of felling it. This year, however, it is absolutely loaded with fruit, which, from a great height, hangs down on long, thin switches that are bound to break at the very first storm. I have built a high scaffold around the tree by nailing together laundry poles and the like and thus hope to save some of the fruit and the tree. This year's berry harvest isn't bad either. But the stuff isn't sweet since there was no sunshine. At least it's comforting for you to know that you haven't missed too much sunshine lately. . . .

Warmly,

Your Karl Friedrich

36. From Paula Bonhoeffer

Berlin-Charlottenburg 9

July 14, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

Your letter from the fifth didn't arrive until today. Even though mail is not supposed to be routed via Florastraße anymore, it still took this long. At least it was fortunate that, in the meantime, we were able to speak with you and see you healthy and in good spirits.

Please do not worry about the air-aid shelter in the cellar. I have spoken with the sergeant in charge of the case, and he now intends to requisition a gas door for us and also install a gas window, which can be opened and locked. Of course, there is still a lot of mess, for everything must presumably be cleared out beforehand. . . . I also like your idea of a lute for Maria. We do have a good one here; only the strings are missing and would have to be found somewhere. I think Maria will soon visit you again. She is keenly hoping to get a permit. . . .

I rather doubt that we will travel to Uncle Hans's birthday celebration. The trains are supposedly crowded; for Papa it would be quite exhausting, and he doesn't want me to travel by myself. Nor is one at all in the mood for celebrations—I think in the morning we will go to Potsdam to visit Aunt Hannah's grave. With Uncle Rudi still in Sweden and Rüdiger Goltz in Kiensegg, probably no one else will visit, which I would regret. I'll be glad to let him know that you have asked me to send him your greetings from prison.

July 16

The letter didn't get finished. . . . Please let me know what else you still need, and please do inquire whether your letters are really no longer routed via the detour since they are taking so very long. My own letters, it seems, are getting through more quickly.

I am very glad that on Sunday mornings you are at least able to hear the church bells. I am still always especially reminded of the church bells in Gnadenberg, where, at the beginning, I also often felt like a caged bird. All of us have every reason to be thankful for having such beautiful memories to comfort and support us in difficult times—memories that make us aware, perhaps only in contrast, of how good we used to have it; now let us cling to them in hard times also. “Thanks be to God for everything.”

Papa and your brothers and sisters and friends send their love and always surround you in wishing you the very best.

Affectionately,

Your Mother

37. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

Sunday, July 24, 1943

My dear Parents,

Now you delivered the package yourself yesterday, even in this heat. I hope it has not been too much for you. I am deeply grateful to you and for everything you brought. Of course, I especially welcome the summer produce in here. Even the tomatoes are already ripe. Only now am I beginning to feel the warmth; it is not yet bothersome here in my cell, especially since I don't move around much. However, the craving for fresh air does get stronger. I would like to enjoy an evening in the garden again. The daily half-hour walk, although nice, is just not enough. The various cold symptoms, muscle pains, runny nose, and such, will presumably only clear up once I'm breathing fresh air again. I am always delighted with the flowers, which bring some color and life into the gray cell. I do thank you very much for your letters with the family news. I hope that everyone

has had an enjoyable vacation, for all need it. I received another very nice letter from Susi, which gave me much pleasure. She is right; only this period of separation makes one really aware that in normal times one often doesn't put enough effort into getting together. One thinks it unnecessary to specially "nurture" the natural relationships among siblings, and for that reason some things are neglected, which is a pity. I also thank Walter very much for his postcard, and especially Susi for often delivering the packages, which, of course, is always a strain on her. Given all the trouble you have with the packages, you must also know that I'm enjoying every little bit with deep gratitude and a very hearty appetite, and so thus far I have been able to retain my strength. I always arrange it so that a package lasts me just through the week, and thus get a pleasant reminder and refreshment each day. In this way I already feel surrounded by all of you during breakfast, which is all the better since I find especially the morning the most difficult part of the day to cope with inwardly.

I very much enjoyed two nice letters, one from Maria and one from my mother-in-law—dated June 27, by the way. Was it left somewhere? Maria ought to go horseback riding as much as she likes. It makes me happy, and I envy her. However, since she pays no attention to my suggestion that she should give me riding lessons, I assume that she considers me a hopeless case—but could she perhaps be mistaken? If, however, she thinks that horseback riding is not proper for a minister, then I'd just beg to differ! I'm glad that my musical suggestion makes sense to her. It would be wonderful if she could get hold of a viola da gamba. If necessary, it's possible to figure out on one's own how to play the instrument; Renate's husband is a master at that. However, I do hope that we'll be able to learn it together. Surely Maria isn't ending her medical leave prematurely, against the doctor's advice? All other considerations aside, as a future

minister's wife she will need healthy feet and probably won't be able to count on a horse to ride! I'm glad that she has a lot of reading time.

In my own reading I now live entirely in the nineteenth century. During these past months I have read Gotthelf, Stifter, Immermann, Fontane, and Keller with renewed admiration. A period in which such clear and plain German could be written must have been essentially healthy. The most tender things are treated without getting sentimental, the most robust without getting frivolous; convictions are expressed without pathos, and neither the language nor the subject matter is overly simplistic or complicated—in short, I find all this very appealing and very healthy. But it presupposes intensive work on German style and thus much tranquility. By the way, once again I was captivated by the most recent Reuter book. I am astonished and delighted to feel such an inner affinity, which often extends to the choice of language; the very choice of expression often creates a sense of connection with or distance from an author.

I still need to add special thanks for the smoking supplies and to all the kind donors of cigarettes!

How is Renate faring? Please do send her my love and also give her my thanks for her greetings.

Each time I hope that this will be the last letter I write you from prison. After all, my release is becoming more likely every day, and gradually one has also just had enough of being here. I would really wish for all of us to still have a few nice summer days together.

By the way, Papa, did you consent to appear in the "Film of Notable Personalities"? I do think it would be quite nice after all. Besides, it would certainly produce a number of good photographs of you, wouldn't it?

Once again, many thanks for all the things you continually do for me. Please pass on my greetings to Maria, her mother, her grandmother, and also the new brothers- and sisters-in-law, and of

course all my brothers and sisters and their children. In love and gratitude,
Your Dietrich

38. From Karl Bonhoeffer

Berlin-Charlottenburg
July 28, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

I have been intending to write to you for the past several days, but something always interfered. In that regard you are more master of your own time; so even in your position there are still areas where one can speak of freedom. This morning we were informed that Maria will be allowed to visit you the day after next. We are happy for both of you. My letter will not get to you until after you have spoken with her. Thus I don't need to tell you about how we and the extended family are doing. She will tell you the important things. On Sunday the Leipzig clan and the Schleichers will return from Tempelburg; probably again an expansive but amusing overnight stay with us, unless the Leipzig clan already travel on that same evening. Emmi has already returned with her three children, and Suse's time in Friedrichsbrunn also soon draws to a close. Thus spring and summer go by. During these hot days we think of you often in your cell under the roof. We take some small comfort by remembering those hot days in September when we visited you in Barcelona. When you came to see us in the early morning, you asked us whether we had been cold at night. You apologized for having taken the woolen blanket, while we ourselves had in fact been unable to escape from the heat during the night.

Almost four months have now passed with you being out there.

One may hope that the issues are by now sufficiently clarified, and we will soon have you back in our midst. It would be wonderful if we could spend some time together in Friedrichsbrunn. However, in these times of restlessness and bomb threats, one doesn't dare to think of such idyllic settings. And after all, it's quite nice in the garden too; if only Mother didn't have to take care of all the chores, one could be completely content with it. And very often—as patients tell me again and again—people are glad to be back home again since there is still more food available here. Still, nothing can top a walk in the Friedrichsbrunn forest or a beautiful afternoon in the meadow, and I would still like to experience that again sometime. Much love from
Mama and
Your Father

39. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

July 30, 1943

My dear Parents,

During today's meeting at the Reich War Court, I received permission from Dr. Roeder to write to you and to Rüdiger Goltz regarding my defense. I am not certain about Rüdiger's Bavarian address and would therefore ask you to get in touch with him. Considering his leg injury, which as far as I know has worsened again, I am doubtful whether he himself will be able to take on the case. However, I trust he will be able to recommend someone suitable. Dr. Roeder thought the defense attorney would need one day to study the files, one day to interview me, and another for the trial, that is, three days. That is not very much. And I presume you, Papa, know many attorneys as well. From the Lubbe trial, you also know Dr. Sack. However, it is doubtful whether such a

“heavyweight” would be able to give his attention to a case of such minor importance to him; also he is said to be terribly expensive. I simply mention this as a reminder but am really not able to make a judgment. What I have in mind is a calm, experienced, older man who is not partisan with regard to church politics and whom one can trust both professionally and personally. I myself don’t know anyone, but I am sure you will make the right choice. It would be good if you could clarify the matter soon.

I also want to mention that I now have permission to write to you every fourth day; this is very good for me. I think I will alternate between writing to you and to Maria.

Many thanks for everything, and please don’t worry! Love to you and my brothers and sisters,

Yours,

Dietrich

Part 2:

Awaiting the Trial: August 1943–April 1944

Part 2

Awaiting the Trial: August 1943–April 1944

40. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

August 3, 1943

My dear Parents,

I am really glad and thankful that I'm now allowed to write to you more frequently, for I fear that you are worrying, first, about the heat in my attic cell and, second, about the request for an attorney. Your magnificent package has just arrived with tomatoes, apples, compote, thermos bottle, and so on, and with the fantastic cooling-salts that I had never seen before. What effort you've expended on my behalf yet again! Please don't worry. I have often experienced worse heat, in Italy, Africa, Spain, Mexico—and perhaps worst of all in New York in July [19]39; and I know more or less how to manage best; I drink and eat little, sit quietly at my desk, and find myself actually unencumbered in my work. Now and then, I refresh heart and stomach with your fine things. I don't want to request transfer to another floor; I don't consider that decent with regard to the other prisoner who would then have to move into my cell, presumably without tomatoes and such; besides, it probably doesn't matter much objectively whether it's 34° or 30° in the room. But I know that,

unfortunately, Hans always tolerates heat so poorly; I feel very sorry for him. But it's always a remarkable observation that one bears up quite differently under what can't be changed than when one is constantly thinking one could somehow improve one's situation.

Now with regard to my request for an attorney, I very much hope you have not been greatly disturbed in the meantime but await the unfolding of events as serenely as I do. Really you must not think I am now quite depressed or anxious. Naturally it was a disappointment, as presumably for you as well. Yet in a certain sense it is also a liberation to know that the conclusive clarification of the situation we have awaited for so long will now be coming soon. I am waiting daily for more precise information. If Rüdiger Goltz cannot make himself available immediately, that does not matter much. Dr. Roeder said explicitly it's a case that any proper lawyer could handle, and if it's a capable, warmhearted, decent man, who in addition is a calm and distinguished negotiator who will maintain the tone cultivated thus far in the proceedings—and you are the ones who can best assess this—I am completely in agreement. Personally I actually feel that one says best oneself what one has to say, but a lawyer is probably necessary nonetheless for the legal matters, of which I understand nothing.

I sometimes wonder these days whether perhaps you ought to go to Sakrow for the foreseeable future because of possible air raids. Maria suggested Pätzig, but there the connections are so inconvenient, and you won't want to travel before the conclusion of my case, would you? Wouldn't it also be prudent for Renate to move in with her mother-in-law in the country for a while and her husband try to arrange his work correspondingly? It's only an hour's drive. But perhaps all worries are quite unnecessary, as is so often the case. Hopefully!

I have again been reading some good things. *Jürg Jenatsch* brought

back youthful recollections with much joy and interest. As to historical matters, I found the book on the Venetians very instructive and compelling. Would you please send me some Fontane: *Frau J. Treibel; Irrungen, Wirrungen; Stechlin*. This intensive reading in recent months will also do much good for my work. One often learns more for “ethics” in such places than in textbooks. I like *Kein Hüsung*, by Reuter, as much as you do, Mama. But have I now read through all the Reuter volumes? Or do you still have something more special?

By the way, I’ve just remembered, on the question of the lawyer it would be good if the man were to take some time for me and not be too rushed. I think this should be as with a doctor, who also shouldn’t give the impression he has many things to do.

Just now for my noon meal I ate two of those wonderful tomatoes from the garden and thought of the work you put into growing them. But they have really turned out splendidly. Thank you so much! Dear Papa, thank you so much for your letter. In our love of Friedrichsbrunn, none of us can possibly be outdone by another. This year it’s been thirty years since you bought it! I am still very much hoping for a few beautiful days there with you, and perhaps that will also cure my lumbago.

After seeing Maria again, I have already been able to write to her. I was very happy about that. I always feel so terribly sorry for her when she has to go to the Reich War Court. But I thought she looked better.

Are these hot days particularly burdensome for Renate’s condition? I would be very sorry about that. Do send my love to her along with her husband and of course all my siblings and the children. In *Der grüne Heinrich*, I recently read the pretty verse, “And through the powerful waves / Of the seas conspiring against me / Comes to me from your song, / Albeit muffled, each note.”

With much love and good confidence, your grateful
Dietrich

I just read the call to evacuate; couldn't you at least spend the nights in Sakrow for a while? All the others will already have made their own plans by now. It is really quite distasteful in such a time to have to sit here uselessly and wait. Hopefully, we'll see each other soon! D.

41. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

August 7, 1943

My dear Parents,

This letter is coming to you after all instead of to Maria, as I had originally intended. For I don't know whether it's a good idea to send letters to her with my present address on the envelope. Village gossip spreads quickly, and there might be someone there who knows what Tegel, Seidelstraße 39 means; I would like to spare Maria that. Also she is not even home right now, so I wish to be extra careful not to put her in a position I can't manage from here. She already has enough to endure. So I'll wait until I hear from her what she thinks about this. This dependence on waiting in every matter characterizes my present situation, and the closer one hopes to come to the goal, the harder it is to be patient.

Now the heat has broken, and I am again sitting at my desk in my jacket. But I want to thank you again that you brought me such relief during those hot days. The trip to Tegel was surely a terrible ordeal for you each time.

Are you now also very busy preparing for the air raids? Given everything that's appeared in the newspaper in recent days, one cannot help thinking this through all over again in detail. For

instance, I was remembering that at one point we were talking with certain misgivings about the beams in the cellar; weren't there some plans to modify somehow the main beam in the middle? Do you still intend this, and is help available to do it? I imagine that is very difficult right now. I so wish I could help you in this. But do tell me everything; each little detail is interesting.

What plans do my brothers and sisters have for their children? Will you be going to Sakrow, at least at night?

In order to tear myself entirely out of such thoughts if only for short intervals, I have been reading Hauff's fairy tales in recent days with great amusement. They transport a person into a completely different world, where the only fear remaining is that one might awake all too soberly from the realm of fantasy and dreams. I would truly like to read *Lichtenstein* again some time; I have it in a Reclam paperback edition at home; the small print wouldn't bother me.

Actually I hope from each day to the next that your visits to Tegel will not have to be so frequent anymore, so that at last you can finally take the vacation you need so much, with your minds at ease.

The other day I read about the obligatory registering of copper vessels. This includes my Spanish "brassaro"; it should be recorded, however, that this is a work of art from the eighteenth century. It's remarkable how little one cares about such things in times like these.

From among my books I would like to have Vilmar, Schlatter, Calvin stored someplace safe, perhaps also the old pictures in my room, but please do not take too much trouble with this. Books can always be acquired again later, after all, and what is *most important* in these times is that you keep up your strength; in comparison with this everything else is entirely secondary.

Now Sunday is also almost over, and I am approaching the new week with great anticipation. I hope there will be more mail soon from you and Maria.

I believe I have never yet told you that each day when I am unable to read or write anymore, I study a little chess theory; I do enjoy that. If you find something small and good on this, perhaps with exercises, I would be grateful, but don't go to any inconvenience; it works fine this way.

Now please remember me to all my siblings again and please let me know all your plans and decisions soon. Would you please discuss with Maria what she thinks regarding mail, and send her my best greetings.—Thinking fondly of all of you,
Your grateful Dietrich

42. From Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer

August 8, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

I haven't written you for a long time, with hardly any excuse except that lately I haven't found a quiet moment to do so. That is, my time as a bachelor was not pure leisure in reality. These days there are constantly things to do and to take care of in a large household where things have to go on. "Being a father, however, very much so" holds true now even when the children are not at all around. Also there are the many invitations from acquaintances who try to rescue me from being bored at home in the evenings—a state I don't get into easily. Thus despite many attempts at writing, nothing ever came of them. In the meantime, Grete has returned with the children. . . . But I don't want to keep them here. Instead they are all leaving on Monday for Friedrichsbrunn in the Harz Mountains. I believe it is high time to prepare for air raids, and children do not belong in the mess that would result from a severe attack. I had my colleague from Hamburg here to stay for a few days. He arrived with a small satchel. He had

been in the city center during the first three severe attacks, then slept a night outside in the country, and did not return to the city. Thus he was swept along to us. Now he has gone back again to check on his belongings. I just hope that it won't be Berlin's turn as long as you both are "sitting." But one must, of course, reckon even with *that* possibility. Travel conditions are presently very difficult, as you can imagine, so that I am restricting my official traveling as much as possible and will be in Berlin less frequently. Under these conditions, it is not pleasant to be separated from one's family. For one never knows how often it will be possible to see one another. One must simply remember that today in Europe there are very few families that have been able to stay together up to now—and be thankful that it has been possible so far. In any case, how the days ahead might look goes beyond human foresight. . . .

All the best; don't lose your patience. We are all hoping very much to see you soon.

Yours, Karl Friedrich

43. From Paula Bonhoeffer

August 11, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

. . . The news that a lawyer should be notified was of course a shock to us, but since we know that for Christian reasons you are a man of order who wishes to obey all laws, we told ourselves that it could only be some sort of formal error or perhaps lack of information. According to the new *German law*, justice is clearly administered on the basis of a person's *convictions*; so just like you, we won't worry about the outcome of this matter but rather place it, like our entire uncertain life, in this time into God's hand. . . .

Your most important books have now been moved from the attic into the cellar, and yesterday the record player and records as well. The Dürer reproductions are out there. Of course, we missed your directions and help very much. Lotte is in Schweidnitz, where her mother suddenly died. But she returns on Saturday. So I am alone with Else, and even though every child and grandchild is prepared to jump in and help at a moment's notice, this comes to nothing due to their also needing to take care of so many things. . . .

A warm and friendly invitation to the country came from your mother-in-law for us or some of the grandchildren. But until your cases are settled, we don't want to go away. If things become too chaotic, perhaps we will sleep out there.

Papa doesn't want to leave his work despite his seventy-five years. In regard to the film of the "renowned personalities" that the propaganda ministry wanted to make about him, he wishes to make a decision only when his children are no longer in prison, and I understand that. But when the attacks come, do take care of yourself too, as best you can. Make sure you receive something to shield your head, and that you have enough water to wet a towel and make it into a hood over your head, and have them give you your blanket from the cabinet so you can wrap yourself in it wet, and wet your shoes, and so on; these are supposed to be the most important things when you are forced to go through fire. On Sunday we were with Paul von Hase and his wife, and saw such a display of phosphorescent bombs. This is not beauty! I received a very kind letter from Maria. I think you will have a very dear, brave wife, and that gives us great joy. When she is finished with her treatment, she plans to come to Berlin. I strongly dissuaded her and think her mother will not allow it! She wishes to help me, but instead I would just have one more worry. Today I forced a quiet hour out of the day to write a letter to you. In my thoughts, I am actually so constantly with the two of

you that I truly have no real idea whether and when I last wrote. The lines you quoted from *Der grüne Heinrich* gave me great pleasure.

Now may God continue to protect you and mercifully lead us all together again. With Papa, always thinking of you,
Your Mother

44. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

August 17, 1943

My dear Parents,

I am enclosing a power of attorney for Rüdiger in case he is able to take on the case after all; in the meantime, you will presumably have heard from him. Of course, I can understand if he is unwilling to make a special trip to Berlin for a matter like this, particularly at this time and as the father of ten children. But I assume you will also have spoken with him about Dr. Wergin. The hour with you yesterday was again indescribably lovely; thank you so much for coming. I find that you in particular, Papa, could be looking somewhat better. Why do you both not do as I do and go to bed at 8:00 or even 9:00 for a while, and also take a proper afternoon nap? All the work, the meager nourishment, interrupted nights, and on top of it all your worry about me—that is simply too much. This is the main reason the endlessly extended delay in reaching a decision bothers me so much. In more normal times, four weeks are nothing at all; in these uncertain bomb-threatened times, every day is long. But since one may assume that everyone wants the quickest possible settlement, I quietly hope that we arrive at the goal even more quickly. Above all, please worry as little as possible about me. I am holding on well and am entirely at peace within. And how good it is that from earlier

experiences we know of one another that alarms truly do not unsettle us. I am very glad that Dr. Roeder's courts are remaining in Berlin.

I imagine that for men in responsible positions it would be very unsatisfactory to have to leave Berlin now. Besides, you—like me too—surely have better things to do than constantly brooding over possible alarms. To become detached from the events and commotion of the day—one learns this here in the cell practically without trying.

I forgot to mention the birthdays on the twenty-second and twenty-eighth. I would very much like to give Susi, who has taken so much trouble with packages for me, something she would enjoy, but the only thing I can think is my last bottle of sherry, which I would like to give her. The Schleichers would most likely be pleased with the new one-volume Bible bound in thick light brown leather located in the air-raid cellar; please put it on the birthday table and tell them both that I am thinking of them with many warm and heartfelt wishes. I wish so much I could be there! But the test of patience is still not at an end. If one only keeps the bigger issues in mind while experiencing these small, recurring disappointments, then one soon perceives how trivial are one's own deprivations.

Since in the last two weeks of uncertain daily waiting I hardly did any productive work, I now want to resume writing. In recent weeks I have attempted to draft a play. But in the meantime, I have realized that the material is not actually dramatic and will now attempt to transpose it into narrative form. It concerns the life of a family. Here, of course, much that is personal creeps in.

I would like to have some draft paper and my watch; the other one stopped yesterday all of a sudden; it's working again now, but I don't want to risk suddenly ending up without a watch. Could you please buy me *Systematische Philosophie*, edited by N. Hartmann, Kohlhammer Verlag, 1943? I would like to work through it while I am still here. Otherwise I am now allowed to use the staff library here,

which contains various good things; thus I need fewer from you. But if you could still find *Witiko*, by Stifter, that would be great.

It was truly kind of the Schleichers recently to send me the rabbit liver. A real piece of meat is something most welcome in the face of this never-ending gruel; I am also very grateful to them for the cookies, peaches, and cigarettes. Could you perhaps spare a little tea? Occasionally I can get boiling water here.

The death of the three young pastors haunts me. I would be grateful if their relatives could somehow be notified that I am unable to write them now; otherwise they would not understand. Among my students, these three were among those closest to me. It is a great loss to me personally and to the church. The number of my students who have been killed is now probably over thirty, and to a large extent the best of them.

I thank K. Friedrich very much again for his letter; they are always particularly nice. Also Hans Christoph sent a very nice note on my engagement, though he did so as if it were already public. Perhaps one ought to tell Uncle Hans that this is not yet the case. Here in the cell there is no greater joy than letters.

I completely forgot to ask about Uncle Paul. Did you actually express to him my condolences following the death of his mother? Do give him my greetings.

Now thank you once again very much for everything. After all, the day we will see each other again in freedom is approaching ever closer, and it will be one of those days in one's life that one never forgets. Warm regards to all my siblings and their children. Do write soon again! The next letter will again go to Maria.

Always thinking of you,

Your grateful Dietrich

45. From Paula and Karl Bonhoeffer

August 22, 1943

My dear Dietrich,

Over the weekend we have again come out here and are now sitting on deck chairs by the water enjoying the peace and quiet, for in the past few days we had plenty to do with rearranging the house and transporting some things from town before the expected air raids. Papa's books and your most important books are now in the air-raid and supply cellar, and a number of your folders and belles lettres are now in Papa's study on the emptied bookshelves. Your wardrobe upstairs is completely empty. I sent another package to Pätzig and brought one out here. Our walls are also almost completely empty. We took many things out of their frames and [have stored] the frames in the garage. Likewise all the good rugs have been taken away. You wouldn't like it at our house right now. Neither do I! But it cannot be helped. We do what we can. Otherwise we are simply waiting. Last week Papa freed himself from his medical duties, but this means he'll have all the more to do in the week to come. So it always goes. Tomorrow we will return home. The Schleichers are also at home. Today they all planned to go to Kottbus to Hans Walter. . . . Walter and Klaus are home alone. We are taking care of Klaus, and Walter's mother is no longer required to do wartime duty and is looking after him. So things are in upheaval everywhere. . . .

It was so good that we were able to talk to you last Monday and convince ourselves that your patience has not reached its end and that you remain confident, despite the length of time. May God keep you and us all in this difficult, uncertain time.

Your Mother

Mama has basically already reported on all that is going on with

and around us. The holiday today—it's also Uncle Otto's and Suse's birthday—was restorative, no telephone calls, and our living space comfortable. In Berlin everyone's house looks as if it is in the middle of a move. I gather it is quite hot where you are. But it looks as if it will cool off somewhat toward the evening. Hopefully, rain will come soon; the dryness is also undesirable in case of incendiary bombs. Today before breakfast for the first time in a long while, we again took a walk along Lake Sakrow. We have become somewhat unaccustomed to walking, and the morning temperature was 23°, but it was nevertheless quite beautiful. For Mama I would have wished we could walk somewhere flat but at an elevation of several thousand feet. The Tatras would be such a place, but the times are not suitable for traveling farther away. In the hope of imminent reunion, and with warm regards,
 Father

46. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

August 24, 1943

My dear Parents,

This was certainly a lively night for you! I was very relieved when the captain let me know everything was all right with you. From my upper-story cell and the window, which is lowered completely during alarms, one sees the dreadful fireworks toward the south of the city very clearly, and without the slightest feeling of personal anxiety one becomes overwhelmingly conscious in such moments of the utter absurdity of my present situation of waiting inactively. Then early this morning the Moravian *Daily Text* moved me strangely: “And I will grant peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and no one shall make you afraid.”

Annoyingly, I got a stomach and intestinal bug Sunday night, yesterday had a fever of 38°, but today it's back down. But I got up solely to write this letter and will immediately lie down again to be safe; under no circumstances do I want to be sick. Since there's no special diet here in such cases, I am lucky to have your crisp bread and a box of thin butter cookies that I had been saving for just this purpose. Also a medical orderly gave me some of his white bread. So I am coming through this just fine. Probably one should always have something of this sort here just in case, perhaps also a little bag of semolina or flakes that one could have cooked in the dispensary. By the time you receive this letter, the matter will long be settled.

Dear Mama, thank you very much for your letter of the eleventh, which arrived yesterday, the *twenty-third*. That you witnessed such a display with Uncle Paul Hase is perhaps very good. In days like these, he will have his hands completely full. While I was lying in bed yesterday, letters also came from Maria and my mother-in-law. This was particularly cheering. I am really so pleased that Maria has offered you her help, dear Mama. I cannot determine from here whether you ought to have refused her help. It is so difficult to place oneself entirely into the situation. While one constantly tries to, the knowledge of the details just isn't there.

In the past week I have again been able to work very well and was just making progress when this annoying interruption came along. Incidentally, I've been reading *Microbe Hunters* with great pleasure, and since K. Friedrich sent it, I assume it is scientifically accurate. It is certainly a very impressive piece of research history. So now as I cannot think of anything more to write, I will lie down again. Might I ask again for *envelopes*? I only have three left. Please do not let this letter alarm you. I simply didn't want to lose the opportunity to write even if it is somewhat shorter. By the day after tomorrow, I will surely feel fine. Please remember me to both birthday children again

and tell them how often I think of them and how much I wish I were there!

With love to you and the whole family,
Your grateful Dietrich

Do send Christel in particular my good wishes; I always feel especially sorry for her during the night alarms, and the children as well. Maria had another migraine. They seem to be a particularly awful kind. Could you suggest a remedy?

47. From Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer

August 30, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

As you see, I am presently in Friedrichsbrunn. Grete is with the children up here, and Suse too with hers, and we are now attempting to see if we can fix up the house for the winter. This requires procuring coal, wood, and petroleum in sufficient quantities, and this is not easy. One trots from one office to the next and engages in battle. Furthermore, the question about school is still completely unresolved, and for the two older children it is impossible to solve satisfactorily. So it remains an open question whether we will remain. But in any case it is surely good to prepare in advance as far as possible and to make it possible to live here. One must always reckon with the possibility that someone in our large family will be forced to come here.

A week ago today you lived through a severe attack; we heard the bombing from afar in Leipzig. In any case, we believe that what we were hearing during the alarm at night was Berlin. Needless to say, we especially think of you both at such times. By the time you receive

this letter, further attacks may have afflicted you again. If only they would at long last release the two of you.

Shortly I will be going [to] Göttingen for two days to visit some colleagues there who are friends. I want to discuss some professional matters with them, particularly to get advice about the directorship of a larger industrial research laboratory that was recently offered to me. The matter requires serious thought. Despite promises of absolute freedom of research and considerable material enticements, I don't quite trust the situation entirely. Under no circumstances will the pitiful remains of my freedom be up for sale.

Do you have time and peace in your hermitage to do any work for yourself, or is the time entirely lost for you on any scholarly level? Can I get books for you from the university library? Till now I have always avoided this question because I thought by the time I would have your answer you would be out. But even this disappointment does not keep me from continuing to hope it. When I have been able to procure for myself a few quiet minutes amid the children's tumult, I have been reading a small book on the structure and function of the brain. Here I read recently that the offspring of wild animals born in zoos have smaller brains than their cousins in the wild. An effect of imprisonment that perhaps interests you—forgive the stupid joke. One never observes this effect from your letters, in any case. They are always a great joy for us. I always receive them sent on from our parents or Maria. In the next few days another should be due.

Much love from all of us. Make as much good out of this time as you can.

Your Karl Friedrich

48. From Paula Bonhoeffer

Berlin-Charlottenburg 9

August 30, 1943

My dear Dietrich,

Your last letter was dated August 7! How can that be possible? It must have something to do with the Reich War Court's relocation to Torgau. But it is such a pity. It has probably been similar with our letters to you, and there you are without news. We will now request permission to visit and hopefully receive it soon. I keep reading your very last letter over and over, and rejoice that you share our confidence in a good and prompt conclusion to this time of hardship for you and for us parents, and that you don't lose heart and keep your spirits high.

In any case, the summer has now passed by without you. Nevertheless, may we still be able to spend a few beautiful autumn days together in Friedrichsbrunn? We're naturally clearing all kinds of things out of the house, and there we often miss an energetic hand. Our home doesn't look very nice anymore. . . .

The garden already looks quite autumnal. The tomato harvest was very good, also the beans. The potatoes stayed small but were good. I ought to replant the ground that's now clear but never get around to it. For there is a great deal of coming and going in the house, the large family and the many good friends, who all want to hear about you and send you wishes for a quick end to this evil time.

Be commended to God. I entrust you to him always and forever.
Your Mother

49. From Karl Bonhoeffer

August 31, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

I want to add a few words to Mama's letter. As she has already written you, our days too are spent clearing out and getting rid of things, more than is conducive to quiet work and inner peace. It is a state of being perpetually on the move, made all the more unpleasant because we cannot foresee how long it will last. When things get to the point that one can say of oneself *omnia mecum porto*, all will be much simpler. I have resumed my consultation hours. They are not in great demand. Those outside the city balk at the trip into unsafe Berlin, and those in the city have "no time for their nerves," as old Heim used to say, given all the agitation about their possessions. The worst will come later, when people again have time to think about their bodily life.

We have heard nothing from you for some time. Presumably, you have been writing to Maria instead. We do hope you are feeling well again physically. Maria told us about her visit with you. She is a brave human being. I am pleased that she and Mama get along well, and both of them like each other. . . . Because the Landhaus Clinic had to be closed, Georg Schöne is unable to do surgery, which is bad news for him and for his patients.

You wrote recently or else told us when we visited—I don't recall precisely which—that you wanted to have [a] book on chess. We sent you the well-known Lasker book a long time ago now. Didn't you receive it? It was not returned to us. Wouldn't you like to learn to play Patience? We would send you the cards. Hopefully, your patience won't be strained much longer now. I hope we will speak soon.

Affectionately, your Father

50. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

August 31, 1943

My dear Parents,

As you already heard two days after my previous letter, from Maria, who quite unexpectedly was allowed to visit me here, I am quite well again. Aspirin to relieve fever and carbonate of soda for its side effects are wonder drugs for me, and with the help of your large thermos bottles I was up and about soon thereafter. I didn't even have to deny myself any of that magnificent liverwurst. Thank you so much for your care. They even prescribed white bread for me here now, so I beg you, Mama, not to deprive yourself of it anymore for me.

Maria's visit here was marvelous, and I was so happy that she had come primarily for your sakes. I was terribly sorry to hear that Renate had bomb damage in her new apartment; it's also dreadful for Ursel, who went to so much trouble in furnishing it. I suggest to Renate that she attempt to buy two tin plates and two tin cups at my expense; in the shop where we bought her the tin tureen for her wedding, such things are sometimes still to be found. It would please me very much if she were to succeed in this, and in exchange I will give her nothing for her birthday. So she really should do this.

My thoughts for Christoph's birthday have unfortunately proven fruitless; I would like to give him something nice. Do you think *Du und das Wetter* would interest him? That can be found among my books. Perhaps something could yet be found at the Plahn Bookstore for him. (Would [you] please order the newly published book *Das Zeitalter des Marius und Sulla* for me there from Dieterich Publishing Co. [RM 16]?) Could you perhaps telephone them? They have always served me well. Anyway, do give him my best wishes, and I hope next time we will be able to celebrate a happy birthday together.

This test of endurance for the children is really very hard. But he is, of course, already astoundingly levelheaded, and he knows what kind of attitude he owes his parents. In the meantime, you have celebrated a birthday at the Schleichers', and needless to say my thoughts were with you especially that day.

In these past few days I have been able to work well again and have written a great deal. When after a couple of hours of complete immersion in the material I find myself back in my cell, I always need a moment to orient myself. I've still not yet come to terms with the implausibility of my present situation, despite having adapted to my external circumstances. I am finding it quite interesting to observe in oneself this gradual process of habituation and adaptation. When I received a fork and knife a week ago to eat with—this is a new arrangement—they seemed almost unnecessary since I had become so accustomed to using my spoon to spread something, and so on. On the other hand, I believe one never, or only with great difficulty, becomes used to conditions that are experienced as absurd, as, for example, the condition of imprisonment as such. In such cases a conscious act is required each time in order to reorient oneself. Most likely there are psychological works written about this as well?

Delbrück's world history reads just beautifully. But I find it more a German history. I read *Microbe Hunters* with great pleasure all the way through. Otherwise I have been reading various things by Storm, though without being very impressed by it overall. I hope you will bring me Fontane or Stifter.

Unfortunately, letters are now taking a very long time, mostly ten to twelve days. Given that we are separated from one another by only ten kilometers, this seems a bit excessive. But despite this it is always the greatest joy to receive a letter. It has now been conveyed to me that, since Dr. Roeder is apparently not in Berlin, I am to send my letters to Maria via your address. So she must wait patiently even

longer. I am sorry for her about this. But of course I am hopeful that I will not have to write too many more letters from here. I think five months of waiting and uncertainty are enough, for you too! And the summer is almost over. But there may still be beautiful September and October days.

Now please give my love to all my siblings and their children. I have such a great longing to see them all again. Most of all, everyone stay well till then!

With love from your grateful
Dietrich

51. From Paula Bonhoeffer

Berlin-Charlottenburg 9
September 3, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

Yesterday we received your letter of August 24, in which you wrote about the bombing attack the preceding night! These are impressions that will surely haunt you for your entire life and for which you can thank your stay in Tegel, for in our air-raid cellar you would never have experienced that nightmarishly beautiful air display of which you wrote as seen from your elevated open window. Yet how well I understand your bewilderment about your present situation in such moments, when you're forced to watch passively and can't help in any way, here in your prime years. But then, on the other hand, I think that despite imprisonment you do have another weapon with which to help. Your intercession for those you carry in your heart and for our entire people [Volk]. Can't you perhaps help more through intercession than the rest of us, who exhaust ourselves often in vain trying to protect and to save?

In the meantime, there was another severe attack the day before yesterday, and by chance we were spending the night in Sakrow with Christel. From there we could watch it quite differently than at home. We saw our neighborhood around Heerstraße severely threatened, yet we actually remained quite peaceful in the face of the unalterable. But our hearts were heavy for the Schleichers next door to us. When we returned home in the morning, we saw many beautiful mansions destroyed on Heerstraße, the train station on fire as well, and on Lötzen Allee some incendiary bombs, on the Soldauer Allee and Kurländer and Marienburger Allee, damage from the blasts: shattered windows and roofs. In our home only a kitchen window and the roof of the storage chamber next to your room were somewhat damaged. Apparently, it was worse in Charlottenburg and Moabit; those too we probably had seen burning. But unfortunately Susi has the same damage again as previously, if not substantially worse damage to windows and doors, brought about by a bomb that exploded close to the Sehring house. We spent the entire morning there clearing the place so that you could at least move around, and then we packed a few more things and brought them in the wooden cart [Leiterwagen], for this area seems to get hit nearly every time. Suse will probably come to Berlin sometime this week, when Grete is up there again with the children. Nothing happened at Klaus's. I enclose a letter from Grandmother and one from Karl-Friedrich and will therefore close for now.

If only all humanity would unite in prayer and appeal to God to be angry no longer and to give peace to the entire world he has created! Be commended to God. Papa sends his love with mine.

Your Mother

Papa has requested permission to visit; we are very much hoping to receive it; there are so many things to discuss.

52. From Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer

September 3, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

It is now almost a half year since you have been locked up. I would never have believed that it would last so long. I wonder whether at least the time is going by more quickly than previously. By some mistake in organization I now no longer receive your letters from Berlin, which I am very sorry about. But I still go to Berlin often and hear of your latest news then.

I am sitting here a bachelor. Grete is up in Friedrichsbrunn with the children. After it had looked at first as if it would be practically impossible to make the house habitable for a larger number of people in winter under the present circumstances, now it appears to be feasible after all. Just today a decisive step was taken. I found someone who will install lights in three rooms: the kitchen and two other rooms. One can't get enough petroleum even for everyone to huddle in one room, and that is completely out of the question if the boys want to study. Moreover, we found an apparently very amiable and erudite older schoolteacher from Hamburg as a tutor with whom the boys can, it seems, learn very nearly every language that exists. Now the heat is the only thing still not working—apart from the water supply, which has been out of order for weeks in the village. But I think that will also function eventually.

Tomorrow I am going up for a couple of days. When I think of how much I look forward to seeing them all again, I can somewhat imagine how you must be longing to be free soon. If this goes on much longer, I will apply for permission to visit you—provided that this would not deprive you of a visit from your beloved. Now when the summer season of beauty is soon past and everything will look gray and sad outdoors, perhaps you will miss freedom less.

With fond wishes and all the best,
Your Karl Friedrich

53. From Christoph von Dohnanyi

September 4, 1943

Dear Uncle Dietrich,

Now we are back home. We had to help at Uncle Walter's. He had bad luck again. On March 1, it happened for the first time at his place. But today everything is in a mess. That is no wonder. Four explosive bombs fell right near him—sometimes even a single one causes such a huge draft that people are sucked right out of their beds. With four of them it must really be unpleasant, of course. In the grove of woods near my grandparents, an Australian parachuted down. He was found sleeping near his parachute, and immediately Mr. Schröter took him prisoner. His parachute is still in the woods, not far at all from Grandpa and Grandma's house. I have no idea how a man in such a situation can sleep.

It was good that Grandpa and Grandma happened to be here with us that night, since it eases everyone's mind (as the grown-ups say).

Today they are coming over again. There's the doorbell. I have to go downstairs. I have to quickly finish the letter because lots of help is needed. Pictures, laundry, rugs, shoes, and everything you can think of are being dragged out of the city to us. At any rate, if we get bombed, we'll make a worthwhile target. But of course that's not very likely.

Uncle Klaus is planning to come tomorrow. Hopefully, it will happen. Then the family will be back together again comfortably. Except sadly it's not quite complete. But that too will come about.

And then the long-awaited celebration will also come. One must just wait patiently. Sometime that day will come for certain.

The lovely fruit season is over now. The last apple dropped from our tree yesterday. I immediately devoured it. Unfortunately, the wasps had already gnawed much of it, but that is not necessarily a bad sign. Soon the pears will be ripe; then things will be better again.

This week we have to rake the potatoes. I can't wait to see how many there are. Overall the harvest is said to be not so good. But that can vary a lot.

Now I have to close because today we are supposed to finish things very early. For one never knows what will happen in the night. So now I wish you, first, an undisturbed night and, second, everything that will improve your "well-being." With love from your grateful Christoph

54. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

September 5, 1943

My dear Parents,

We probably don't need to say anything to each other about the night before last. I will certainly not forget the view through my cell window of the ghastly night sky. I was very happy to hear from the captain right away in the morning that everything had gone well for you. That Susi had damage for the second time and now has to move out of her apartment makes me very sorry for her. She has indeed a great load to bear. How good that the children weren't there! It is a great consolation for me that Maria doesn't have to be in Berlin. But wouldn't it now be time for you as well to set up at least your night quarters in Sakrow? It is remarkable how in such night hours one's thoughts revolve quite exclusively around those

people without whom one wouldn't want to live, and thinking of oneself recedes entirely or as good as disappears. Only then does one sense how interwoven one's own life is with the life of other people, indeed, how the center of one's own life lies outside oneself and how little one is an isolated individual. The line "as if it were a part of myself" is quite true, and I have often felt it at hearing news of the deaths of fallen colleagues and students. I think that is simply a fact of nature; human life extends far beyond one's own bodily existence. A mother probably feels this most strongly. Beyond this, however, are two passages in the Bible that have always summed up this experience for me. The one from Jer. 45: "I am going to break down what I have built, and pluck up what I have planted. . . . And you, do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them; . . . but I will give you your life as a prize of war," and the other from Ps. 60: "O God. . . . You have caused the land to quake; you have torn it open; repair the cracks in it, for it is tottering."

Now I want to thank you and all those involved again very much for the last package. I will never forget it, and every day I remind myself how much thought, effort, and sacrifice such a package always brings with it. But that is precisely why it is always not only an external but also a great inner help. That the Schleicher girls again sent me some of the small amount of sweets they receive is truly very kind of them, but I think they would really need it themselves. I also thank Hans Walter very much for his gift of tobacco. Of course, I recognized Grandmother's cookies. The Pätzig additions are a natural part of the whole and draw my thoughts daily toward that day we are already all looking forward to. I can imagine Maria now sewing and working on her trousseau—thus preparing for this day quite concretely—and that makes me very happy. I can't contribute anything here toward it except wait, hope, and anticipate it with joy. It would be nice if the letters didn't take so long to arrive. Something

has presumably gone wrong. Your last letter was from August 11! Maria's, from the sixteenth. That is really too long. For instance, I would like to know about Maria's plans or also what came of the great billeting of Berliners. I would like to hear from you whether the protective trench has been dug and whether you were able to make an opening from the cellar into the trench. Captain Maetz had this done this way. How is Renate doing? Aren't these night alarms particularly bad for her condition, even if she is experiencing them out there in Sakrow?

I am continuing to do well. I have been moved two floors down because of the danger of air raids. Now from my window I look out just at the level of the church towers; it is quite lovely. This past week my writing progressed again very well. The only thing I miss is exercise in fresh air, on which I am very dependent for productive work. But now it won't be much longer, and that's the main thing.

Please give Maria my love, and she should have some more patience and stay in Pätzig and/or Klein Reetz and not worry! Also love to all my siblings and their children. Please don't let the air raids exhaust you too much, get some rest in the afternoons, and get the best nourishment you possibly can!

In my thoughts I am with all of you, always,
Your grateful Dietrich

55. From Christoph von Dohnanyi

September 7, 1943

Dear Uncle Dietrich,
Now three more days have gone by since I wrote you the last time. Not much has happened in this time, which, however, was not very long.

As I probably already wrote you, on Sunday my grandparents and Uncle Klaus were here. Uncle Klaus came later. This was because he had had a visitor who kept him company from eight o'clock in the evening until 7:30 the next morning. And so then he slept all day. All of them stayed overnight with us and then left early Monday morning to go home.

Tomorrow we all have permission to visit Papa. It is truly wonderful that this falls right on my birthday. This is my second visit since Papa has been away. Tonight Eberhard is coming home again. The English have bombed Kade. Thirty-eight farmsteads burned down. But there was no damage at Eberhard's mother's. It's really going too far when they even go into the countryside and smash it to ruin.

Yesterday I got a small hematoma. And since it was right on my ankle, I couldn't bike to school. I hope it's better by tomorrow so I can go to Papa. I have to go there regardless. Now I can't think of much more that I can write to you. But I will write you again soon. Wishing you all the best, your grateful
Christoph

56. From Renate Bethge

Sakrow

September 8, 1943

Dear Uncle Dietrich,

We had wished so much that you would be able to visit us soon in our beautiful apartment. Actually we have been waiting for this from week to week. You would presumably have had many familiar things to discover, but you would have been truly delighted to see how everything came together in one place—the pictures, the books.

And seeing all this is now no longer possible. Everything is in chaos and scattered. In the meantime, you have had to wait and wait, have had to tell yourself so often that your help would have been so useful in the tumult, and surely were often afraid during the alarms because you could not know immediately that we were faring well. We had certainly hoped to see you again at the birthday celebration. We celebrated with my mother-in-law and parents, Aunt Christel, my grandparents, and Bärbel at my parents' home with some good food. And you arranged such nice greetings and congratulations, for which we thank you very much. We were overjoyed to find also the beautiful pigskin leather-bound Bible. Even there you come up with the most marvelous gifts. We wonder whether you also incited Maria to her nourishing gift by telling her how something like that would be appreciated? Unfortunately, my husband was obliged to depart again that evening. He has such a demanding program that I am often alone. But we are nevertheless doing well. I myself am doing much better again, except that I can't keep up with studying at the music conservatory from here, unfortunately. Of course, it is difficult that we can't truly settle down anywhere for the moment. There are difficulties everywhere. The Busses are staying at my mother-in-law's, and of course we would prefer best of all to be independent. A room we rented in Kade as a last resort faces due north and so is completely impossible in the winter. Our efforts continue. It is very nice that we can use Bärbel's room at Aunt Christel's for the time being. This gives us our own little domain again, at any rate. It's difficult with our scattered belongings, above all the books. When we need one, we never know where the right resources are, in the Burckhardthaus cellar, at my parents', in Kade, or in Bärbel's room and/or in Aunt Christel's cellar. But for all that we are still doing really well. The furniture question has not yet been resolved. The grand piano, which is so especially beautiful, is going to my parents.

Margret is with the children in Köslin. Fritz, however, is mostly in Stettin. Christoph is doing his military service on Borkum. All of them send you lots of love.

Did you know already that your publisher Lempp has died? Apparently quite suddenly. Ebeling held a quite excellent memorial service for Erich Klapproth. Fritz in Köslin, the one for Winfrid Krause. All these events will make your isolation particularly difficult for you. We would so much love to discuss all these things with you. Soon this will be possible. Anyway, we hope and wish for that very much. We envy you for just one thing in your horrible situation, however, namely, the many good things you have been reading. These past few weeks have devoured us completely. There was no music; even I only rarely had a chance to practice.

With much love and hopes that you are continuing to do well,

Your Renate

57. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

September 13, 1943

My dear Parents,

In response to the wish I expressed in one of my last letters to get somewhat more mail, in recent days I have now received a whole stack of letters, which gives me great joy. I feel like Palmström, who orders “a three-month’s supply of assorted mail.” But seriously, a day with mail rises noticeably out of the monotony of all the others. Your visit topped it off, so I am truly doing very well. After the unpleasant delay in mail delivery in recent weeks, I was especially grateful. I also thought you looked a little better, and that made me very happy. But the fact that you have been deprived this year of the vacation you need so much continues to be the primary burden of my whole saga.

Before winter comes, you really must go away for a while, and most of all I would like to come along. Today letters from September 3 arrived from you and K. Friedrich, and Christoph even wrote twice, which is terribly nice of him and for which I thank him very much. That you have now removed my things without my help was also an extra load of work, and I thank you for that very much. It is a strange feeling to be utterly dependent for everything on the help of others. But in any case, one learns in such times to be grateful and hopefully not forget it later. In normal life one is often not at all aware that we always receive infinitely more than we give, and that gratitude is what enriches life. One easily overestimates the importance of one's own acts and deeds, compared with what we become only through other people.

The stormy world events in recent days, of course, race through one's body here like electricity, and one wishes to be able to accomplish something useful someplace; but at the moment that place can only be the prison cell, and what one can do here plays itself out in the realm of the invisible, and there of all places the expression "doing" is quite inappropriate. I sometimes think of Schubert's "Münich" and his crusade.

Otherwise I am studying and writing as much as possible, and I am glad that in these more than five months I never had to suffer a moment's boredom. The time has always been full, though in the background there hovers this incessant waiting from morning till night. A few weeks ago I requested that you might procure for me a few newly published books: N. Hartmann, *System der Philosophie*, *Das Zeitalter des Marius und Sulla* from Dieterich Verlag; now I would add R. Benz, *Die deutsche Musik*. I don't want to let these things go by unread and would be happy to be able to read them all while I am still here. At some point K. Friedrich mentioned a generally comprehensible physics book that he wanted to send me. Klaus too

makes lovely book discoveries from time to time. I have read nearly all of what is usable here. Perhaps I will try again with Jean Paul's *Siebenkäs* or *Flegeljahren*. They are in my room. Later I am not likely to choose them, and there are after all many well-read people who really love him. To me, despite many attempts, he always seems too long-winded and affected. Since, however, it's already the middle of September, I hope that all these wishes will be outdated before they are fulfilled.

Another short note has just come from Christoph. I have a great longing by now to see him and all the children again. They will have changed in these months. Christoph is fulfilling his duties as a godchild truly better than I as his god-uncle, but I look forward to undertaking something with him that will give him pleasure.

When you speak to Maria or see her, do give her my love. I thank Grandmother warmly for her letter. Do remember me to all my siblings and their children. With thanks to you for everything,
Your Dietrich

Where has Karl-Friedrich actually been appointed? Is he going to accept it?—Please send stationery!

58. From the Senior Reich Military Prosecutor

Notarized Copy
Torgau, Ziethen Barracks
September 16, 1943

Military Detention Center
Branch Office
Ent[ry]: September 23, 1943

F[ile] n[umber]: 83.43 g
Mz.

Secret!

Decree

Attorney Dr. Kurt *Wergin*, Woyrschstraße 8, Berlin W 35, is authorized as counsel for Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in accordance with §323, par. 4 Military Criminal Ordinance, §51 War Criminal Ordinance

Signed,
the President
of the Reich War Court
as Supreme Judicial Authority,
Admiral
Bastian

Senior Reich Military Prosecutor
Signed on his order
By Dr. *Lotter*
Reich War Attorney

To Mr.
Dierich [*sic*] Bonhoeffer
Presently *c/o Berlin-Tegel*
Military Detention Center
Seidelstraße 39

Reich War Court 18
Notarized: Ladenig
Army Judicial Inspector

59. From Paula Bonhoeffer

Berlin-Charlottenburg 9

September 20, 1943

My dear Dietrich,

Now it's the middle of September and still the same old thing. This is indeed a difficult test of patience, but you are truly doing everything you can to ease the burden on us parents by summoning the strength to cope with it and not being defeated by it. Every letter from you reveals this to us afresh, and so, for us too, they strengthen our patience. . . .

Our plan for a trip to the cabin for a few days will now probably come to nothing for this summer or fall. Very painful! I sometimes think I do want to go up there with Papa once more for a week. With all his work at seventy-five years old, he has not had a single day of relaxation for a year now, but he can't do it until both your cases are in order, and I feel the same way. This will make it all the more marvelous when it is possible again, and then this time your Maria will come with us. She so kindly offered to come and assist me with the house, but I would have no peace and a very bad conscience during the alarms, while I myself am so absolutely calm. A slit trench that is not reinforced with wood on the sides serves no purpose, and the wood cannot be procured. During the last severe attack, Walter was in this sort of trench, and when the bombs dropped nearby the sand collapsed on him from above and the sides, so that he doesn't want to go in anymore.

Eberhard is now quartered in the Seeckt barracks in Spandau. Dearest Renate can visit him daily when his duties are done, and she always brings him something nice. He is doing quite well there. Uncle Paul intends to look him up sometime too, and we want to go see him in his uniform tomorrow at some point. We hope he will

remain here a little while, for in her condition it is not very easy for Renate. . . .

Papa is going to request permission to visit again. Each time we have seen and spoken to one another, we are helped to keep going on. By the way, I did get Hartmann's *Systematische Philosophie* and will bring it along next time. We are happy to hear that you have begun working on a family story, and we are very eager to read it sometime. But unfortunately I can't find the chess book you wanted nor Stifter's *Witiko*. If you would like the *Wanderungen durch die Mark*, by Fontane, that would be available. But I will look further for the other books. Your bookshelves upstairs have now been completely emptied, and everything has been brought downstairs, also the pictures and contents of your cupboards. When one sees the many damaged roofs, it is clearly better this way, even though naturally everything has become quite mixed up in the process. In Kade several incendiary bombs were also dropped onto barns. And that's a place one assumed was safe. Dear Renate had sent a number of things there. That's how it goes; one can't foresee anything at all, and perhaps that is good; otherwise our families would be even more anxious. Papa wants to include a note. Always thinking of you,

Your Mother

Mama didn't leave me much room. But she did convey everything essential, so all that remains is to send my love. I am presently drying tobacco leaves. But I hope you are back out before it is smokable. Zacharias always brought me cigarettes from his own homegrown tobacco that tasted quite good. With love,

Your Father

60. Last Will and Testament, September 1943

In the case of my death, Maria should choose from among my things whatever she would cherish as a remembrance. Eberhard should receive the entire library, the large Rembrandt Bible, the Dürer Apostles, the grand piano, the car and motorcycle, the high desk (still in Altdamm), and one of the two icons; all these things have had significance for our shared labor and life in the eight years from Finkenwalde on. Similarly, he should have the six Indian scorpion spoons (which Mama is safeguarding), the small rug (at Mr. Lang's), and my savings balance. From among the books he should first allow Marianne to choose what she would like, also my siblings, and then should send one book each to Jochen Kanitz, A. Schönherr, W. Maechler, O. Dudzus, F. Onnasch, W. Rott, Hans Christoph, G. Ebeling, and Uncle George Ch. Marianne should have the Mexican rug, Dorothee the little jewelry box from Toledo, Christoph the clavichord if he would take pleasure in it, Thomas my baptismal watch, Michel the gold pencil (Mama has this), the chair from Trent, and the crucifixion scene painted on canvas, and Martin a nice book. Everything else should be distributed to my brothers and sisters, to their children, and to friends, though in such a way that Marianne should always be considered first. I can give nothing to my parents but my thanks.

I am writing these lines in the grateful awareness of having lived a rich and fulfilled life, in the certainty of forgiveness, and in intercession for all those named here.

Berlin, September 20, 1943

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Eberhard should not torment himself with my funeral. It is quite all right with me if Ebeling, Rott, Kanitz, Schönherr, Dudzus, Fritz, Walter, Asmussen, Dibelius, Böhm, Jannasch, or Lokies does it.

61. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

September 25, 1943

My dear Parents,

Yesterday, dear Mama, you left such a marvelous package for me again. Your imagination is truly inexhaustible; the warm meal in the thermos bottle was particularly surprising and welcome. But I also thank you both and all those involved very much for everything else. If only this effort could soon be spared all of you! Outdoors it looks as if it is gradually settling in to a continuous rain, and I have a runny nose developing to go with it, along with my lumbago again. In my opinion the problem is simply the lack of fresh air. The brief half hour from which the busy sergeant loves to shave a few additional minutes, because he would otherwise not fulfill his duty, is simply too little, especially when a person catches cold as easily as I do. This is annoying only in that it hinders one from doing the only thing one can do here, namely, read and write. But it is in no way dire or a reason for anxiety on your part, only maddening—and thus can be ignored as unimportant.

A few days ago a very nice letter arrived from Renate, for which I thank her very much. She's now leading a real wartime marriage, with many austerities and difficulties. But those two will not lose their good spirits so easily. In any case, they did have some wonderful months together. Perhaps I will soon face a similar decision. If one can foresee that one can be together at least a couple of months, then I would be in favor of marrying; otherwise I would find having

wedding leave for just a few days too little, primarily for the wife; for this reason I would consider it better to wait—though, for how long? But these sorts of questions can be decided only in practice and not in advance. I am so terribly sorry for Maria about this dreadful protraction of my case. Who could have imagined this in April? I would rather that one be told how long such a case would presumably take, right from the beginning. In my work here as well, I would have been able to arrange things differently and more fruitfully. In the end, given our mind-set, every week and every day are precious. As paradoxical as it sounds, yesterday I was really glad when first the authorization for the attorney and then the arrest warrant arrived. So the apparently aimless waiting may be coming to an end at last after all. Nonetheless, it is precisely the long duration of my detention that has permitted me to gain impressions I will never forget. I always read the unusual books you bring me from Karl Friedrich with much pleasure between my periods of proper work. Otherwise I am writing and notice that I also enjoy free, nontheological creative writing. But I am only now perceiving how truly difficult the German language is and how easily one can botch it!

Please thank Ursel very much for what she recently sent along. But she should now really devote *everything* to her two soldier sons!

In reading through this letter, I find it sounds somewhat dissatisfied. It shouldn't, however, and that would also not correspond to the reality. As much as I long to be released from here, I nevertheless believe that not one single day is lost. What effect this time will eventually have is impossible to say. But it will have an effect. Please remember me to Maria and all my siblings and their children. I have recently received only Renate's letter. Do stay well in these autumn days! With my love and gratitude,

Your Dietrich

62. From Christoph von Dohnanyi

September 28, 1943

Dear Uncle Dietrich,

Today I brought something to Papa. Then after I had bought something else in the city, I went home around noon.

My flute teacher has now come back again. He was in Spain. Tomorrow I can go see him. He lives in Steglitz. That is not exactly advantageous for an air raid. He takes his fourteen flutes—I think he has that many—into the cellar with him at every alarm. Incidentally, the flute that until now did not belong to me is now my very own property. This was told to me by none other than Papa himself on my birthday, when we had permission to visit. It was truly my greatest and nicest birthday present I have ever received.

Yesterday we were at Aunt Else's. Not all of us but only Klaus and I. We picked her some fruit. We were there already once before and had to go back again, namely, on Friday, and even then only managed to pick all the summer fruit. We'll have to go back again to pick the winter apples. Yesterday she gave us a couple of apples to take along for Papa. Real red Christmas apples like the ones that always hang on the Christmas tree.

This cold weather is totally crazy and not only that but also bad. Our potatoes are still in the ground. Hopefully, it will still get warmer again. This morning I had dressed very lightly and ended up freezing to death. And when I came home I changed in a hurry. Now I am a little warmer.

Our little goat—I think you were still here when it was born—is growing up quickly; now it's already almost as big as the old one. The two of them create a lot of work. First, cleaning out their stall and, second, the problem of feeding them is not easy to solve at all. We can't give the animals our own potatoes. They have to be outside

most of the time and eat green fodder. They both love this, and the old one gives more milk afterward. Of course, the garden loses some of its beauty, but these days milk is more important than a beautiful-looking garden and you can't have both at once.

Now I will close and go clean out the aforementioned and already very filthy goat stall. All the best!

Your grateful Christoph

63. From Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

October 3, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

The day before yesterday your letter of August 31 arrived—a record transit time, one month for a distance of thirteen kilometers—apparently due to the Reich War Court's move to Torgau. This is a shame. We hope it will not take as long to get permission to visit. I requested it about ten days ago. Tomorrow it will be half a year since we witnessed your arrest amid the flowers still there from my seventy-fifth birthday. It is a joy for us to hear you say that you have the capacity to concentrate, at least at times, to such an extent that you're completely able to forget your present situation. I am eager to read your study on the experience of time. When one lives in the face of predetermined dates, as we are presently doing from Friday to Friday, when we deliver your weekly packages, the weeks seem short; in looking back, what one has experienced appears to be receding quickly into the distant past. The latter has perhaps something to do with age, but also, perhaps, with the profusion of new challenges in the present time. My capacity for work is not well satisfied. There are too many demands requiring attention. The garden now takes up less time. We will harvest three apples, and no

pears at all. In contrast, the grapevine yields much this time. I think we will be able to provide you a sample on Friday. Yesterday the day was filled with glazier work. The glazier had to cut the panes and teach us how to fit them into the window frames with nails and putty. It looks simpler than it is. But nevertheless we got everything taken care of except one pane in the dining room. Mama will report to you on the back about your siblings and household matters. Best wishes and keep up your spirits for the rest of your ordeal,
Your Father

Dear Dietrich,

It is inhibiting to write letters when one assumes they will be outdated in the course of things before they reach the other person. For instance, when I would now like to give you suggestions for your congestion, since I deduce that you have one from your request for lozenges from Bad Ems. Since these are unfortunately no longer available anywhere at all, this question is moot as well, and I only hope you can get the advice of a doctor. I sent you the wool sweater and your tracksuit pants. Don't you want the sweatshirt as well? I always get so much back that I have no real idea what you want. Well, the temperature is also changing rapidly. You can't believe how difficult it is to get the Fontane and the Stifter. You had two volumes of Stifter in your library, says Renate, and *your* Fontane. But regardless I have no opportunity to look for something in your library, because we moved everything from the attic downstairs to Papa's office on the ground floor and to the second floor, where it is stacked in a heap on top of the cupboards. I decided to do this—not happily but of necessity—when I saw how often attics were destroyed by fire. But I can send you the *Hungerpastor*, by Raabe. Let me know once more what you already have had of Fontane and Stifter there;

the things often go to Hans and then I am no longer aware of where they have already been. . . .

And do keep letting me know your wishes. I so much want to help ease your situation as far as it is within our power. For members of our family this is truly an entirely improbable state of affairs. But one thing I can say with certainty: I have always been proud of my eight children, and now I am even prouder when I see how they are conducting themselves with dignity and decency in such an indescribable situation, now more than ever. To be sure, I am also convinced that this test of patience also has meaning for you and I [en]trust you further to divine guidance. God will make it turn out well. So let us continue to wait and work in order that this evil time passes. That is also at times a blessing of work. Thank God you can do so on the intellectual level; and I have no lack of work in the house and with the families, and I will be glad as long as I can. . . .

All the best, my good boy,
Your old Mother

64. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

October 4, 1943

My dear Parents,

Many thanks for your letter of September 20, which arrived three days ago together with one from Maria dated September 2, and one from Christoph dated September 28. Could you please let Maria know immediately that I only just now received her letter; otherwise she won't understand at all that I have not answered it; a later letter from September 13 arrived sooner.

Outdoors these autumn days are enchanting, and I wish you—and I with you—were in Friedrichsbrunn; I also wish this so much for

Hans and his family, who are all especially fond of the cabin. But how many people may there be in the world today who are still able to fulfill their wishes? I don't share Diogenes' opinion that the absence of desire is the highest joy and an empty barrel the ideal vessel; why should we foolishly believe what we know is not true? But I do believe that, especially when one is still younger, it can be very good to have to renounce one's wishes for a time; only I find it dare not reach the point that the desires die off altogether and one becomes resigned. But this danger does not yet exist in any way with me at present.

In her last letter Maria wrote about her thoughts about a career; only after I had answered her did it occur to me that perhaps the Rackow language school might be the right thing for her; in any case, I would consider that very sensible if she really does want to get out of Pätzig. Would you please write this to her right away before she possibly makes different decisions. She should ask them to send her a brochure. One can take all the various examinations for translators there, and the courses do not last long but are presumably rather demanding. But that wouldn't put her off.

Another letter from Christoph has just arrived. I find it amazing how often he remembers to write. What sort of image of the world must be forming in the mind of a fourteen-year-old when for months he has to write to his father and godfather in prison? There won't be too many illusions about the world in a mind like his. For him childhood has probably come to an end with these events. Please thank him very much, and I look forward greatly to seeing him again.

It's wonderful that you have managed to find Hartmann's *Systematische Philosophie*. I am now immersed in it, and it will occupy me for several weeks if in the meantime the longed-for interruption does not take place.

In one of her last letters Maria wrote so very nicely about the hours spent with you. She feels so at ease with you, and needless to say I am overjoyed by this and thank you very much that you always make it so pleasant for her. I would find her offer to take over the household from you, dear Mama, very attractive indeed, also with an eye to my return; I also believe that the worst period of the air raids is past. But of course I also don't wish to assume the responsibility for this decision.

I am looking forward to the next visit you have applied for. Can't one of my siblings come with you then? How are Renate and her husband doing these days? I think often of them, of course. Please remember me fondly to them and all the others.

With love,

Your grateful Dietrich

Would you please try to get me Ortega y Gasset, *System der Geschichte* and *Vom römischen Imperium*, two essays published in 1943 by Deutsche Verlagsanstalt in Stuttgart.

65. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

October 13, 1943

My dear Parents,

Before me is the colorful bouquet of dahlias you brought me yesterday, reminding me of the lovely hour I was able to spend with you, and of the garden and simply of how beautiful the world can be in these autumn days. A stanza that I came across from Storm resonates with this mood and echoes over and over in my consciousness, like a melody one can't get out of one's mind: "If outside it's all gone mad / in Christian ways or not / still is the world,

this gorgeous world / entirely resilient.” A few colorful fall flowers, a glance out of the cell window, and a half hour’s “exercise” in the prison yard, in which a pair of beautiful chestnut and linden trees stand, suffice to confirm this. Yet in the end the “world” is summed up, at least for me, in a few people one wants to see and with whom one wishes to be together. These occasional appearances by you and Maria for a short hour, as if from far away, are actually that from which and for which I primarily live. This is being in touch with the world where I belong. If in addition I could occasionally hear a good sermon on Sundays—sometimes the wind bears fragments of hymns to me—it would be even lovelier. By the way, Ursel or Karl-Friedrich ought to apply to accompany you on a visit; that would give me great joy.

I took great pleasure in your most recent letter, of October 3, which arrived with startling dispatch. In the meantime, you have seen for yourselves that I am doing well, and this time I truly thought you were looking a little better. I also thank you very much for the grapes from the garden; they are, of course, quite excellent, and I am only sorry that you, Papa, are now not eating them yourself.

In recent days I have been writing a great deal again, and in light of everything I intend to do during the day, the hours in the day are now often too short, so that at times I even have the bizarre feeling that—for this or that more incidental matter—I have “no time” here! In the morning after breakfast, from 7:00 a.m. on more or less, I do theology, then [I] write until noon; in the afternoon I read, then comes a chapter from Delbrück’s world history, some English grammar, of which I always have all sorts of things to learn, and finally, depending on energy, I write or read some more. In the evening I am then tired enough to be glad to lie down, if not yet to sleep.

When is Maria now coming to stay with you? Mama, wouldn’t

you like to let her simply take over the household, if only temporarily? That could be a sort of vacation for you, and I imagine Maria would do a splendid job. I am so sorry that you and she have now dragged the fur coat here for nothing. But in the warm white sweater and the ski suit, I am really quite warm despite its being only 12° in the building. How long will we keep having to write each other letters? On the twenty-sixth I will be thinking very much of Christel's and Renate's birthdays. They will both celebrate them with particular concerns. By the way, that is also the anniversary of Max von Wedemeyer's death.

Please give my fondest wishes to all my siblings and their children. The longing to see them all again increases from week to week. Do also give Aunt Elisabeth my best regards. And just stay well in the cooler weather!

With love from

Your grateful Dietrich

66. From Karl Bonhoeffer to the President of the Reich War Court

October 17, 1943

To the President of the Reich War Court:

I request the expeditious release from prison of my son the Reverend Dr. Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He has been imprisoned since the beginning of April. I hardly need say that it would be a great joy to my wife and me, who are old people, to have him with us for the festive season after such a difficult time. On the occasion of a meeting with Senior Military Prosecutor Roeder a while ago, we were informed that the completion of the trial was due to take place in the middle of July. Given that, as we are told, the investigations

have been concluded for some time, and given that for a member of my family the idea of evading trial in the case of release is out of the question, we hope that our request can be granted. I am also convinced, given the character of my son, that he has done nothing to justify further imprisonment.

[Karl Bonhoeffer]

67. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

October 22, 1943

My dear Parents,

I've been told just now that Suse and little Michael were here to deliver your package. I thank you and her for it very much. I hope prison didn't make too stark an impression for the little boy. Such a young child naturally can't yet have any standard for what is possible and perhaps pictures my condition in overly dark colors. It was really painful for me that I was unable to greet him cheerfully and talk to him; that would surely have reassured him. I gather that Suse is of the opinion that children should not be intentionally shielded from whatever life brings with it, and in principle I believe this is correct, for it will not have been by accident and without meaning, precisely for this generation, that they are learning early on to come to terms with difficult impressions. But how different they will be at age eighteen than we were; I hope not too disillusioned and bitter, but truly only more capable of resistance and stronger through all they have experienced. Do tell Michael that I send my very best thanks for his bouquet!

It appears that now my affairs are moving forward, and I am very happy about this, It is all the more unnatural that I can't discuss with you what is affecting me, as I do with everything else. But I think it

cannot go on much longer now. By the way, you mustn't think that I am preoccupied all day long with my situation. That is in no way the case and in my view also not necessary. I am using the last quiet days and weeks to work and to read as much as possible, and unfortunately I almost never get my daily quota of work entirely done. For me it has been of great benefit that during this time I have been able to read so calmly the great German novels of formation and education [Bildungsromane] and compare them with one another: *Wilhelm Meister*, *Der Nachsommer*, *Der grüne Heinrich*, *Der Hungerpastor*—at the moment I am reading *Flegeljahre*—and I will be nourished for a long time by them. Also, reading the world history was very useful to me. I continue to like Hartmann's *Systematische Philosophie*. It is a very usable overview. So I feel like someone who has been given a semester filled with great *publica*.

My own production has certainly also benefited. But now I endlessly look forward to the day when I will be dealing not only with thoughts and imagined figures, but with real people and all our various daily tasks. This will be a great adjustment.

How are you both? Is Else away? What are the Schleichers doing? What do you hear from Hans Christoph in Calabria? I am doing well and as far as possible am enjoying the last warm days of the year. Thank you very much for everything. I hope your worries will soon be coming to an end! It would be about time. I thank Karl Friedrich very much for his letter. I hope to see him sometime for a visit. That would really be wonderful! With confidence, with love to you and the entire family,
Your grateful Dietrich

When is Maria coming to stay with you? She wrote me today that she is going for a while to her sister [Ruth-Alice von] Bismarck in

Kniephof. She writes that you spoil her too much and I am to tell you that. But I find it actually very nice.

68. From Paula and Karl Bonhoeffer

October 23, 1943

My dear Dietrich,

Now Susi has left with the things for you, and the few cigarettes Papa saved for you and the little piece of sausage are still sitting here. So I am rather annoyed, and you will be too. It is such a long way out to you, but I will definitely see that I send it to you soon. My memory is unfortunately getting worse and worse. . . . Maria is now, at her mother's request, at her sister's for about two weeks to help with her new little boy. But unfortunately the language course began already on October 1. She will write you about this. The woolen scarf I sent you is from her. She had knitted it for her brother. . . . I can't enjoy these magnificent fall days at all when I think how you are missing them, though of course one would have no time to enjoy them right now. But who knows what all this will turn out to be good for. I remain convinced that this long period of waiting for you is for the best. In any case, many new things are coming to life there in the silence, and much is ripening. In the agitation of these times, we never have a moment to ourselves. That you have so little exercise in the fresh air and no possibility of music weighs on Papa and me very much. Papa wants to add a note. Hoping to see you soon, and continuing to commend you to God,

Your Mother

Dear Dietrich,

I hope we can speak to you again soon out there. I requested permission to visit with the specified wish for regular visits every two weeks. I hope this will be approved and then speedily made unnecessary by your release. It is a crying shame that these gorgeous, warm fall days are passing by us and millions of others without our being able to enjoy them without reservation. One good thing is that it appears these days are still warm also for our soldiers in the east. Thus the winter will be somewhat shortened. . . .

It will soon be time when I can send you some homegrown tobacco. I will, however, indicate this in some way so that you recognize it and, if it is unusable, can discard it.

Warm wishes,

Your Father

69. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

October 31, 1943

My dear Parents,

I thank you again very much for your visit. If only it could be somewhat more frequent and more extended. With our large family the time doesn't last even long enough to ask about each person. But the main thing is that you and all the others are doing tolerably well. It goes without saying that everyone has particular worries and a great deal of work these days, even if at your age you would actually deserve to feel less of this; instead of us younger ones relieving you of some of these burdens, unfortunately it is just the other way around.

I also thank you very much for the packet; I know precisely how [much] effort and thought this costs you each time, and if you are always annoyed when you forget something, as you wrote recently, dear Mama, I beg you not to be. First, in fact things are almost never

forgotten, instead just the opposite, everything is always much nicer than I consider possible; and, second, I am quite clear about all that you must think about these days. I would really be sorry if that which never fails to provide pure pleasure for me were somehow to cause you subsequent distress. So thank you very much and please tell Ursel and all others involved.

Today is Reformation Day, a day that can evoke a great deal of reflection again, precisely in our time. One wonders why consequences had to arise from Luther's action that were exactly the opposite of those he intended and that overshadowed his own last years of life and at times even made him question his life's work. He wanted an authentic unity of church and the West, that is, of Christian peoples, and the result was the collapse of the church and of Europe; he wanted the "freedom of the Christian," and the result was complacency and degeneration; he wanted the establishment of an authentically worldly ordering of society without clerical domination, and the result was the insurrection in the peasants' revolt of his time and soon thereafter the gradual dissolving of all authentic bonds and orders of life. I remember from my student years a debate between Holl and Harnack as to whether the great intellectual movements succeeded as a result of their primary or their secondary motives. At the time I believed that Holl, who asserted the first, must be right. Today I think he was wrong. Already one hundred years ago Kierkegaard said that Luther today would say the opposite of what he said back then. I think that is true—*cum grano salis*.

Now just one request: would you please order for me Wolf Dietrich Rasch, *Lesebuch der Erzähler* (Kiepenheuer Verlag, 1943), Wilhelm von Scholz, *Die Ballade* (Thomas Knaur Verlag, 1943), Friedrich Reck-Malleczewen, *Briefe der Liebe aus 8 Jahrhunderten* (Keilverlag, 1943)? Presumably the printings are not large, so they must be ordered quickly.

My rheumatism is much better again. Recently it was so bad for a few hours that I was unable to stand up from the chair by myself or even to raise my hands to eat. They brought me immediately to the infirmary and put me under the light rays. But since May I haven't ever been entirely rid of it. How does one deal with this later? Good that you have found a well-organized receptionist!

Do please send my love to all my siblings and their children. Hoping daily to see one another again soon,
Your grateful Dietrich
The letter from Grandmother Kleist arrived yesterday.

70. From Karl Bonhoeffer

November 5, 1943

Dear Dietrich,
Your letter of Reformation Day made a gratifyingly quick journey. We received it today. I have ordered the books you wanted. The bookstore didn't have them in stock but will send them as soon as they come in. Since we saw each other, nothing special has occurred within the family. . . . Mama invokes the specter of my November flu when I work in the garden without a hat. I have promised to improve. In point of fact, all kinds of things must now be done in the garden. Gardeners are hard to come by. The one we used to have seems to be sick. The two of us are no longer up to it, but we have help from the two Bormann daughters, so we may perhaps manage in this way, providing the frost doesn't come too quickly. Last night, unfortunately, the blossoms of our beautiful dahlias dropped. I managed to rescue the last rose for Mama's desk. Today it has been seven months since you were imprisoned. It reassures us to know that you can work and that you have the capacity to order your day. In

this way the rest of your ordeal will also be endurable. With regard to your rheumatic problems, November, of course, is not exactly the best month to get rid of them. Perhaps you can ask for a half tablet of aspirin three times a day or Nelutrin three times a day. Admittedly, I do not know if the latter is available. I assume that when you return to normal circumstances and get more exercise in fresh air, you will leave these problems behind. We just now had the brief alarm. That they are coming so early is considerate. One is still dressed and can still hope for an undisturbed night.

Karl Friedrich wrote that he intends to discuss the professional opportunity here in Berlin with his ministry in Dresden, and in any case he will not leave Leipzig during the war but will possibly come here on a regular basis for orientation. Mama sends much love; she will write soon herself.

Warmly, your Father

71. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

November 9, 1943

My dear Parents,

Now the dreary fall days have begun, and one must attempt to brighten them from within. Your letters always help with this—which, by the way, have been coming through with astonishing speed recently. And your last package was again particularly nice. I was very pleased and surprised by the Stifter anthology. Since it consists mainly of letter fragments, almost all of it is new to me. The last ten days have unfolded for me entirely under the spell of *Witiko*, which—after I had pestered you so long to find it—turned out to be right here in the prison library, where I had truly not reckoned to find it! With its thousand pages, which

can't be skimmed through but must be read with much leisure, it is presumably not accessible to more than a few people today, and for this reason I don't know if I ought to recommend it to you. For me it belongs among the most beautiful books of all I know; by its purity of language and of the characters it transports one into a quite rare and curious feeling of happiness. Actually one should read it for the first time at age fourteen, instead of the *Battle for Rome*, and then grow up with it. Even the good historical novels of today, such as those by Bäumer, can't be mentioned in the same breath with it at all. It is a book sui generis. I would very much like to own it but most likely wouldn't be able to find it. Among all the novels I've read to date, I have had an equally strong impression only of *Don Quixote* and Gotthelf's *Berner Geist*. I have foundered on Jean Paul once again this time. I can't get past the sense that he is affected and vain. He must have been a rather deadly person too. It is wonderful to go on journeys through literature in this way, and the kinds of surprises to be experienced are astonishing, even after so many years of reading. Could you perhaps help me toward others?

A few days ago I received Rüdiger's letter, for which I thank him very much. I thought with longing from here of the program performed at the Furtwängler concert he attended. I hope I don't unlearn the last of my technique in this time here. I sometimes have actual hunger for an evening of trios, quartets, or singing. Once in a while, my ears would really like to hear something other than the voices in this building. After more than seven months, one gets fed up here. But of course that is to be expected, and I needn't have said it to you. What is not to be expected, however, is that I am doing well despite everything, that I am provided various joys to experience, and that I am of good spirits in it all—and for this I am grateful every day. Tomorrow Maria is to come for a visit. From month to

month I comfort her and ask her to be patient, but it is nevertheless indescribably difficult for her.

I hope to see you again soon as well and in the meantime to receive a letter. Give all my siblings and their children my love. I thank Anna very much for the cigarettes!—Just stay well, all of you, and don't worry about me. "What takes a long time . . ."

With love from your grateful

Dietrich

And many thanks for the book on chess theory!

72. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

November 17, 1943

My dear Parents,

As I write this letter, the Schleichers, as Ursel told me, are all listening to the B minor Mass for today's Repentance Day. For years it has been part of Repentance Day for me, just as the *St. Matthew Passion* is part of Good Friday. I remember quite clearly the evening I heard it for the first time. I was eighteen years old, was coming from a Harnack seminar in which he had discussed my first seminar paper very graciously and had expressed the hope I would someday become a church historian; I was still quite full with this when I entered the Philharmonic Hall; then the great "Kyrie eleison" began, and at that moment everything else sank away completely. It was an indescribable impression. Today I am moving through it by memory, section by section, and rejoice that the Schleichers are able to listen to what is for me Bach's most beautiful music.

Ursel's visit this morning was a very great joy. I thank her for it very much. It is always so reassuring to find you all serene and cheerful in the face of all the disagreeable things you have to go

through because of my imprisonment. Dear Mama, you wrote recently that you are “proud” that your children behave so decently in such a dreadful situation. In reality we all learned that from the two of you, especially when you would grow so completely calm in the face of serious illnesses in the family and let nothing show. So that has probably become part of your legacy to us. Ursel told me a great deal about everyone, and it was really time we saw each other again after such long months in which so much that affects us together has taken place. Now I hope *very much* that Eberhard’s petition for a visit will be approved before he is sent to the front. But should that not be the case after all, we both know well that we are bound to each other in our daily thoughts. I am very happy for Renate that he received this leave and hope that Hans Walter too will soon receive the leave he has truly long since earned.

There is not much news to report about me. It’s now quiet in the building as evening approaches, and I can pursue my thoughts undisturbed. During the day I repeatedly notice the different volumes at which people go about their work and are probably equipped by nature to do. A fortissimo just outside the cell door is not exactly conducive to quiet scholarly work. In the last week I read Goethe’s *Reynard the Fox* again with great pleasure. Perhaps you would also enjoy it again some time.

What are the possibilities of a piece of jewelry for Maria? I would so much like to have something for her when I am free again. It would have to be something with very simple lines. But this will presumably be very difficult? I thank Ursel again very much for the bottle with the magnificent cocoa, and thank Tine for the milk she sacrificed for it. Also many thanks for the cookies! From week to week I hope for the end to this test of patience. For Maria too, it seems to me, it is all becoming too great a burden. But it can’t possibly be much longer.

I wish you a beautiful first Sunday in Advent together with the children. I will be thinking of you very much, and I wish the Schleichers some beautiful musical evenings as we used to do. Good that Renate now plays the piano part better than I could. Farewell, and above all stay healthy! Give my love to all my brothers and sisters and their children. With heartfelt love,

Your grateful Dietrich

Many thanks for Papa's letter of November 5.

73. To Eberhard Bethge

November 18, 1943

Dear Eberhard,

I simply *must* avail myself of the opportunity of your proximity to write to you. You know that those in charge here have even refused me access to a pastor; but even if he had come—and I am actually very glad that I have *only* the Bible—I would not have been able to speak to him in the way I can only with you.

You can scarcely imagine how much I worried in the first weeks of my imprisonment that your wedding plans not be shattered. I prayed for you very much and for Renate and thanked God for every day I heard good things about you both. Your wedding day too was *truly* a day of joy for me like few others. Later in Sept[ember] I suffered from being unable to support you. But the certainty that you have been led to this point with such unbelievable kindness made me quite confident that you are in God's good care. That you two are expecting a child, Eberhard, gives me joy beyond words. Let us accompany this child on its way into the world with many, many prayers!

And now today, be for me—after so many long months without

worship, confession, and the Lord's Supper and without *consolation fratrum*—my pastor once more, as you have so often been in the past, and listen to me. There would be so infinitely much to report that I would like to tell you both; but for today there can be only what is most essential, and so this letter is intended for you alone. You yourself will know what you can tell others. Since the time you prayed for me and with me many years ago—this I will never forget—I believe that you can pray for me like no one else. I want to ask you for this, and I also do the same for you every day. And now let me tell you some things that you should know about me. In the first twelve days here, during which I was kept isolated and treated as a dangerous criminal—to this day the cells on either side of mine are occupied almost exclusively by death-row prisoners in chains—Paul Gerhardt proved of value in unimagined ways, as well as the Psalms and Revelation. I was preserved in those days from all severe temptations [Anfechtungen]. You are the only person who knows that “*acedia*”-“*tristitia*” with its ominous consequences has often haunted me, and you perhaps worried about me in this respect—so I feared at the time. But I have told myself from the beginning that I will do neither human beings nor the devil this favor; they are to see to this business themselves if they wish; and I hope I can stick to it.

In the beginning the question also plagued me as to whether it is really the cause of Christ for whose sake I have inflicted such distress on all of you; but soon enough I pushed this thought out of my head as a temptation [Anfechtung] and became certain that my task was precisely the endurance of such a boundary situation with all its problematic elements, and became quite happy with this and have remained so to this day. 1 Pet. 2:20; 3:14.

Personally I reproach myself for not having finished the *Ethics* (at the moment it is presumably confiscated), and it comforts me

somewhat that I told you the most important things. Even if you were not to remember it any longer, it would nevertheless resurface in some way indirectly. Furthermore my thoughts were, of course, still incomplete.

Then I felt negligent not to have followed through on the long-fostered desire to go with you once more to the Lord's Supper. I had wanted to express to you there how grateful I was that with so much patience and forbearance you bore my tyrannical and self-serving manner, which often made you suffer, and everything with which I sometimes made your life difficult. I ask you for forgiveness for this and yet know that—even if not physically—we were granted participation *spiritualiter* in the gift of confession, absolution, and communion, and may be very happy and at peace in this. But I wanted to express it nevertheless.

As soon as possible I began (in addition to daily Bible study; I have read the Old Testament two and a half times through and have learned a great deal) nontheological work. An essay on “the sense of time” arose primarily out of the need to make my own past present to myself in a situation in which time could so easily appear “empty” and “lost.” Gratitude and repentance are what keep our past always present to us. But more on this later.

Then I began a bold undertaking that I have long had in mind; I began to write the story of a middle-class [bürgerlich] family of our time. All the countless conversations we have had along these lines and everything I myself have experienced formed the background for this—in brief, a rehabilitation of the bourgeoisie as we know it in our families, and precisely from a Christian perspective. The children of two families connected by friendship grow up gradually into the responsible tasks and offices of a small town and attempt together the creation of common life, mayor, teacher, pastor, physician, engineer. You would recognize many characteristics familiar to you in the

story, and you yourself also appear in it. But I have not yet moved very far beyond the beginnings, particularly due to the repeatedly inaccurate prognoses regarding my release and the inner unrest connected with that. But it is a great joy to me. If only I could talk to you about it every day. Truly I miss this more than you can imagine. The origin of our ideas often lay with me, but their clarification entirely with you. Only in conversation with you did I find out whether an idea was of any use. I long to read out loud to you some of what I have written. The observation of details is so much better on your part than mine. Perhaps it will turn out to be crazy pretentiousness?!

On the side I wrote an essay on the subject, "What Does It Mean to Tell the Truth?" and at the moment I am attempting to write prayers for prisoners, of which oddly enough there are none yet written. Perhaps they should be distributed at Christmas.

And now the reading. Yes, Eberhard, I regret very much that we did not get to know Stifter together. That would have stimulated our conversations very much. This will now have to be postponed until later. But I have much to tell you about it. Later? When and how will that be? Just in case, I have passed on to the lawyer a will in which I have signed over to you almost everything I have. Only Maria must be allowed first to choose for herself something she would like to have as a remembrance. In this case please be very good to Maria, and if possible even now write her a few nice words in my stead from time to time, as you are able to do so well, and simply tell her that I asked you to do this. But perhaps—or surely—you are now moving into greater danger. I will think of you every day and ask God to protect you and lead you back. Please take *everything* you can use from among my things; I am happy *only* to know they are with you! And *please* take from among the groceries that have come for

me as much as you can possibly use. This would be a very reassuring thought for me.

I would love to hear very, very much from you! Sometimes I have thought it may actually be very good for both of you that I am not there. You both were spared the conflict between marriage and friendship that in the beginning is by no means so easy to resolve and later will not be perceived as such. But that is just a private and passing thought that you must not laugh at!

Might it be arranged, in the case of my not being sentenced but released and drafted, for me to come to your region? That would indeed be marvelous. By the way, if I should be sentenced, which one can never know, do not worry about me in any way. *That* truly doesn't bother me at all, except that I am then presumably forced to stay put a few more months until the end of the "probationary period," and that is, of course, not pleasant. But many things are not pleasant! The matter for which I would be sentenced is so unobjectionable that I should only be proud of it. Also I hope, if God preserves our lives, that we can at least celebrate Easter together again with joy! And then—*sub conditione Jacobea*—I will baptize your child!

And now, farewell, dear Eberhard. I do not expect a long letter from you. You have little time now. But let us promise each other to remain faithful in intercession for each other. I will pray for strength, health, patience, and preservation from conflicts and temptations for you. Please pray the same for me. And if it should be determined that we never see each other again, then let us think of each other to the end with gratitude and forgiveness, and may God grant to us then that we one day stand praying for each other and praising and giving thanks with each other before God's throne.

God protect you and Renate and us all! In faithfulness, your grateful
Dietrich

How difficult it must be for you not to be able to be with Renate for the next few months! I very much hope that the departure may be not too bitter for you both, but full of confidence, trust, and gratitude. With the very best one has, one can surely do no better than to place it in God's hands. Only in this way can one move beyond the bitter feeling of being cut off, with which we have both now become acquainted. At least you can still write daily and receive letters. That is no small thing. I hope your future commanding officer will be reasonable. I readily believe and hear with amusement that you are such a splendid soldier. It will make many things easier. In this way as well you are certainly my better. I will someday stand at attention before you and am already looking forward to it. Is the language truly disgusting and repulsive? But I believe you will very quickly meet with trust and influence among the others. By the way, I hear that Warsaw is terribly expensive. Take as much as you can with you; if you need money, just take a thousand marks from my account. I have no use for it, after all. Are you actually receiving my letters to my parents to read? Have them send them to you. I find here—and I think you as well—that waking up in the morning is the most difficult part emotionally. (Jer. 31:26!) I am now praying quite simply for freedom. There is also a false serenity that is not at all Christian. We need feel no shame as Christians about a measure of impatience, longing, protest against what is unnatural, and a strong measure of desire for freedom and earthly happiness and the capacity to effect change. In this I believe we are of the same mind. After all, despite—or precisely because of—all that we are presently experiencing, each in his own way, the two of us will surely remain entirely our old selves, won't we?! I hope you don't think that I will emerge from here as a man of the "inner line," now much less than ever! And in the same way I believe this of you. What a day of joy it will be when we tell each

other our experiences! It sometimes makes me very angry that I am not free now.

My wedding plans: if I am free and not to be drafted for at least a couple of months, then I will get married. If I have only two to three weeks free until my induction, I will wait until the end of the war. What an engagement we have. Maria is astonishing. But isn't this too much to expect? If only we had seen each other a couple of times in January. I don't know why Maria, young as she is, has to endure so much. I hope it is not too much for her, and yet I am so happy to have her now of all times. Or do you think it would have been more proper and selfless if following my imprisonment I had asked her simply to wait for my release, without letters and visits? I would have considered that unnatural, and I believe she would have as well. Please think of her too when you think of me.

G. Seydel's death hits me very hard. It's always the best who die. With the help of you all, I have survived well physically (strange what a minimal role *concupiscentia* plays here; cf. 1 Pet. 4:1). What is going on with your sudden attacks of fatigue? (I remember with horror how inconsiderate I often was about that. Terrible! But I know you don't hold that against me); and shouldn't you have Papa give you a few Pervitin for when you are on guard at night? Here it is often used for this purpose, and I recently tried it out myself. It is very good. Go ahead and talk it over.

Now I'll end. In any case, we have experienced incomparably beautiful years together. And may many still await us!

Dietrich

November 20

Your joint letter of November 9 has just arrived with so much news, which I was very happy about and also with the sorrowful news of B. Riemer's and R. August's deaths. Now you have lost the last one of your actual childhood friends. More and more our gaze is now being directed toward the present and the future. Thank God you have Renate, and you yourself know well that behind her stands a family whose many members regard you as one of their own and who will always stand by you. I ask myself, did I in some way alienate you from your old friends? I don't believe it; rather it was your path that led you in a different direction, without affecting your faithfulness to them in the slightest. I was often impressed by how seriously you took the duties of your friendship toward them. But your marriage with Renate is the strongest proof for me that the way that separated you from some things externally was the right and necessary way. I think of Gerhard as my own brother even today, and of H. H. Zippel and Riemer with respect and friendly sentiments. They were good and special people who accompanied you through your youth. I probably don't have the funeral sermon for R[iemer] anymore, but I think I gave it to them at the time.

The thought of not being able to talk to you immediately upon my release is difficult for me too. But if this should in fact be the case, then at least we will have to write each other extensive letters for a while and so we will not forget our different experiences. In case I am still sitting here in this hole at Christmas, don't let that bother you. I am actually not afraid of doing so. As a Christian, one can celebrate Christmas even in prison—at any rate, more easily than at family festivals. I thank you most especially that you have requested permission to visit. I think it has also become possible now with fewer complications. However, I would not have dared to request this of you. But since you have now done so on your own initiative, it is all the more marvelous. My entire hope is now that this will

really come about. But you know, even if it is denied, the joy that you tried will remain, and only my anger at certain people will increase somewhat for my trial date, which is not a bad thing. (For I sometimes think I am not yet enraged enough about the whole thing!) So in that case let us swallow even this bitter pill—we are both becoming gradually accustomed to doing so of late. I am glad that at the moment of my arrest I saw you, and I have not forgotten it. I know that my feeble attempts to care for you are now in much better hands with Renate and with the best conceivable mother-in-law of all conceivable mothers-in-law (free use of Leibniz).

A bit more regarding my external life: we get up at the same time; the day lasts until 8:00 p.m.; I am sitting holes into my trousers while you are walking the soles off your shoes. I am reading *V.B.* and *Reich*; I have become acquainted with several *very* nice people. Daily I am led for half an hour of solitary walking. In the afternoon my rheumatism is being treated in the infirmary with great kindness but without success. Each week I receive the most magnificent things from you all to eat. I thank you very much for everything, also for the cigars and the cigarettes from your trip! If only you all are able to eat enough! Are you often hungry? That would be terrible! I am lacking nothing—only missing all of you. I want to play the G minor sonata with you and sing Schütz, and hear you play Pss. 70 and 47. Those were your best ones!

My cell is being cleaned. Then I can pass on something to eat to the prisoner who does the cleaning. One of them was recently condemned to death. That affected me greatly. In seven and a half months one sees a great deal, particularly what major consequences minor stupidities can have. My observation is that extended deprivation of freedom has a demoralizing effect in *every* respect on most people. I have thought up a different penal system; principle: to penalize each person in the actual area of wrongdoing; for example,

to penalize “absence without leave” by canceling all leave; “unwarranted wearing of medals for bravery” by deploying the person to dangerous frontline service; “thievery of comrades” by temporarily marking the thief; “illicit trading of food” by reducing the person’s rations, and so forth. Why are there actually no deprivations of freedom in the O.T. *law*?

Just in case they’re ever needed, you have, of course, preparatory studies for your unfinished doctoral project that you can show (set of lectures on the Psalms)? It was never discussed, but just in case. Is your rank as an “orderly” to the sergeant actually considered a particular honor? Ridiculously funny! Or also repugnant? I am so happy that you can still spend so much time with Renate. Do thank her very much for the letter! Also give Christoph my best regards when you two write to him next. I hope you will stay together in Lissa yet a good long time.

I wish you both much joy and don’t want it to be darkened in any way by thoughts of me. I myself have every reason to be grateful for so infinitely much. Now in the hope of a happy reunion soon as in old times!

Your Dietrich

The enclosed verses have made a particularly strong impression on me. Perhaps you would like to keep this piece of paper in your wallet? The rest of the letter must, of course, be destroyed. Does it perhaps please you to hear that prisoners and guards here tell me over and over that they “marvel” (!?) at my peace and cheerfulness [heiterkeit]? I am always amazed myself at this sort of comment. But it is still quite nice?

If you can think of *anything* by which I could still give you some pleasure, you would be giving me the greatest joy! It is among the most dreadful aspects of life here that one can do utterly nothing of

this sort. *Please* at least *occasionally* take some of my bacon along; tell Mama that *I urgently* request it! I still have plenty of it and will certainly need none in the next six weeks. If only I could give you the Krössin smoked goose to go along with it. Can that sort of thing be mailed?

November 21

Today is Remembrance Sunday. Are you holding the memorial service for B. Riemer? It would be lovely but difficult. Then comes Advent, a time during which we share so many beautiful memories. You were the first to open for me the world of music making, as we did for years during the Advent weeks. By the way, a prison cell like this is a good analogy for Advent; one waits, hopes, does this or that—ultimately negligible things—the door is locked and can only be opened *from the outside*. That has just occurred to me; don't get the idea one cares much about symbolism here! But I have to tell you two things yet that may seem peculiar to you: 1. I very much miss table fellowship; every "material" greeting I receive from you all is transformed here into a remembrance of table fellowship with you. Is it not an essential dimension of life precisely because it is a reality of the reign of God? 2. I have quite spontaneously experienced Luther's instruction to "bless oneself with the cross" at morning and evening prayer as a help. There is something objective about it for which a person here particularly longs. Don't be alarmed! I will definitely not come out of here as a "homo religiosus"! Quite the opposite: my suspicion and fear of "religiosity" have become greater here than ever. That the Israelites *never* say the name of God aloud is something I often ponder, and I understand it increasingly better. Did you two receive my wedding sermon, actually? . . . This letter has become

much longer than I expected. Now various things are in it that are also intended for others. You will be able to distinguish these.

I am presently reading a great deal in Tertullian, Cyprian, and other church fathers, with much interest. To some extent they are much more contemporaneous than the Reformers and simultaneously a basis for Protestant-Catholic conversation.

Is either of you sometimes surprised that I let you send me things to eat without the slightest protest, even though I know you yourselves have so little? In the beginning, during the months of interrogation, I considered it important for the sake of the cause, to keep up my strength. Later I was repeatedly told that the trial date would be soon, and I wanted to be in good shape for it physically as well, and now this is again the case. Once I am either free or sentenced, this will, of course, cease. By the way, on purely legal grounds I consider a sentence practically impossible.

November 22

If there is anything that might ease Renate's condition a bit and you need money for it, please—without more ado—simply withdraw as much as you need. And all the more so when the time arrives. There is really no sense in money moldering in the bank. Be glad that you went ahead and bought Renate the jewelry back then. I will probably not be able to get anything for Maria. I have often been glad that you asked me at the time to attend the civil marriage ceremony. I think happily of that day and have the feeling of having come with you right up to the decisive moment.

Say, how do you actually manage among the other soldiers with your willingness—which I often admired—simply to accept unfair allegations (probably an aspect of your *anima naturaliter christiana*)? Here there have been several times when I have quite colossally told

off people who permitted themselves merely the slightest rudeness with me, so that they were quite dumbfounded and from then on completely above reproach. That truly gives me a great deal of pleasure, but I realize clearly that it is actually an utterly impossible sensitivity that I can scarcely ever overcome. You know well enough that I was hardly able to swallow even your well-deserved reproaches, a horrible trait that you truly bore with endless patience. I can become quite ferocious when I see here entirely defenseless people being unjustly roared at and abused. These petty tormentors of others, who vent their cruelty in this way and of course are found everywhere, can upset me for hours. I think you find a better balance in such things. It would surely be good for me if I could be a soldier near you. The *Neues Lied* that I received just a few days ago stirs up countless beautiful memories! You see, things keep occurring to me that I want to discuss with you. When one begins after such a long time, there is no end, and many things that I very much wanted to ask and tell you aren't even expressed. We truly must see each other soon. Now I'll really stop! With heartfelt love to you and Renate,
Your Dietrich

Are you by any chance writing occasionally to Papa and Mama? I could imagine they are delighted by any greeting that reminds them of me. I was very pleased with the intercessory prayer at the σύνοδος. Do you at least have time to read the *Daily Texts* in the morning?

November 23

The attack last night was not exactly enjoyable. I immediately thought of you all and especially of Renate. In such moments being imprisoned is indeed no longer funny. Hopefully, you two will be going to Sakrow. Last night I was wondering how nervous seasoned frontline soldiers are during alarms.

My parents were just here and brought good news. So the long trip was not in vain. How on earth did they manage to fight their way here? The city must be an awful sight. I was so very sorry that we were not able to speak, but was nevertheless very glad to hear that nothing happened to either of you—December 17 is the date! Finally! Will I see you this week yet? Can't Rüdiger phone Speckhardt in Torgau regarding your permission to visit? Also it needs to be arranged from this end so that the captain takes charge of it!

74. From Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer

Sunday, November 21, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

I have just applied for permission to visit you. As you know, I had been playing with this idea for a while, except I didn't know whether I would be preventing someone else's visit that you would perhaps desire *more*. But I was reassured about this; and since in your letter of October 22, which made the rounds to me a few days ago, you also explicitly wrote that you would enjoy this, I went ahead and did it. Hopefully, it will work the next time.

Today has been a very quiet day for me, for I've spoken not a word to anyone. That won't impress you, but it is quite unusual for me. Particularly in contrast to the preceding weekend, when I visited Grete and the children in the Harz Mountains—this frenzied commotion, everything happening in the kitchen—cooking, eating, dishes, homework, play, sewing on the machine, ironing, silliness and bickering, and at the end of the day getting ready for bed. When I go back at Christmas, it will be better. Then the tutor will be away—an aged and rather spoiled sixty-five-year-old man who tutors the two

oldest and who because of the key position he holds is treated with kid gloves—and I can have his room.

For me it is not only life at home that has changed completely but my professional life as well. I presumably wrote you that Jost has been appointed to Marburg. This is a great loss for me. I miss him at every turn. The other division chief, Ostwald, has been severely ill for several weeks; we are afraid it's cancer. So now everything depends on me. Furthermore, two old gentlemen have died: first, the physiologist here, Gildemeister, with whom I had a great deal to do precisely in my new area of responsibility and whom I miss terribly. The other, my predecessor Le Blanc, for whom I delivered a eulogy yesterday in the public meeting of the academy. Thus in the course of a year my existence here has changed utterly, and for me a new epoch is beginning—if I stay here. I wrote to you already about the offer I have from industry. The negotiations are still in process. The people here are acting very kindly and want to keep me. There are also many reasons why I would like to stay. And Grete doesn't want to leave at all. If the times were not so unfathomable, I probably wouldn't even consider leaving this university. I will probably go next to the administration in Dresden to see what can be done here for the institute. At the end of this week I am traveling to Berlin, where I haven't been for quite a while.

I used today to think through a couple of papers I have been wanting to write for some time now. I have the feeling that time is pressing, yet I make no real progress. It's not only the empty stomach that tickles a person a bit at times and makes one get up from the desk at ill-timed intervals. But it is simply not at all easy at present to concentrate on pure science. On the other hand, one ought to do so as long as one still has unbroken windows, which is still the case for us at home. At the institute my auditorium is already pretty well

blown out and unusable. We can still publish our papers more or less without restriction.

Hopefully, your time in prison will truly soon be over! It is quite inconceivable for us what it means to be forced to be alone for so long.

All the best and perhaps we will see each other soon.

Your Karl Friedrich

75. Last Will and Testament, November 1943

November 23, 1943

Dear Eberhard,

Following yesterday's air raid I now think it best to let you know briefly what arrangements I have made in the case of my death. For the instructions I gave my attorney could, of course, be circumvented, so it is better if someone else knows. I hope you will read this with your usual lack of sentimentality! I simply find it only prudent to make the necessary arrangements for such a case. So: Maria should first choose for herself something she would like to have as a remembrance. To you comes my entire library, including nontheological books, grand piano, car, motorcycle, money in my checking account, one of the icons, the Dürer pictures, the Rembrandt Bible, the Indian idol spoons, the rug Mr. Lang has, the Chinese rug, the standing desk (in Altdamm) (books: Ranke and *RGG* are still in Köslin), the large Grünewald reproduction from my bedroom in Finkenwalde (where is that, by the way?), my fountain pen (if you want it), the Fra Angelico—I think these are the main things; Marianne is to have the Mexican rug and the Kalckreuth (Leopold) and to be able to choose some things from among the books and miscellaneous items. Christoph will receive

the clavichord, Dorothee the little Toledo box, Thomas my watch, Michel the crucifixion on canvas and the Trent chair, Martin something he likes. You should have the Stanislaus Kalckreuth alpine landscape. My siblings and the other children should choose what they want from the remainder.

You should send Fritz, Jochen, Albrecht, Mächler, Dudzus, your brother Christoph, H. Christoph, Ebeling, Rott, Perels, and if possible Uncle Georg Ch. each a book. Anything you need from my clothing is yours as a matter of course.

So, that's it. Keep this paper safe somewhere! I believe one must sign this sort of document with one's full name. Ergo!

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Berlin, November 23, 1943

76. Prayers for Prisoners: Morning Prayer

Morning Prayer

God, I call to you early in the morning,
help me pray and collect my thoughts,
I cannot do so alone.

In me it is dark, but with you there is light.
I am lonely, but you do not abandon me.
I am faint-hearted, but from you comes my help.
I am restless, but with you is peace.
In me is bitterness, but with you is patience.
I do not understand your ways,
but you know [the] right way for me.

Father in heaven,
Praise and thanks be to you for the quiet of the night.
Praise and thanks be to you for the new day.
Praise and thanks be to you for all your goodness and faithfulness
in my life thus far.
You have granted me much good,
now let me also accept hardship from your hand.
You will not lay on me more than I can bear.
You make all things serve your children for the best.

Lord Jesus Christ,
you were poor and miserable, imprisoned and abandoned as I am.
You know all human need,
you remain with me when no human being stands by me,
you do not forget me and you seek me,
you want me to recognize you and turn back to you.
Lord, I hear your call and follow.
Help me!

Holy Spirit,
Grant me the faith
that saves me from despair and vice.
Grant me the love for God and others
that purges all hate and bitterness,
grant me the hope
that frees me from fear and despondency.
Teach me to discern Jesus Christ and to do his will.

Triune God,

my Creator and my Savior,
this day belongs to you. My time is in your hands.
Holy, merciful God,
my Creator and my Savior,
my Judge and my Redeemer,
you know me and all my ways and actions.
You hate and punish evil in this and every world
without regard for person,
you forgive sins
for anyone who asks you sincerely,
and you love the good and reward it
on this earth with a clear conscience
and in the world to come with the crown of righteousness.
Before you I remember all those I love,
my fellow prisoners, and all
who in this house perform their difficult duty.
Lord, have mercy.
Grant me freedom again
and in the meantime let me live in such a way
that I can give account before [you] and others.
Lord, whatever this day may bring—your name be praised.

77. Prayers for Prisoners: Evening Prayer

Evening Prayer

Lord my God,
I thank you that you have brought this day to an end.
I thank you that you allow body and soul to come to rest.
Your hand was over me and has protected and preserved me.
Forgive all weakness of faith and wrong of this day

and help me gladly to forgive those
who have done wrong to me.
Let me sleep in peace beneath your protection
and preserve me from the assaults of darkness.
I commend to you those dear to me,
I commend to you this house,
I commend to you my body and my soul.
God, your holy name be praised.
Amen.

“(Each day says . . .)”

**78. Prayers for Prisoners:
Prayer in Particular Need**

Prayer in Particular Need

Lord God,
misery has come over me.
My afflictions are about to crush me,
I don't know which way to turn.
God, be gracious and help me.
Give me strength to bear what you send.
Do not let fear rule over me.
Give fatherly care to those I love,
especially my wife and children,
protect them with your strong hand
from all evil and all danger.
Merciful God,
forgive me everything in which [I] have sinned
against you and others.

I trust in your grace
and commit my life entirely into your hand.
Do with me
as pleases you and as is good for me.
Whether I live or die,
I am with you and you are with me, my God.
Lord, I await your salvation and your kingdom.
Amen.

“Undismayed . . .”

79. To Eberhard Bethge

Friday, November 26, 1943

Dear Eberhard,

So now it's actually happened—if only for a moment; but that's not so important; even a couple of hours would be much too little, and being cut off here alone one becomes so receptive that one can feast long on just a few minutes. This image—to have had the four people who are closest to me in my life around me for a moment—will accompany me now for a long time. When I came back up here to my cell, I simply walked back and forth for an hour, my food sat there getting cold, and finally I had to laugh at myself when I caught myself saying to myself from time to time, quite clichéd, “That was really wonderful!” I always have intellectual reservations when I use the word “indescribable” for something, for if one takes the trouble and insists on the necessary clarity, then to my mind there is very little that is truly “indescribable”; but at the moment this morning seems to me to belong in that category. Now Karl's cigar is here before me, a truly improbable reality—so, was he nice?

and understanding? and V.? it is simply marvelous that you saw them!—then the good old favorite “Wolf” from Hamburg from better times—next to me set up on a box is Maria’s Advent wreath—on my provision shelf your gigantic eggs, among other things, are awaiting the next few breakfasts—(there is no point in my saying, “None of you can possibly spare such things,” but I think it, and am nonetheless delighted!). To my great relief you actually looked vigorous, only somewhat thinner, but not exhausted, indeed, healthy. Be so good and eat the bacon I sent you, happily and without protest! It feels good to be able to share something again for once, and you can surely stand to put on some weight. For me it is terrible to imagine that any of you now occasionally go hungry. I believe all of you are taking care of Renate with powers united. Now you have been able to see for yourself that I am in every respect my same old self and that I am doing well. I believe it took only a moment to make clear to both of us that what has taken place in the past seven and a half months has left us both unchanged in the essentials; I hadn’t ever doubted this for a moment, and you certainly hadn’t either. That is the advantage when nearly every day for eight years one has experienced each event together, discussed every thought with each other. Then one needs only a second to know how things are for each other, and actually one doesn’t even need this second. I can remember my first visit to a prisoner—with Fritz O., you were also with me—that it took quite a dreadful toll on me, though Fritz was very cheerful and kind. Now I hope very much that it was not like this for you today with me! For that would rest on the misconception that being imprisoned is perceived as uninterrupted torment. That’s not how it is, and precisely such visits ease one’s life quite perceptibly for days afterward, even if they also naturally stir up some things that fortunately had been asleep for a while. But that too does no harm.

One realizes again how rich one was, becomes thankful for it, and musters new hope and will to live. I thank you one and all *very* much.

When and where will I be able to visit you? See that you stay a good long time in Lissa! We really have to see each other as quickly as possible following my release. Actually it's an abomination that they refuse to permit a soldier wishing to visit his best friend to do so. Damn bureaucrats! But one learns from everything and even from this for later.

November 27

In the meantime, the expected large-scale air raid on Borsig has taken place here. It is truly a singular sensation to see the "Christmas trees," these marker flares that the command aircraft sends down, dropping immediately overhead. The clamor and screaming of the prisoners in their cells is frightful. We had no casualties, only injuries, but we worked until 1:00 a.m. with the bandaging. Afterward I was able to sleep soundly right away. The people here speak quite openly about how afraid they were. I am not sure what I ought to think of this, for fear is actually also one of those things of which human beings are ashamed. My sense is that one can actually speak of it only in confession. Otherwise there can so easily come to be something shameless in it. By such reticence one is also freed from having to play the hero. On the other hand, a naive openness can have something quite disarming about it. But there is also a sort of cynical—I might even say almost godless—openness that runs riot in the same way [as] in drunken and promiscuous patterns of behavior, with chaotic results. Doesn't fear also belong among the "pudenda" that ought to be hidden? I need to think more about this. You will have had your experiences of this as well.

Our intensive experiences in the most harrowing aspects of war

will, if we survive them, presumably provide the necessary experience for a rebuilding of the life of the peoples, internally and externally, that is only possible on the foundation of Christianity. For this reason we must really preserve our experience, come to terms with it, let it become fruitful, and not push it away. We have never before been given such a palpable sense of the wrathful God, and that too is grace. “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” The tasks toward which we are moving are tremendous; it is for them that we are now being prepared and ripened.

Dear Eberhard, I wish so much that you and Renate do not allow yourselves to be oppressed in any way by worries about the future during this time in which you are awaiting your child, but that you see in the coming child a personal blessing, a personal sign of God’s grace for your shared future, and wait for the birth truly only with joy and faith. This is what I pray to God for you, and I am certain God will give it to you.

November 28

First Sunday in Advent. It began with a quiet night. Last night in bed I opened the *Neues Lied* for the first time to the—“our”—Advent songs. There is scarcely any of them I can hum to myself without being reminded of Finkenwalde, Schlönwitz, Sigurdshof. This morning I held my Sunday devotions, hung the Advent wreath on a nail, and attached the Lippi nativity scene inside it. For breakfast I ate the second of your ostrich eggs with great delight. Shortly afterward I was summoned to the infirmary for a consultation that lasted until noon. After the meal I wrote a report on recent events and needs for medical care during the air-raid alarms here in the building. This was based on the bad experiences during the last alarm (a bomb twenty-five meters away, infirmary without windows, light, prisoners crying

for help yet without anyone caring for them except us from the infirmary. But even we were of little assistance in the dark, and when opening the cells of those serving heavy sentences, one constantly has to be careful they don't crack you over the head with the leg of a chair in order to run away—in short it wasn't pleasant!). Hopefully, the report will make some difference. I am glad to be able to be of some assistance, and that it is worth the trouble.

I forgot to tell you that I smoked the “Wolf” cigar, with its magical fragrance, yesterday afternoon in the infirmary during enjoyable conversation. Thank you so much for it. Following the alarms the cigarette question is unfortunately abysmal. During the bandaging the wounded men asked for cigarettes, and the medics and I had consumed most of them earlier. I'm all the more grateful for what all of you brought me day before yesterday. By the way, nearly all the windowpanes in the entire building are gone, and people are sitting freezing in their cells. Although I had forgotten to open my window when I left, I found the panes unbroken that night, to my greatest surprise. I'm very glad about that, even as I feel terribly sorry for the others.

How marvelous that you are able to celebrate Advent with the others. You will all be singing the first songs together right about now. I am reminded of the Altdorfer nativity scene and along with it the verse, “Now your manger, shining bright, hallows night with newborn light. Night cannot this light subdue; let our faith shine ever new”—and along with it the Advent melody:



but not in 4/4 meter, rather in the suspended, anticipatory rhythm that corresponds to the text. Later I will read another one of the

delightful novellas of old W. H. Riehl. You would enjoy these too; they are also well suited for reading aloud to one's family. One ought to try to find a copy sometime.

Unfortunately, I am not yet of one mind with Maria in the area of literature. She writes me such truly good, un-self-conscious letters, but she reads and sends me and loves, of all people, Rilke, Bergengruen, Binding, Wiechert, of whom I consider the latter three beneath our level and the first outright unhealthy. Thus actually none of them suits her at all. Yet something draws her to them. One would need to be able to talk about such things to each other, and I am not convinced they're so unimportant. I would very much like for my wife to be in agreement with me as fully as possible in such matters. But I think this is only a matter of time. I don't like it at all when wives and husbands are of different opinions. They must stand together like an unassailable bulwark. Don't you agree? Or does this also belong in some way to my "tyrannical" nature that you know so intimately? Then you must tell me so! Most likely our age difference also shows in these literary matters as well. Maria's and Renate's generation has unfortunately grown up with very bad contemporary literature, and it is much more difficult for them to connect to older literature than for us. The more we have encountered truly good things, the more tasteless the thin syrup of more recent output becomes for us, at times almost to the point of nausea. Do you know of one book from the best literature of the last ca. fifteen years that you think will endure? I don't. It's partly wishy-washy, partly striking various poses, partly self-pitying sentiment—but no discernment, no thought, no clarity, no substance, and almost always a base, unfree use of language. On this point I am quite consciously a *laudator temporis acti*. You too, aren't you?

November 29

Today, Monday, stands out quite clearly from all preceding Mondays. Whereas otherwise the shouting and ranting in the corridors have been most furious on Monday mornings, now after the events of the past week apparently even the worst shouters and blowhards have become quite subdued indeed, a very noticeable change!

By the way, I need to tell you personally one more thing: the severe air raids, particularly the last one, when the aerial mine burst the windows in the infirmary, and bottles and medicines fell out of cupboards and shelves, when I was lying on the floor in utter darkness and did not have much hope for a good outcome, are leading me quite fundamentally back to prayer and the Bible. On this more in person later. In more than one respect, this time in prison is a salutary baptism by fire for me. But the details can only be told in person, face-to-face.

A suitcase with canned foods and the auto fur rugs was just dropped off for me. I immediately asked to be taken downstairs and hoped to catch at least a glimpse of you. They said “a young man”—(please! No one would say that about me any longer! Or could it have been Klaus D.?)—brought it two hours ago and immediately left again. Many, many thanks to you both. It is certainly very good to have a supply of nonperishable food here, and the furs are most welcome in this windowless building that also drains my cell of heat. It is truly amazing how you all always think immediately of everything and also translate this into action. I think in this respect our family is truly something very special, don't you agree? And how good that you are now entirely embraced within it. When one is in a difficult situation, one can be entirely certain that everything conceivable will take place to bring help and relief. You too can

know this when you are somewhere out there. I believe that this standing up for one another is a legacy that all members of the family have inherited.

Tuesday, November 30

Today I hope to get this letter off. So, the end. Do try to remain in Lissa through Christmas. Then perhaps we really can see each other. What is your address? How shall I reach you right after my release, by special priority call or telegram? Stay well, you and Renate. God keep you all. With all my heart,
Your faithful Dietrich

Initially R. would have liked to finish me off; now he has been forced to content himself with an utterly ridiculous indictment that will garner him little prestige. By the way, I think that in case you yourself ever find yourself in prison, you should arrange a code here before you go to the front. In the past few months I have experienced as never before that everything I receive here in the way of relief and help is thanks to other people and not to myself. I have previously sensed on occasion that you suffer somewhat from the fact that you too owe many things in your life to other people. But that is precisely the wrong way around. The wish to have everything by one's own power is false pride. Even what one owes to others belongs nevertheless to oneself and is a piece of one's own life, and the desire to calculate what one has "earned" on one's own and what one owes to others is surely not Christian and is a futile undertaking besides. With what one is in oneself and what one receives, a person is a whole. I wanted to say this to you still because I have experienced it myself now, and yet not only now but already unspoken in the long years of our *vita communis*. I have certainly not received less from you than you from me.

80. Report on Experiences during Alarms

The November 26 alarm led to the following experiences in the infirmary of the Tegel military detention center. All windows and blackout shades were destroyed by one of the first bombs falling in the vicinity; various vessels with medicines fell out of the medicine chest; the floor was covered with dust and rubble. The attempt to restore provisional blackout measures failed, since the bombing continued. When an aerial mine or high-explosive bomb approximately twenty-five meters away demolished the prison wall, severely damaging doors, windows, and the prison roofing, prisoners awaiting trial pounded wildly on the locked doors of their cells, screaming, and the wounded cried out for help. Amid the overall din that resulted, quite apart from the bombing, it was scarcely possible to determine where the wounded really were. The infirmary staff opened a few cells and determined minor injuries, but immediate treatment was impossible since there was no lighting in the infirmary and it was impossible to treat even the most severe injuries. Only after the bombardment could the blackout shades be repaired and treatment begun. More severe damage to the infirmary would make treatment almost entirely impossible, since the first-aid kits located in two other places in the building would not be sufficient for a larger number of injuries.

From this the following consequences can be deduced: (1) If a physician is to treat serious cases, the construction of an infirmary bunker is essential. (2) During alarms, an exception should be made for medical corps members among the prisoners awaiting trial, where possible, to help in the infirmary. (3) Measures are essential for the immediate location of the wounded, which under present conditions is impossible. If safeguarding lives is the primary consideration, then the most extensive possible release of prisoners from their cells and

the immediate construction of slit trenches is required. (4) Also, the significance of the psychological effect must not be underestimated for a soldier who, perhaps for a minor offense, is confined to his cell for interrogation and is forced to endure a severe attack raining down on him without any prospect of timely aid . . .

81. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

First Sunday in Advent, November 28, 1943

My dear Parents,

Although no one has any idea whether and how letters are presently being handled, I nevertheless want to write to you on this afternoon of the first Sunday in Advent. The Altdorfer nativity scene, in which one sees the holy family with the manger amid the rubble of a collapsed house—just how did he come to portray this in such a way, flying in the face of all tradition, four hundred years ago?—is particularly timely. Even here one can and ought to celebrate Christmas, he perhaps wanted to say; in any case, this is what he says to us. I am glad to think that you are now sitting together with the children and celebrating Advent with them as you did years ago with us. Only one does everything perhaps more intensively now because one doesn't know how long one still has it.

I still think with some horror about how the two of you were forced to endure such a terrible night and such a terrible moment without any one of us present. It seems so incomprehensible that one should be locked up at such times, unable to help. I am now hoping very much that this will truly come to an end soon and not suffer further delays. Nevertheless, please do not worry about me. One will emerge from this whole affair greatly strengthened.

You surely know by now that we experienced the expected attack

on Borsig right here in our vicinity. Now one has the hope—not a very Christian one—that they will not return to our area soon. It was not exactly pleasant either, and once I am free I will suggest improvements for such eventualities. Astonishingly, my windowpanes remained intact, whereas nearly all others were broken. So for the other prisoners it is really dreadfully cold. Since the prison wall was partially destroyed, no “exercise” can take place either for the time being. If only there were at least the possibility of hearing something from one another following the alarms!

It was very good to see you both again. Thank you so much for coming and also for everything you brought. It is a very reassuring feeling to know you are in Sakrow for the time being. Maria must not come to Berlin now; even if she receives permission to visit, one ought to wait and see how things develop. And what will happen with Renate? Childbirth in Berlin is out of the question, isn't it? But then where?

Recently I have been reading the *Geschichten aus alter Zeit*, by the old cultural historian W. H. Riehl, with great pleasure. You probably know these from a much earlier time. Today they are as good as unknown but nevertheless very charming and delightful to read. They would also be suitable to read aloud to the children. As far as I know, we used to have a couple of volumes of his, but in the meantime we have surely long since given them to some book collection or other.

If you were to bring me the book on superstition sometime, that would be very nice. People here are beginning to read fortune cards to predict whether an alarm will come that night! It is interesting how in such tumultuous times superstition blossoms and how many people are quite prepared to pay attention to it, even if only with half an ear. Farewell! Give my love to my brothers and sisters and the

children. God protect us all. With thanks to you for everything,
Your Dietrich

82. From Eberhard Bethge

November 30, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

How and with what can I possibly begin to let you know my joy, and to pack everything I am saying to you—walking, standing, or in conversation with Renate—into a much too short letter? In the midst of the chaos of the attacks and the follow-up work, *the* event for me was that I saw you and received such a good, detailed letter from you, the first one. I have read it many times and am sorry now not to have the quiet for writing that you had. I was astonished on Friday to find you so cheerful and looking so well. Cheerful, fresh, not at all pale, and in every way in command of the situation as usual, somewhat concerned to convey to us above all else comfort and confidence regarding your situation. I was overjoyed that we succeeded in seeing each other. And then in the afternoon I received the letter with the beautiful, beautiful things. It is just not right for you to part with the bacon. But of course I can hardly send it back. So I am enjoying it with the hunger and appetite you know so well in me for these things and have also successfully broadcast to others. I have already tried smoking the pipe, and Renate finds it not at all unsuitable for me. Many, many thanks for everything. Also for all the offers that I can't possibly realize all at once. But they will remain in the background as reassuring facts for the future. Today I hear that I will probably come to Meran, so warm things are less necessary. When I had to wait a whole hour in the afternoon in front of Hans's cell for Christine, I had the opportunity to slowly, so to speak, eat your letter. The biblical

expression that Joh[n] ate the letter is quite apt, except that I wasn't sick in my stomach afterward; in Ez[ekiel] this doesn't happen either.

Your letter showed me how different both our lives have been through this period. In essence I have felt myself in the military drawing near to you through the shared loss of self-determination, which is so entirely unfamiliar to us. And since then I have thought of you in new and different ways when I have had to march and march endlessly in formation. And then I imagined that you were stuck there beside me and how you too were forced to bellow out those moronic songs along with us, and I simply had to laugh silently at both of us. The secret of my being a good soldier—emphasized somewhat too strongly in distinction from the others, for you—boils down to one thing: Renate. That is, all I had to do was to bellow loudly, salute “smartly,” and polish my rifle clean, in order not to throw away my chance to see her in the evening through being kept in for another roll call. But in other ways being in uniform had precisely the opposite effect than for you: up to now (in basic training) it was impossible to read even just *one* book past the first ten pages despite many attempts. You are badgered breathless and by the end dead tired. To read the *Daily Texts* is already an achievement. Previously, in my last period as a civilian, it was also sufficiently chaotic, but with my many trips I was still able to get many things done. What you have now accomplished and gained is really quite wonderful and enviable. Also, Christoph seems to have become well motivated. Renate's father is sending him Ranke and similar things at his own request. At the moment I am reading *Der grüne Heinrich* together with Renate. Of course, it has some tedious passages and occasional frivolities but nevertheless many beautiful sections. By the way, in the sixth volume of my edition is a great omission in the section by Keller about Gotthelf, above all, it appears, regarding *Berner Geist*; they were indeed polar opposites. I found that recently

but didn't get around to reading it. Keller was not aware that he was living in the fortunate between-times, since an almighty power was being disarmed and a much more fearsome one had not yet conquered but was only beginning to stir. Such reading is so marvelous on these days of leave, like the hot evening bath to which I became entirely accustomed while we were living at the Schleichers.

I particularly thank you for the verses you wrote out for me; I will very happily put them in my briefcase to take on the journey into the unknown. Yes, if only you could be a soldier along with me. Here in Spandau the people were of the sort with whom I would gladly have remained together. A remarkable respect for and interest in such a curious and rare vocation, especially among the seventeen- to eighteen-year-olds. Now in Lissa, by contrast, it is quite different. The people are all, in every way, utterly orderly and boring, sought out for their reliability and respectable viewpoints. I am somewhat alone and to that extent silent. I am very sad when I think how you have now been working and writing and I hear nothing of it, and perhaps not for a long time. It was, of course, nice that I was able to keep preaching for so long; now I am to preach in Lissa as well and am receiving permission to do so. But the circles of which I was primarily a part were, after all, *homines religiosi*.

Unfortunately I am now being constantly interrupted. In the meantime, it is now December 1, and with difficulty I have received an extension of my leave until Saturday. Might you be coming in the meantime to Lehrter Straße, where I might see you? If at all possible I will take Renate along to Lissa again. People don't entirely approve because she is already in her seventh month, that is, she's entering it. Indeed, the wedding already seems so long ago! Many thanks for the words you wrote for the occasion. Unfortunately we never received any wedding sermon. Did you send it via R.? No one knows anything about it. There have been difficulties with receiving

other letters from you as well, since your parents very quickly send them on to Karl-Friedrich or Maria. But eventually there are scarcely any I have not seen. Most often I read them together with Renate. Yes, and what shall I tell you about her? Briefly: we are more in love than ever, and I am surprised and filled with happiness at *how* entirely justified was the confidence that various things during our engagement that appeared perhaps too frivolous or present but in inadequate intensity would take care of themselves. Independently and step-by-step, she takes hold of her duties and throws herself into them with deftness and charm, with courage and intelligence. For me it is a continuous fountain of happiness. It feels in some ways idiotic to me to write this to you; you have to imagine how I would be narrating this to you, perhaps in the evening; then it would feel right. The question whether it was right does not exist. Indeed, to add the uncertainty of *this* question on top of all the upheaval of the previous months—that would perhaps have been too much. I can actually hardly even remember our engagement—and Renate said a similar thing recently as well—so utterly are we filled by the experience that only this is what is right. Marriage is what remains stable through all passing relationships.

Friday, the third

Now it's decided that I have to depart. I was suddenly robbed of the time I had intended for writing to you today as I was called out yet again with the car, contrary to all arrangement, and there was a breakdown that consumed the whole time. So I am very sorry to have to send you this fragment, but there was no other way.

Wishing you all my very, very best. I think of you often and hope to see you again soon somehow.

With faithfulness, from my heart,

Your Eberhard

83. From Karl Bonhoeffer

December 5, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

I want to use this quiet second Sunday in Advent for writing you a letter. We are here outside the city in Sakrow, which does us good following a week spent nailing windows shut, replacing panes, and unsatisfactory attempts to cover the roof with rugs and boards using utterly inadequate materials—there is a shortage of nails, cardboard, hammers, and such. I have an old male nurse from the clinic to help. In this next week I hope to be able to see one or another of my patients again. We are doing well in terms of health. When one is working physically, the cold rooms are not so noticeable. The main concern now is to protect the heating system from freezing. The veranda with twenty-two shattered windowpanes is the main focus of concern. It is astonishing that all the windowpanes remained intact in your room, although it faces in the direction where the explosive bomb was dropped. All the same, there remains the possibility of making a few rooms habitable. One must be grateful for this when one sees the destruction in the rest of the city. Toni Volkmann lost everything she owned, all the furniture used by the boarders she had taken in to make a living. She herself is fine. My old assistant Burlage, to whom I was very close, was killed with 150 others in his air-raid bunker. His wife was spared because she had gone out to rescue the dog. Zutt saved nothing except his suitcase. Overall it is pleasing and surprising to see how easily at least for the moment the loss of property is borne. Karl-Friedrich went back to Leipzig early this morning, worried about whether the heavy attack on Leipzig had hit his house, and given its proximity to the water tower, this was not unjustified. We want to try to phone him this evening. I assume that Mama will also want to write and will therefore close. I will write an

application for permission to visit right now as well.

Love, your father,

who is secretly hoping for Christmas together. Mama can't write after all; she scalded her fingers somewhat with steam in the kitchen—it's not severe but nevertheless a hindrance to writing at the moment.

Eberhard went back to Lissa yesterday with Renate. He sent word today that he expects to join his detachment on the way to Italy on Tuesday. Bene has been drafted at age fifty-three as fit for limited service. Apparently he has recovered physically quite well. But as a lieutenant sergeant in the last war and since then without practice, he will first need to get back into shape. I hope we can talk together soon.

Love, your F.

84. To Eberhard Bethge

Second Sunday in Advent

Dear Eberhard,

The need to converse with you on a quiet Sunday morning is so great, and the thought so enticing that such a letter could perhaps make a lonely hour more enjoyable for you, that I want to write you without knowing whether, how, or where these lines will reach you. As K[arl] Fr[riedrich] told me yesterday, when he came here entirely by surprise, you went back to Lissa only yesterday. May the time not become too difficult for you. You are hardened against some things to a greater extent than I am through your boarding-school upbringing. How and where will we both celebrate Christmas this year? My wish for you is that you are successful during these Advent weeks in conveying some of the joy you always brought into

the circle of brethren to your comrades. For it is not only fear, so pervasive among the people here at every new air-raid alarm, that is contagious, but also the peace and joy with which we encounter what is laid upon us at any given time. In fact, I believe the strongest authority is created by such a stance—if it is not just put on for show but is authentic and un-self-conscious. People are seeking a stable pole and orient themselves toward it. I don't think either of us is a daredevil, but that also has nothing to do with the heart made secure by grace.

By the way, I notice more and more how much I am thinking and perceiving things in line with the Old Testament; thus in recent months I have been reading much more the Old than the New Testament. Only when one knows that the name of God may not be uttered may one sometimes speak the name of Jesus Christ. Only when one loves life and the earth so much that with it everything seems to be lost and at its end may one believe in the resurrection of the dead and a new world. Only when one accepts the law of God as binding for oneself may one perhaps sometimes speak of grace. And only when the wrath and vengeance of God against God's enemies are allowed to stand can something of forgiveness and the love of enemies touch our hearts. Whoever wishes to be and perceive things too quickly and too directly in New Testament ways is to my mind no Christian. We have already, of course, discussed this a few times, and every day confirms for me that it is right. One can and must not speak the ultimate word prior to the penultimate. We are living in the penultimate and believe the ultimate, isn't that so? These ideas would give Lutherans (so-called!) and pietists goose bumps, but nevertheless it's true. In *Discipleship*, I only touched on these ideas (in the first chapter) and later never developed them properly. That will need to be done later. The consequences are very far-reaching, among others for the Catholic problem, for the concept of ministry, for the use of

the Bible, and so on, but above all certainly for ethics. Why do people in the Old Testament vigorously and often lie (I have now collected the citations), kill, betray, rob, divorce, even fornicate (cf. Jesus's genealogy), doubt, and blaspheme and curse, to the glory of God, whereas in the New Testament there is none of this? "Preliminary stage" of religion? That is a very naive explanation; after all, it is one and the same God. But more later and in person on this!

In the meantime, it is evening. The sergeant who brought me back to my quarters from the infirmary said to me, as he left, smiling a bit sheepishly but nevertheless in all seriousness: "Pastor, please pray that we have no alarm tonight!"

Imagine, this morning it emerged in conversation with a medic imprisoned here that he was present at Max Wedemeyer's death and brought him back dead to the unit. I can't tell this to Maria yet since, of course, such conversations are forbidden and I fear further questions in her letters. But it is nevertheless quite remarkable. Against the order of his major, Max took a patrol out and was shot through the heart.

For some time I have been taking my daily walk with a party regional spokesman, former member of the German Christian church leadership in Brunswick, presently leader of the party's headquarters in Warsaw. He has completely fallen apart here and latches on to me with an almost childlike dependence, seeks advice for every tiny detail, tells me when he cried, and so on. After being very cool toward him for several weeks, I now try to find him some relief, for which he is touchingly grateful and tells me over and over he is so glad to have met just such a man as myself. In short, there are the most bizarre situations; if only I could really and truly tell you about them!

I have been reflecting further on the thoughts about one's own fear about which I wrote you recently. I think that under the guise of

honesty something is presented here as “natural” that on the contrary is a symptom of sin; it [is] really quite analogous to open talk about sexual matters. “Truthfulness” does not at all mean that whatever exists must be uncovered. God himself made clothing for human beings, that is, in *statu corruptionis* many aspects of the human being are to remain concealed, and when one cannot root it out, evil is likewise to remain hidden. Anyway, exposure is cynical; and even if cynics appear particularly honest in their own eyes or act like fanatics for the truth, they still miss the decisive truth, namely, that after the fall there is a need for covering [Verhüllung] and secrecy [Geheimnis]. For me, Stifter’s greatness lies in the fact that he refuses to pry into the inner realm of the person, that he respects the covering and regards the person only very discreetly from without, as it were, but not from within. Every form of curiosity is quite foreign to him. It impressed me once that Mrs. von Kleist-Kieckow told me with real horror of a film in which the growth of a plant was portrayed with time-lapse photography; she and her husband were unable to bear that as an illegitimate prying into the mystery of life. Stifter lies in this direction. But doesn’t this also have some connection to the so-called English hypocrisy, which one contrasts to German “honesty”? I believe we Germans have never truly grasped the significance of “covering,” that is, or rather the *status corruptionis* of the world. Kant says very fittingly in his *Anthropology*, whoever fails to appreciate or disputes the meaning of illusion in the world is guilty of high treason against humanity.

By the way, were you the one who rustled up the book on “Witiko,” that was brought to me on Friday? Who else could it have been? Although it is more studious than wise, I read it in part with great interest. Many thanks!

By the way: “telling the truth” (about which I wrote an essay) means, in my opinion, to say how something is in reality, that is, with

respect for mystery, for trust, for hiddenness. “Betrayal,” for example, is not truth, just as frivolity, cynicism, and such, are not. What is concealed may be revealed only in confession, namely, before God. More on this as well later.

For the psychic overcoming of difficulties, there [exists] an easier way of “thinking past adversities”—I have more or less learned to do this—and a more difficult one: to hold them consciously in one’s gaze and overcome them; I can’t do that yet. But one must learn this as well, for the first is a small self-deception, I believe, though presumably a permissible one.

Now farewell. Faithfully thinking of you,

Your Dietrich

85. From Susanne Dreß

Friedrichsbrunn

December 14, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

Now I am sitting up here in snow and hoarfrost with little heat, yet in my thoughts I’m constantly in Berlin. How greatly I’d hoped to be able to be at home with the children for Christmas and then also to get permission to visit you. Even more I had hoped that you would be home again with our parents for Christmas. But perhaps one should learn in this Advent season to hope for other things. What may the dark time around Christmas now bring once more? I was very happy to be able to spend those awful days in Berlin, in order to help during the day with Mama and Papa, and to spend the evenings during the attacks with Walter, instead of only hearing the airplanes buzzing overhead here and having no possibility of news for days at a time. Now because of the ban on travel I will presumably have to remain

here until the beginning of January this time. . . . I have now been up here again for eight days and am enjoying the enchantingly beautiful landscape. On the bare beeches the hoarfrost is hanging in four-centimeter-long crystals. I have never been away in the winter before and was acquainted with winter landscapes only from postcards. . . .

Life together with the Leipzig family continues to go well. It's not really so very together anymore since I am residing up here in the boys' room with my two [sons]. . . . We have three beds, three chairs, two tables, one washstand, one wardrobe, one clothes tree, and a stove in the room, on which one can cook a bit if one makes a large enough fire underneath. When she was here, Miss Erna hung the Advent wreath head high precisely in the one free space where a person could stand upright, and since it is already shedding its needles, one gets fir needles on one's head many times each day, which are a bother when they fall down the back of your neck. You can imagine how tight and cozy it was when Walter was here. But he was so happy to be together with the children again that he had no complaints at all and felt very pleased to be here.

Christmas preparations have been completely abandoned this year. I have almost nothing even for the children. I still want to bake something and make some sweets. But since we want to set up the living room downstairs as the communal Christmas room, because of lack of heating, there simply isn't room for "much." I got a book in the city for Walter on the very day before the attack, but then that was the end of that. You will receive a pair of woolen mittens knitted by me that were, however, not ready yet when Walter left, and that I therefore can bring along to you only when I return to Berlin. . . . I have gradually brought a great many things up here, particularly those that the children are devoted to, as well as all kinds of books, pictures, and photos. It's now very pleasant in the winter seeing that we now have electric lights in the kitchen and upstairs in

your room. Otherwise it would be scarcely endurable. Hopefully, the coal supply will last. I don't want to take the children back to Berlin again. After all, it's just a matter of getting through March, April, and possibly February. In May one can survive with wood gathered from the forest. Perhaps one can find a place to stay in the countryside in the meantime. But these days no one makes plans any longer, but rather when things will no longer go on the way they have in the past, one makes a decision very suddenly. And for the most part this too works quite well. One learns to fundamentally let go of worrying about tomorrow, for the trouble one has every day is thoroughly enough.

Michael chose a hymn for you from the hymnal, which he is copying out for you. . . . Now with all our hearts we wish you a blessed Christmas and a better new year.

With much love,

Your Suse

86. To Eberhard Bethge

December 15, 1943

Dear Eberhard,

When I read your letter yesterday, it felt like the first drops of water in a long time from a spring, in the absence of which my spiritual life had begun to wither. Of course, this will seem exaggerated to you, for, in the first place, another spring has opened for you in the meantime and also you have many possible substitutes. But given my imprisonment, this is very different. Of necessity I have to live from the past; what is to come, which announces itself for me in Maria, still consists so much only in hints that it lies much more on the horizon of hope than in the realm of possession and tangible experience. In any case, your letter revived my thoughts, which just

in the past few weeks had become somewhat rusty and tired. For I was so utterly accustomed to sharing everything with you that such a sudden and long interruption represented a profound readjustment and a great deprivation. Now we are at least back in conversation, and I am reading your good, warmhearted letter, so familiar to me in its language, over and over again. Ever since your sermon on Isa. 53, I have been very fond of your language. If you wanted, you could easily be a novelist, but unfortunately you continue not to believe this of yourself and haven't taken the leap. Perhaps in quieter times a desire for this will develop; I almost can't imagine it otherwise. Anyone who has such a pronounced sense for the gradations of expression, and has acquired such a distinctive voice as you have, will eventually be compelled to want to write something coherent. Thank you so much for having written, and do write to me from time to time. For all the china they smash, R. and company must not succeed in also destroying our most significant personal relationships.

Now, first just a couple of external things: the wedding sermon was accidentally put with the will that Papa received from me and was locked up along with it. Please have Papa retrieve it for you. It is nothing special, but it was written at the time of your wedding, and I would be glad if both of you were still to read it occasionally.

How did it come about that you are being sent not to Warsaw but instead to Forli? (Surely I don't need to brush up your art-historical knowledge by reminding you of Melozzo da Forli's paintings of angels in the Vatican Museum?) In many respects this is more appealing, but do prepare yourself also for very cold days, little coal, bad stoves, stone floors, mountains, and spring not arriving prior to March/April. You will particularly need warm socks. You have the addresses of Marianne and George, don't you? Do you know to which unit you will be going? Are you still connected somehow to your previous military office, or not any longer? Be sure you learn

good Italian. With the many Italian prisoner-of-war camps, more and more interpreters are needed. In eight weeks you will surely be able to speak it. Since it is primarily a matter of learning by ear, this will come very easily to you.

Did you receive my *second* letter?

I assume that for Christmas a smoked goose or something like that will arrive from Klein Krössin or Kieckow again. I now have a great favor to ask you, to take half of it and give the other half to my parents. I definitely do not want it here; such a thing simply doesn't belong here, and it is no pleasure at all to eat it alone. You can send me *one* slice, but certainly not more. It is truly very much nicer to imagine you, that is, Renate and you, having a lovely breakfast together! That sounds marvelously altruistic, but in reality it's fundamentally selfish (and now that sounds even more altruistic! What is to be done? Especially given that people like us grant each other not any altruistic joys but only selfish ones). So will both of you please do me this favor and don't annoy me! Besides, you know from before that I don't care so much for it. Hans should get a slice too, since he is fanatically devoted to smoked goose! So, those are the external things.

And now I take up with joy your "evening conversation" (particularly since the lights have once again gone out here, and I am sitting by candlelight). So I imagine us sitting as in old times following supper (and the regular evening work) together in my room upstairs and smoking, occasionally playing chords on the clavichord and telling each other what the day has brought. Then I would first have infinitely many questions for you, about your time in training, about your trip to Karolus, and about being married, and would finally hear reasoned and honest opinions on all the things we had previously theorized about and that you now know. Yes, you already write like an old married man that marriage is the one and

only true thing—and I take you at your word, for you have never spoken in clichés. But you must tell me much more about it. And finally I would begin to tell you, for example, that, despite everything I have written, it is horrible here, that the dreadful impressions often pursue me well into the night, and that I can cope with them only by reciting countless hymn verses and that then my awakening sometimes begins with a sigh instead of with the praise of God. One becomes accustomed to the physical deprivations; in fact, one lives for months at a time as if bodiless—almost too much so—but one never becomes accustomed to the psychic pressure, quite the contrary. I have the feeling that what I am seeing and hearing makes me years older, and the world often feels for me like a nauseating burden. Presumably you will now be amazed that I am saying such a thing and are thinking of my letters; in fact, you yourself write so kindly that I was “somewhat concerned” to give you confidence about my situation. I often wonder who I really am: the one always cringing in disgust, going to pieces at these hideous experiences here, or the one who whips himself into shape, who on the outside (and even to himself) appears calm, cheerful, serene, superior, and lets himself be applauded for this charade—or is it real? What does “poise” [Haltung] mean, actually? In short, one knows less about oneself than ever and is no longer interested in it, weary with psychology and thoroughly averse to any analysis of the soul. I think this is the reason Stifter and Gotthelf have become so important to me. More important matters are at stake than self-knowledge.

Then I would talk to you about whether you think this trial, which has connected me to the Military Intelligence Office (and I can't imagine that has remained a secret), may possibly endanger the exercise of my profession in the future? You are absolutely the only person with whom I can discuss this question for the time being, and

if permission to visit is ever granted, perhaps we can talk about it. Give this some thought and please tell me the truth.

And finally, of course I could not but talk to you also about Maria. We have now been engaged nearly a year and still haven't ever had one single hour alone together! Isn't that absurd? We have to consciously repress everything that is usually part of the engagement period, the sensual-erotic dimension; our first kiss had to be exchanged right under R.'s eyes. We are obliged to converse and write about things that are not the most important to either of us. Month after month we sit next to each other for an hour as obediently as schoolchildren on their bench and are then torn away from each other again. We know next to nothing about each other; we have experienced nothing together, for we experience even these months separately. Maria considers me a paragon of virtue and a model of Christian behavior, and in order to reassure her, I am obliged to write her letters like an ancient martyr, and thus her image of me becomes ever more distorted. Isn't this an impossible situation for her? Yet she endures it so splendidly as a matter of course. Only occasionally does a different note sound, for instance, in her last visit, when I told her that even Christmas was not yet certain, she sighed and said, oh, it's becoming *too* long for me! But I am quite certain that she will not leave me in the lurch; it is not becoming "too long" for her "conduct" but for her heart; and that is much more important. The only thing I keep telling myself is that this all took place without our having a hand in it and will thus presumably serve some purpose. If only I can avoid doing her any injustice by expecting too much of her. If we were to get married soon after my release, which would surely be the best thing, then we would actually start getting to know each other. It will thus be a leap of faith without experience. That sounds quite beautiful, of course, but is not nearly so simple. Sometimes the age difference also disturbs me again, especially since I have the

feeling that I am becoming significantly older here and sometimes think my life is more or less behind me and all I have left to do is to complete my *Ethics*. But you know, in such moments I am gripped with an incomparable longing to have a child and not to vanish without a trace—probably more of an Old Testament wish than a New Testament one. How lucky you are that you are already able to await this, even if it is very difficult for you not to be able to be with Renate. Yes, all this I would say to you and much more besides, and would know that (assuming you were not trying to read the newspaper or falling asleep or even thinking of Renate!) you would listen to me like no one else and would give me good counsel. It may be that all these problems will be blown away in the moment of my release—I hope so! Could you perhaps still write me a few words in response to my questions and reflections?

If only we could see each other in freedom still before your departure. But if I really am meant to spend Christmas in prison, I will celebrate it as a “frontline Christmas” in my own way; you need not worry about that. The great battles are easier to fight and less punishing than the daily skirmishes. Yet I am also hoping that in some way you can wangle a few days of leave in February, and by then I will certainly be out, for, given the nonsense they are pinning on me, they will have to release me at the court appearance.

I am again working on the essay about “What does it mean to tell the truth?” The significance of trust, of faithfulness, of secrecy is worked out in strong contrast to the “cynical” conception of truth, for which all these bonds do not exist. “Lies” are the destruction of and the enmity against the real as it is in God; whoever tells the truth cynically is lying. By the way, I miss worship so remarkably little. What is the reason for this?

Your biblical comparison with “eating the letter” is very nice. If you get to Rome, do visit Schönhöffer in the “Propaganda fide.”

Was the tone among the soldiers truly nasty, or are they considerate toward you? Here in the dispensary the behavior is blunt, to be sure, but not disgusting. A few of the young prisoners seem to suffer to such a degree under the extended isolation and the long, dark evening hours that they break down completely under it. It is in fact insane to lock these people up for months without anything to keep them busy; truly in every possibly conceivable way this is nothing but demoralizing.

December 16

The attorney, of course, didn't show up again. This waiting is repugnant. Prisoners ought to be treated like sick people and children: what is promised must be fulfilled. What will become of me after my release seems still quite unclear. But if you were to get a reasonable superior in Italy, might it not be possible to tell him quite openly that you have a friend and cousin with whom you would like to serve together, and ask whether he couldn't perhaps put in a request for me? That would truly be wonderful! We could support each other in every situation. I will close so as not to claim too much of your time. I wish you and Renate an incomparably beautiful Christmas and a hopeful parting. I believe quite certainly that good things in endless abundance and great happiness await you both. I am not surprised that Renate is finding her way so un-self-consciously in her new tasks. Give her my love. When you characterize marriage as what "remains stable in all passing relationships," you are certainly right. But don't we also count a good friendship among the things that remain stable? Now farewell and God protect you! In faithfulness, and thinking of you,

Your Dietrich

The attorney has just arrived!

87. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

December 17, 1943

My dear Parents,

There is probably nothing else for me to do than to write you a Christmas letter just in case. Even though it is beyond comprehension that I may possibly be kept sitting here even over Christmas, nevertheless, in the last eight and a half months I have learned to consider the improbable probable and by a *sacrificium intellectus* to allow those things to happen to me that I can't change—granted, this *sacrificium* is not complete, and the *intellectus* silently pursues its own paths.

Above all, you must not think I will become despondent on account of this lonely Christmas; it will take its distinctive place forever in the series of diverse Christmases I have celebrated in Spain, in America, in England, and I intend that in years to come I will not be ashamed but will be able to look back with a certain pride on these days. That is the one thing no one can take from me.

The fact that you, Maria, and my siblings and friends are also not spared from knowing that I am in prison over Christmas, and that this will overshadow the few joyful hours still remaining for you in this time, is something I can tolerate only by believing and knowing that you will not think any differently than I do and that we are united in our attitude toward this Christmas; and that can't be otherwise simply because this attitude is a spiritual part of my inheritance from you. I need not tell you how great my longing for freedom and for all of you is. But throughout the decades you have given us such incomparably beautiful Christmases that the grateful remembrance of them is strong enough to make even a darker Christmas radiant. In such times it becomes apparent for the first time what it means

to possess a past and an inner heritage that is independent of the changes of time and circumstance. The awareness of being borne by a spiritual legacy stretching through centuries gives one the secure feeling of safety in the face of all passing afflictions. I believe that those who know themselves to be in possession of such reserves of strength don't need to be ashamed of softer emotions, which to my mind still belong to the better and more noble human feelings, when memory and a good and rich past evoke them. They will not overwhelm anyone who holds fast to the values that no human power can take away.

Viewed from a Christian perspective, Christmas in a prison cell can, of course, hardly be considered particularly problematic. Most likely many of those here in this building will celebrate a more meaningful and authentic Christmas than in places where it is celebrated in name only. That misery, sorrow, poverty, loneliness, helplessness, and guilt mean something quite different in the eyes of God than according to human judgment; that God turns toward the very places from which humans turn away; that Christ was born in a stable because there was no room for him in the inn—a prisoner grasps this better than others, and for him this is truly good news. And to the extent he believes it, he knows that he has been placed within the Christian community that goes beyond the scope of all spatial and temporal limits, and the prison walls lose their significance.

On Christmas Eve I will have you all in my thoughts, and I want you to believe that I too will have a couple of truly beautiful hours and that the distress will certainly not overpower me. It will be most difficult for Maria. It would be lovely to know that she is with you. But it will be better for her to be at her own home. When one thinks of the horrors that have overcome so many people recently in Berlin, then one becomes aware anew of how much we still have to be

grateful for. Presumably it will be a very quiet Christmas everywhere, and the children will think back on it later for many years to come. But perhaps precisely this will reveal to some for the first time what Christmas really is. Give my siblings and the children and all friends my love. May God protect us all.

With great gratitude and love,

Your Dietrich

88. To Eberhard Bethge

December 18, 1943

Dear Eberhard,

You too must receive a Christmas letter, at least. I no longer believe I will be released. As I understand it, I would have been acquitted at the hearing on December 17; but the lawyers wanted to take the safer route, and now I will presumably be sitting here for weeks yet, if not months. The past few weeks have been more difficult emotionally than all of what preceded them. But there is nothing more that can be done about it, only that it is more difficult to resign oneself to something one believes could have been prevented than to what is unavoidable. But once the facts are settled, one way or the other, one must then come to terms with them. I am thinking today above all of the fact that you too will soon be confronting circumstances that will be very hard for you, probably even harder than mine. I now think that one ought first to try everything to change these circumstances. Once everything has been tried and failed, then it is much easier to bear. It's true that not everything that happens is simply "God's will." But in the end nothing happens "apart from God's will" (Matt. 10:29), that is, in every event, even the most ungodly, there is a way through to God. When, as in your case, someone has just begun an extremely

happy marriage and has thanked God for it, then it is exceedingly hard to come to terms with the fact that the same God who has just founded this marriage now already demands of us another period of great privation. In my experience there is no greater torment than longing. Some people have been so shaken from early on in their lives that they can no longer, so to speak, manage any great longing. They have given up extending their inner “bowstring” of tension over long periods of time and create for themselves surrogate pleasures that can be more easily satisfied. That is the sad fate of the proletarian classes and the ruin of all spiritual fruitfulness. It truly may not be said that it is good for people to be beaten up by life early and often. In most cases it simply breaks a person. To be sure, such people are better hardened for times like ours but also infinitely coarser. If *we* are forcibly separated for a long time from the people we love, then we *cannot* procure for ourselves a cheap substitute from other people like most others do—I don’t mean out of moral scruples but simply because of our very being. The substitute repulses us. We simply have to wait and wait; we have to suffer indescribably from the separation; we have to experience longing practically to the point of becoming ill—and only in this way do we sustain communion with the people we love, even if in a very painful way. I have become acquainted with homesickness a couple of times in my life; there is no worse pain, and in the months here in prison I have had a quite terrible longing a couple of times. And because I think it will be similar for you in the next months, I wanted to write you about my experiences in this. Perhaps they can be of some use for you.

The first result of such periods of longing is always that one wishes to neglect the normal course of the day in some way; thus a certain disorder creeps into our life. I was sometimes tempted simply not to get up at six in the morning as usual—which would certainly have been possible—and instead to sleep longer. Up to now I have still

been able to force myself not to give in to this temptation; it was clear to me that this would have been the beginning of capitulation, from which presumably worse things would have followed. This external and purely physical order (morning calisthenics, cold-water wash) gives some strength for inner order. Further, there is nothing more mistaken than to attempt to acquire for oneself in such times some sort of substitute for what is unattainable. It will never succeed, and an even greater inner disorder is the result; but the power to overcome the tension, which can arise only from full concentration on the object of one's longing, is consumed and endurance made even more unbearable. For you as a married man there are presumably other problems posed here of which I don't yet know. But I think that even if the psychological deprivation is much greater than for an unmarried person, at the same time the power to bear it grows considerably and false solutions are more easily rejected. But you need to tell me about this, not I you. Further, I think it is good not to discuss one's condition with strangers—that only stirs everything up even more—but as far as possible to remain open to the needs of others. Above all, one must never fall prey to self-pity. And finally as pertains to the Christian dimension of the matter, the hymn reads, “that we may not forget / what one so readily forgets, / that this poor earth / is not our home”; it is indeed something important but is nevertheless only the very last thing. I believe we are so to love God in our *life* and in the good things God gives us and to lay hold of such trust in God that, when the time comes and is here—but truly only then!—we also go to God with love, trust, and joy. But—to say it clearly—that a person in the arms of his wife should long for the hereafter is, to put it mildly, tasteless and in any case is not God's will. One should find and love God in what God directly gives us; if it pleases God to allow us to enjoy an overwhelming earthly happiness, then one shouldn't be more pious than God and allow this happiness

to be gnawed away through arrogant thoughts and challenges and wild religious fantasy that is never satisfied with what God gives. God will not fail the person who finds his earthly happiness in God and is grateful, in those hours when he is reminded that all earthly things are temporary and that it is good to accustom his heart to eternity, and finally the hours will not fail to come in which we can honestly say, “I wish that I were home.” But all this has its time, and the main thing is that we remain in step with God and not keep rushing a few steps ahead, though also not lagging a single step behind either. It is arrogance to want to have everything at once, the happiness of marriage and the cross and the heavenly Jerusalem in which there is no husband and wife. “He has made everything suitable for its time” (Eccl. 3[:11]). Everything has “its hour”: [“]. . . to weep and . . . to laugh; . . . to embrace and . . . to refrain from embracing; . . . to tear and . . . to sew . . . and God seeks out what has gone by.” This last verse apparently means that nothing of the past is lost, that God seeks out with us the past that belongs to us to reclaim it. Thus when the longing for something past overtakes us—and this occurs at completely unpredictable times—then we can know that that is only one of the many “hours” that God still has in store for us, and then we should seek out that past again, not by our own effort but with God. Enough of this, I see that I have attempted too much; I actually can’t tell you anything on this subject that you don’t already know yourself.

Fourth Sunday in Advent

What I wrote yesterday was not a Christmas letter. Today I must say to you above all how tremendously glad I am that you are able to be home for Christmas! That is good luck; almost no one else will be as fortunate as you.

The thought that you are celebrating the fifth Christmas of this war in freedom and with Renate is so reassuring for me and makes me so confident for all that is to come that I rejoice in it daily. You will celebrate a very beautiful and joyful day; and after all that has happened to you so far, I believe that it will not be so long before you are again on leave in Berlin, and we will celebrate Easter together once again in peacetime, won't we?

In recent weeks this line has been running through my head over and over: "Calm your hearts, dear friends; / whatever plagues you, / whatever fails you, / I will restore it all." What does that mean, "I will restore it all"? Nothing is lost; in Christ all things are taken up, preserved, albeit in transfigured form, transparent, clear, liberated from the torment of self-serving demands. Christ brings all this back, indeed, as God intended, without being distorted by sin. The doctrine originating in Eph. 1:10 of the restoration of all things, ἀνακεφαλαίωσις—*re-capitulatio* (Irenaeus), is a magnificent and consummately consoling thought. The verse "God seeks out what has gone by" is here fulfilled. And no one has been able to express this with such simplicity and childlikeness as P. Gerhardt in the words he places in the Christ child's mouth: "I will restore it all." Perhaps this line can also be of some help to you in the coming weeks. Also, in these past few days I have discovered for myself the hymn "I stand here at your manger . . ." Up till now I had never really made much of it. Probably one has to be alone a long time and read it meditatively in order to be able to take it in. Every word is extraordinarily replete and radiant. It's just a little monastic-mystical, yet only as much as is warranted, for alongside the "we" there is indeed also an "I and Christ," and what that means can scarcely be said better than in this hymn. Only a few passages of the *Imitatio Christi*, which I am now reading occasionally in the Latin edition

(which, by the way, is infinitely more beautiful in Latin than in German), also belong among these. I also occasionally think of the



from the Augustinian “O bone Jesu,” by Schütz. In a certain way, namely, in its devotion—ecstatic, aching, and nevertheless so pure—isn’t this passage something like the “restoration” of all earthly desire? By the way, “restoration” is, of course, not to be confused with “sublimation”! “Sublimation” is σάπξ, (and pietistic?!), whereas “restoration” is spirit, meant not in the sense of “spiritualization” (which is also σάπξ) but of καινή κτίσις through the πνεῦμα ἅγιον. I think that this idea is also very important when we have occasion to talk to people who are questioning us about their relationship with those who have died. “I will restore it all”—that means we cannot and should not take it back again ourselves but allow ourselves to be given it by Christ. (By the way, whenever I am buried I would like “Eins bitte ich vom Herren” and “Eile mich, Gott, zu erretten” and “O bone Jesu” to be sung.)

Around noon on the twenty-fourth, a sweet old man always comes here on his own initiative and plays Christmas carols on his trumpet. In the experience of discerning people, however, the effect is simply that the prisoners wail in misery and the day only becomes more difficult for them; it has a “demoralizing” effect, one said, and I can imagine it. In previous years they say the prisoners repeatedly whistled and made lots of noise while he was playing, simply in order not to weaken. I also believe that in the face of *this* misery that reigns in this building, a remembrance of Christmas that is merely more

or less only playfully sentimental is inappropriate. A good, personal word, a sermon, should accompany it. Without that, music on its own can in fact become dangerous. Don't imagine, by the way, that I am worrying about this on my own account in any way; that is truly not the case, but I feel sorry for the many helpless young soldiers in their cells.

Presumably one will never be fully rid of this pressure that weighs on a person through all the difficult daily impressions, and most likely that is also a good thing. The thoughts about a fundamental reform of criminal justice are occupying me greatly and hopefully will bear fruit someday.

If you receive this letter in time, please ensure that I receive something good to read for the holidays. I had requested some things quite a while ago, but it appears nothing is available. It can also be something full of suspense. If you can get hold of the "Doctrine of Predestination," by Barth, (unbound) or "The Doctrine of God" without difficulty, have them brought to me. *Please* don't come here yourself, unless you have permission to visit. Your time is now also short and belongs to Renate.

These days I read the Palestinian trip undertaken by the elderly Soden with Knopf, nothing special, but I resolved to travel there with you after the war. It sounds as if only the theologically educated [Theologe] would get much out of it; for a layperson most likely too much is disappointing. We can take our wives along as far as Italy and let them wait there for us. What do you think of this?

The propagandist with whom I walk each day is developing gradually into a difficult thorn to endure. While for the most part people here do attempt to retain their composure, even in very difficult cases, he has fallen apart completely and makes a pitiful figure. I am as nice to him as possible and talk to him as I would to a child. Sometimes it is almost comical. What's nicer is that I have

heard that the prisoners who work in the kitchen or outdoors tip one another off in the afternoons as to when I am going to be in the infirmary and then come up with some reason or another because they think it nice to converse with me. Of course, that is actually not permitted, but it amused me when I heard it, and it will surely amuse you too. But take care that this isn't talked about.

This letter is probably the last opportunity that we can write to each other without anyone reading over our shoulders for some time. At my release I will miss you very much, for I envision the first stretch of time outside not being easy. Many major decisions will have to be made. I will need you for those. I would, of course, appreciate a short response to some of the questions in my letters. Also if there is some other thing you have to tell me that is important for me, then please let me know it. I am afraid that the period of our separation could become too long and we won't have shared important things. But on the other hand, I don't want to take up too much of your Berlin time. You must both enjoy these days as much as you can, and above all you must come back soon and healthy! It is some small comfort that you are traveling to such a beautiful and interesting region. Along the way you will also remember August 1936! And if you possibly can, see if you can't get me assigned to your region too—a "World Alliance" man with whom I have attended many conferences, I believe, a professor and a Protestant, lives in Florence. Unfortunately I have forgotten his name, but you can find him in the World Alliance Annual Book that is among my books, under "Italy" and can write to him without hesitation using my name. He knows me well. Perhaps he can be of some use for you. It is always good to have someone like that available. If you can't find the handbook, Renate might telephone Diestel and ask him; he will know immediately and perhaps several other addresses. I would not neglect this but take all these addresses along just in case. You can

gain very useful connections in this way. Greet Christoph from me as well. Does he think of studying theology? I think he will yet grow spiritually and intellectually [geistig] very much.

Now I'll stop! Read and do not forget Prov. 18:24. With my whole heart I wish you a wonderful festive season, a good new year, and a tolerable service assignment, and above all a quick return home,
Your faithful Dietrich

December 22, 1943

Now it appears the decision has been made that I cannot be with all of you for Christmas—but no one dares to tell me. Why on earth not? Do they think I have so little self-control, or do they consider it kinder to delude me with vain hopes day after day? Poor Maria. For her too it would be easier if they would just tell her the plain truth. The English have coined the fitting word “tantalize” for this situation. From sheer pity Maria and I have been “tantalized” for weeks. If you had been here, Eberhard, you would have been the only one who would have done your duty as a friend and told me the truth. Tomorrow or the day after, so I am told, I will be able to talk to you. For the first time in nine months, I will be allowed to speak and hear the complete truth. That is an event. I am obliged to protect my parents and Maria; with you I will put on no pretense, nor you with me. We never did so earlier and don't ever wish to. After our meeting I will no longer be able to write to you. But today I thank you already for coming and for still being there for me. By the way, if when you write from Italy to Renate you occasionally include a note to me, even only just a few words, you will make me very happy. Aren't there such things as purification plants near lakes?—you are aware of my ignorance of technical matters—but such things do exist, and this is what you are for me. Tomorrow I hope to tell you

somehow that for me the way that my entire situation has gone is quite decisively a question of faith, and I have the feeling that it has become too much a matter of calculation and caution. What matters to me is really [not] the more or less childish question of whether I will be home for Christmas; what matters decisively is not even that I would like to be together with Maria undisturbed and that I would like to discuss many things once more with you before your departure. To be sure, these things matter to me very much, but I believe I could gladly give them up if I could do so “in faith” and if I knew that it had to be so. “In faith” I can bear everything (—I hope—), even a conviction, even the other dreaded consequences (Ps. 18:29), but an anxious outlook wears one down. Please don’t worry about me if something worse occurs. Other brethren have gone through it already. But a faithless wavering back and forth, an endless consulting without action, a shrinking from risk, that is a real danger. I must be able to have the certainty that I am in God’s hand and not in human hands. Then everything will become easy, even the hardest privation. For me now it is not—I think I can truly say this—a matter of “understandable impatience,” as people will perhaps say, but that everything takes place in faith. In this regard opponents are much less dangerous than good friends. And you are probably the only one who understands this. I believe that Maria already grasps something of it. When you think of me during the next days and weeks, please do so in this sense (Ps. 60:12). And if you have a word to say to me on this, please be so good and write it to me. I don’t want to go through this bereft of faith.

My sense is that I will be released and/or inducted into the military in January or February. If where you are stationed you are able—and want—to do something so that I might come there too, please don’t let others’ advice deter you from this. The only question is whether you have someone there with whom you can speak confidentially.

Of course, it would have to be done soon. We need to learn to act differently than those who keep on hesitating, whose failure we know in the wider context. One must become clear about what one wants, one must question whether one can take responsibility for it, and then with unconquerable confidence one must do it. Then and only then can one also bear the consequences. 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. I do not wish to erase from my life anything of what has taken place since then, whether for me personally (—Would I otherwise be engaged? Would you be married? Not to mention Sigurdshof, east Prussia, Ettal., my illness under your care, the Berlin time), nor in general. And the fact that I am now sitting here (do you remember the year I foretold to you last March?) I consider my participation in the fate of Germany, to which I was committed. Without any reproach I think of what is past, and without reproach I receive what is present; but I don't wish to slide into uncertainty through human manipulation. We can live only in certainty and in faith. You among the soldiers out on the front, I in my cell, Maria and Renate in waiting and hoping. In the *Imitatio Christi* I just read, *Custodi diligenter cellam tuam, et custodiet te!* (“Take good care of your cell and it will take good care of you”).—God preserve us in faith.

89. To Renate and Eberhard Bethge

Christmas Eve 1943

Dear Renate and Eberhard,

It is 9:30 p.m.; I have spent a few pleasant and peaceful hours and thought with much gratitude that the two of you are able to be

together today. The memory of this will be important for you in the time ahead. The only picture hanging above my desk besides the picture of Maria is the one of you both that you gave me and for which I'm very happy; the bookmark in my *Daily Texts* is a picture of Eberhard that I like more and more the longer I have it: in it I see reflected everything I have known of him for years. One of the greatest joys for me this Christmas was that even this year we could exchange the *Daily Texts* with each other. I had sometimes thought and hoped for this but had no longer considered it to be possible. Now this book, which has been so important to me especially in these past months, will accompany us through the coming year as well, and when we read it in the morning, we will particularly think of one another. Thank you so much! It was especially nice of you to pick out the book of poems for me. I keep reading in it with much pleasure and profit. I felt a bit sad that I was unable to give you anything nice at all this year, but my thoughts and wishes are with you even more warmly, if that's possible, than ever.

I want to say a few things for the period of separation now awaiting you. One need not even mention how difficult such separation is for us. But since I have now spent nine months separated from all the people I am attached to, I have some experience about which I would like to write to you. Up to now, Eberhard and I have shared all experiences that were important to us and thereby helped each other in many ways, and now, Renate, you will be part of this in some way. In the process you should attempt somewhat to forget me as "uncle" and think of me more as the friend of your husband. First, there is nothing that can replace the absence of someone dear to us, and one should not even attempt to do so; one must simply persevere and endure it. At first that sounds very hard, but at the same time it is a great comfort, for one remains connected to the other person through the emptiness to the extent it truly remains

unfilled. It is wrong to say that God fills the emptiness; God in no way fills it but rather keeps it empty and thus helps us preserve—even if in pain—our authentic communion. Further, the more beautiful and full the memories, the more difficult the separation. But gratitude transforms the torment of memory into peaceful joy. One bears what was beautiful in the past not as a thorn but as a precious gift deep within. One must guard against wallowing in these memories, giving oneself entirely over to them, just as one does not gaze endlessly at a precious gift but only at particular times, and otherwise possesses it only as a hidden treasure of which one is certain. Then a lasting joy and strength radiate from the past. Further, times of separation are not lost and fruitless for common life, or at least not necessarily, but rather in them a quite remarkably strong communion—despite all problems—can develop. Moreover, I have experienced especially here that we can always cope with *facts*; it is only what we anticipate that is magnified by worry and anxiety beyond all measure. From first awakening until our return to sleep, we must commend and entrust the other person to God wholly and without reserve, and let our worries become prayer for the other person. “With anxieties and with worry . . . God lets *nothing* be taken from himself.” Finally, I personally believe that you, Eberhard, will find people everywhere who will be eager to smooth the way for you so that it will not take long at all until you are again on leave or in some other way back in Berlin. Despite this, Eberhard, you can trust and I promise you (it actually seems unnecessary to me even to say this to you) that I will refrain from nothing that stands in my power, now or later, to stand by Renate in any way she may need while you are away, and to help the two of you be together again as soon as possible. Renate, you should claim your rights as Klaus’s goddaughter; I will also write to him and do some other things. I believe I can place myself very well in your situation when you are separated, and I wish for you with all

my heart that this time of separation may be made as easy as possible for you. Whatever I can contribute to this will certainly take place, do believe me.

Christmas Day

I very much hope to be there when your child is born. Eberhard, you recently spoke of names. If I am honest, I must say that this question has also occurred to me. If it is a boy, I would consider “Eberhard” the nicest; I like it when names are inherited. It seems you are still thinking of “Dietrich.” The name is good; the example less so. It has a certain logic, since it is quite improbable that you would have become acquainted without my presence. I confess with some shame but pleasure as well that I would truly be delighted about it. (But this is a crazy idea of yours, Eberhard, that this has something to do with Winfried Krause’s and Jochen’s children!) Anyway, I think it is very nice of you to think of doing this (not only “although” I have that name, as you, Eberhard, put it so nicely and characteristically!), but I consider the name and example of the father even better, and in any case I am very excited and definitely will not take it the wrong way if you two come up with some completely different idea! Please forgive me for taking part in this discussion at all.

Again all the beautiful gifts (Maria sent me the wristwatch her father was wearing when he was killed, she knitted me a wonderful sweater, and many other things as well were in a beautifully wrapped Christmas package; the goblet from my parents also gave me special joy; the pastry baked by your mother is legendary as always, the book very interesting—and over and over my eye returns to the *Daily Texts*, which I would have missed greatly in the coming year) are piled up on the ledge of my bed folded against the wall, and in front of me are the pictures, which give me pleasure. I still live constantly from your visit, Eberhard. Just tell your father that this was the best

thing he has done for me in his entire life to date! It *was* truly a “*necessitas*”! There is a spiritual hunger for discussion that is much more tormenting than physical hunger, and I can speak in that way and about certain things with no one else but you. Entire complexes of questions are opened and clarified in a few words and hints. Our attunement, our familiarity with each other, achieved by years of not always frictionless practice, is something we must never lose. It is an unbelievable advantage and an extraordinary help. How much did we touch on and learn from each other in those one and a half hours! Thank you so much for obtaining this and carrying it through. It cost you and Renate a morning together. But I think you both did it gladly nevertheless. It was a *necessitas*, and I can now think of you, Eberhard, again quite differently. Besides, your visit stimulated a little work that I will perhaps be able to send you soon, and it encouraged and renewed in me the desire for my major work; what you described about the writing of *Der grüne Heinrich* (—despite all other claims on your time, you always get around to reading and ferreting out the most interesting things!—) was unknown to me, and I found it very comforting.

The people here wanted to make Christmas as nice as possible for me, but I was always happy each time I was by myself again; that surprised even me, and I sometimes wonder how I will find my way when I’m back around people. Eberhard, you of course know of my occasional retreats from big festivities to my room. I fear that has become even worse. Despite all the deprivations, I have also come to cherish the solitude. I am very happy to speak with one or two people, but any larger gathering of people and above all any idle talk and gossip is intolerable to me. In this respect it will not be easy for Maria.

Second day of Christmas

Today you are leaving, Eberhard. When you both wake up tomorrow, may God strengthen your hearts and let no sadness arise in you; may God daily show each of you tasks that are worth the effort (*Daily Texts* today Luke 2:17!); may God make straight all your ways and bring you back together joyfully and also give me the day when I will see you both again. May God keep you and us all. Thinking of you both with much love,

Your Dietrich

Who actually did your photographs? They are particularly good and, on the other hand, look like snapshots taken by an amateur, which is an advantage. If you need money, *please* simply withdraw it! As much as you want!—Eberhard, try sometime to determine what the people you find yourself with actually believe. Presumably it can be summarized in a few sentences, and yet it is very important to know. Your poetry volume is truly something especially good! (Since it comes from Tiedemann, I cannot suppress certain fears regarding your coming monthly budget!)

The cigars are also magnificent; I am smoking them to accompany work on the little literary work you inspired. I am very confident that we will celebrate Easter together again in freedom, and then both of you will come to my wedding, and beforehand we will also baptize your child.

Eberhard, you know that despite all the reassurance people give me, I know precisely how you must feel in your current occupation! But what is the point of saying much about this when one knows each other so well? One knows it; that is enough. By the way, Klaus's remark that he still lacks this experience was not just made ad hoc; he has occasionally said it before (to be sure, only in theory), for he is among those people who hunger for experience and under the

concept of “experience” view everything else as justified. In these matters the two of us think somewhat differently. By the way, I wanted to thank you particularly that you also visited Weymarn. This will have evoked great joy! That was really very nice of you.

90. Christmas Letter 1943

Christmas

Daily Text: “I will perform marvels . . . and all the people . . .

shall see the work of the Lord.” ([from] Exod. 34:10)

“To you is born this day . . . a Savior.” (Luke 2:11)

I lay in deepest night of death,
You were my Sun,
The Sun that brought me
Light, life, delight, and joy.
O Sun, who prepared the precious light
Of faith in me,
How beautiful are your rays!

I behold you with joy
And cannot gaze enough on you;
And because I cannot do any more
I simply stand here, worshipping.
O that my mind were an abyss
And my soul a vast ocean
That I might be able to contain you!

(Paul Gerhardt)

Joy, O joy beyond all gladness
Christ has done away with sadness!
Hence, all sorrow and repining,
For the Sun of Grace is shining!

(Christian Keimann)

The Light Eternal, breaking through,
the world to gleam *anew*;
His beams have pierced the core of night,
He makes us children of the light.

(Luther)



Your Dietrich

91. From Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

December 25, 1943

Dear Dietrich,
We hadn't written, in the hope that you would perhaps be home for Christmas. Yet we have been brought somewhat up to date about how you are doing by the visits that Maria and Eberhard had. Unfortunately, there has still been no response to our request to visit you over the Christmas period. Postal delivery, as one senses with other things, varies greatly. Perhaps we will already have spoken

to you by the time this letter reaches you. The introduction to yesterday's Christmas day with the early-morning attack by the English was horrible and once again inflicted great damage, apparently this time in the southeastern suburbs. Nothing happened to us. After the Dohnanyi children went with Christel to visit Hans, we celebrated with the Schleichers and the Bethges in the evening. The Dohnanyi children had brought a pretty tree, which Eberhard decorated along with Renate. The children were happy; Eberhard read the Christmas epistle. This is the first time we have been unable to have a tree in our home and the children and grandchildren over. You can well imagine that you and Sabine were often in our thoughts. But we were thankful to be able to be together in an undamaged house with the children who are here. Even if Hans and Christine's absence cast a deep shadow and brought little Christoph to tears before the tree, nevertheless, the confidence that release must surely come soon was so great that gradually the children's cheerfulness won out, and we then feasted together on our herring salad, goose—a gift from a patient—and poppy-seed pastries with contentment, as far as this was possible for us old folks in view of all one has experienced in the past year. Today Eberhard led a brief service in celebration of the nativity. We went with the Schleichers to Fuchs for lunch, and from there the girls went to Potsdam to visit Hans-Walter in the military hospital. His infectious hepatitis is subsiding, he is free of fever, and in the next few days he should have a short leave from the infirmary. But he will have to go back. Mama also wants to write a line.

Love from your Father

Dear Dietrich, Papa told you about the Christmas days. Today Eberhard is departing, really hard for dear Renate. Where she is to

deliver her baby in February is not yet clear even now. She would like best to have it here, but of course that will be difficult.

I hope that you sensed on Christmas Eve how much we were thinking of you. I have now given Maria the cross after all. I told her that you had chosen it and along with your siblings had given it to me; she was to get it anyway someday, so I would rather give it to her myself in person and would love to see it on her. I think she was truly happy about it, and I did want to give her joy.

Tomorrow we intend to return to the city, and we hope to be able to close a couple more windows with flexible glass. We had everything ready when the second attack came. Papa must be able to receive his patients if at all possible. You won't receive this letter until the new year. I greet the new year as never before in my long life. The old year was like a bad dream! God be with you!

Your Mother

92. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

December 25, 1943

My dear Parents,

Christmas is over. It brought me a couple of quiet, peaceful hours, and a great deal from the past was quite present. Gratitude that you and all siblings have been preserved in the heavy air raids and the confidence of seeing you in the not too distant future in freedom were greater than all that is oppressive. I lit your and Maria's candles and read the Christmas story and hummed some beautiful Christmas carols, and thought of you all and hoped that after all the upheaval of recent weeks you might be experiencing a peaceful hour. Your Christmas package was a great joy, especially my great-grandfather's goblet from 1845, which is now on my table with fir greens. But the material pleasures too were very nice and will also keep awhile.

I received interesting books and Christmas pastries from my siblings. Do pass along my great thanks to all of them. Maria, who was here on the twenty-second, gave me the wristwatch her father was wearing when he was killed. That pleased me very much. Then she sent me another package that was given to me only yesterday morning, very handsomely packed, with gingerbread and notes from her mother and grandmother. I felt a bit sad that I was unable to give her anything, but I want to do it only when I am free again and can give it to her myself. I told her that, and she also thought it would be nicer that way. I am quite certain that she will celebrate these Christmas days, missing her father and brother, and with me in prison, as she has dealt with everything so far, composed and brave—even when it appears to be beyond her strength. She has learned very early to discern a stronger and kinder hand at work in that which human beings do to us.

Now I will still not be with you for your birthday, dear Mama. If only one could give you something you could enjoy! Everyone will surely be trying. I can only tell you that we need you more than ever in these difficult times and that I cannot imagine the past months of my imprisonment at all without you. The way in which you both have borne this blow will be an important memory and even more than that for your grandchildren all their lives. With every letter and every visit I receive from you, I am grateful all over again and will always remain so. If only you would not overtax yourselves so often and would take care of yourselves physically somewhat more. That would be a real birthday wish from me to you, but I fear unfortunately that precisely this will remain unfulfilled. And yet it would be such a great comfort for us all. The new year too will bring yet more worry and trouble, but I believe this New Year's Eve we will be able to sing and pray the verse from the old New Year's hymn with greater confidence than ever: "Close up the gates of misery / and

in all places / after so much bloodshed / let streams of joy now flow.” I don’t know anything greater we could ask or wish for your birthday either. I thank you both for everything you have done for me in this past year.

With love from my heart,

Your Dietrich

93. From Christoph von Dohnanyi

December 28, 1943

Dear Uncle Dietrich,

Now Christmas is already over. I will tell you in a moment how we celebrated it. But first I want to thank you for your wonderful gift. It is really magnificent. I never would have thought I would become such a rich man so soon. Now I will try to use it for a beautiful book or some very beautiful object. This will be difficult, of course, since a great many places have burned down. But one can make a stupendous start with one hundred marks. On Christmas Eve we were with Papa, set up a little tree there, and even had a little exchange of gifts. Unfortunately I wasn’t able to play any carols because Mama thought that would be too loud. But when we asked the nurses later, they said it wouldn’t be so bad, and then on Christmas Day I played instead. It was very nice that we were able to be together this way. In the evening we returned home and barely made it for the exchange of gifts here. Renate and Eberhard had decorated the Christmas tree. It is decorated very neutrally. You know, of course, that on our tree we always have a whole lot of tinsel in contrast to the Schleichers, who always had less tinsel but more apples. Ours this time is sort of in-between. Also our beautiful manger is set up under it again. Klaus managed to get the tree itself in Potsdam with great difficulty.

Our school starts again on January 11. Maybe we will be lucky and the vacation will be extended due to the shortage of coal. But I don't think this will happen since it is quite warm out and we don't need to heat that much at all.

Hopefully, it will stay this way, since for the people who have no windowpanes it is quite unbearable when it's cold.

Now I want to wish you a really healthy new year that hopefully brings us peace and reunion soon.

With love from your grateful
Christoph

94. From Eberhard Bethge

Lissa, January 2, 1944

Dear Dietrich,

I must try to get another letter off to you, and tell you how overcome I was by the visit with you and by your letters. You wouldn't believe how often I have read them over, read parts aloud to Renate, and also shared some things with the family. I don't know how it was for you—for my part, in any case, I must say that when I left you on the twenty-third, I felt almost lighthearted and set free. Since this [had] happened, and since we had, in a great rush, managed to touch on so many, many things, it seemed a bit easier to say good-bye. Of course, I saw afterward that it would have been much better if I had had your letters beforehand and thus been able to focus on the problems in greater depth. But I hope you could see how delighted I was to speak with you at last, hear directly from you, and read your words addressed to me.

You write that, apart from marriage, our friendship should count as one of the things that remain stable. But just this is not so in the estimation of others and the consideration that they give it. It is

marriage—whether it is the more stable of the two or not—that gets the outward consideration and recognition. Everyone, in this case the whole family, must take it into account and thinks it right that much has to be done, and should be done, on behalf of a married couple. Friendship, even when it's so exclusive and includes all of each other's goods, as it is with us, doesn't have any "*necessitas*," as Father expressed it in regard to applying for a permit to visit. It's taken for granted that your letters are passed to Maria, and almost as much that they go to Karl-Friedrich, but it takes an extra struggle for me to get them as well.

From all this you'll understand that your letters, and the visit, were something of a liberation for me. In the military, as you also said, nobody takes into consideration that someone has a very good friend. Friendship is completely determined and sustained by its own inner content, and only this keeps it in existence. Marriage doesn't have to be any more than just that; it is sustained by the formal recognition it enjoys. I'm experiencing it—perhaps because I'm newly married—as something very lovely when it's more, when it's inwardly so much the way it should be, and on top of that one experiences the legal and formal consideration and respect due to it, right through these days when everything is in flux. It gives me a sort of calm and makes me feel more manly. That's what I meant to say. Certainly these experiences—as paradoxical as it sounds—have allowed me to find being bombed out, being called up, losing my entire security in many ways, less terrible than I might have otherwise. Being called up is the worst, however; I mean my deployment and separation. But even this still has the effect that the family thinks about things for the sake of the marriage, while no one has yet given any serious thought to how it might be made possible for you and me to do our service together.

Anyway, thank you so much for everything you said to me, for the many "interesting" hints about your work and reflections that

you wrote about. They are very much with me now: Old Testament thinking, the meaning of illusion, enjoying the good things of this earth with a good conscience. Perhaps I'll find a quiet moment soon to write more about these and get it to you. Against expectation I now have another leave until January 6, because of an embargo on military travel; plucky Renate came here to join me. We are having a splendid New Year together, including three overnight leaves in succession thanks to all sorts of manipulations. Then I will probably be off again to Munich via Berlin. If only I could have one more letter from you by then.

By the way, I spoke to Lokies right away on the twenty-third about the effect on your career. He didn't see any problems in the eventuality that all the false fronts come down, and up to now there is really no one in the leadership who could *seriously* deal with this matter because they didn't know about it. Nor did he think that any definite general feeling has developed against you that would complicate things, because the prestige you enjoy as a theologian is too great and undisputed. Of course, he does not always see to the bottom of things; his judgment is easily clouded by his warmth and good will. Nevertheless, it is important that this is what he thinks. He gets around a lot due to his work with evacuees. Renate and I were just reading a beautiful verse, which I recommend to you as a speech exercise in remembrance of old times (it's from Busch): "Fear makes many things happen that otherwise wouldn't have happened."

Wish I could play chess with you just now; I've been getting a lot of practice with Renate, during our honeymoon, in Spandau, and now here.

95. From Eberhard Bethge

Saturday, January 8, 1944

Dear Dietrich,

Today you will have heard that I'm [here] again on my way through, leaving in the morning. Once again the stress of saying good-bye. Remarkable how little one benefits from practice in this. So here's another quick greeting to you; sorry it's such an imperfect, fragmentary one. We were so happy to have your letter written over Christmas, and thank you very much for your words to the two of us.

It must be hard for you to imagine the two of us together, to look at us and speak to us both together. We do thank you for the way you have done it. I think Renate understands very well all that you said, and I am glad that you wrote her some things that you are better able to say than I might perhaps be able to express to her. You wouldn't believe what peace and assurance I feel coming from the letters you have sent me. You have the quiet there, and you take the time, to write good, long letters. Nobody else here in Berlin really has time or leisure for anyone else, and the hardships of daily life make people nervous and self-centered. So your writing does me so much good and keeps me inspired for a long time. Thank you so much. I wanted to say at least that to you before I go off. I certainly hope for some leisure time to give you more of a reply than that. Now at least I have the one more letter I was longing for when I was writing the first page of this one. I hope you will soon hear more from me, especially definite news about how things go for me. The photos were taken by the photographer in Lissa.

A letter has just come from Dieter Zimmermann (army official in Wittenberg). If it's a boy, they want you to be godfather; if it's a girl, me. I'm to pass that on to you. Good-bye for now. Yours, with all good wishes and thoughts,
Eberhard

96. From Eberhard Bethge

On the train to Munich

January 9, 1944

Dear Dietrich,

Almost one year ago we were sitting on the train, this same route, on our last trip together to Munich. It was still a very nice trip then. You were reading Talleyrand; we ate in the dining car; I was probably writing to R[enate] again. We listened to *Palestrina* and were perplexed, had coffee at Ninne's (I'll go and see her tomorrow, or as soon as I can), and collected another lot of good books. On the way back we went over the amounts we spent for food-ration tickets together, and as usual you were very generous. We had a great many high hopes.

Since then you have been through much that we couldn't have imagined then; I bring three-quarters of a year's worth of completely new experiences to this journey of mine. Something new is beginning. Now before it gets dark—there are no lights on military trains—I want to chat with you a little. You've often written to me on trains to Munich, haven't you, and they were unusually thoughtful letters, but certainly not as contemplative as those you've been writing now.

It's been three-quarters of a year without you, and if one looks beyond the constant ardent wish to be together and talk things over, one can take note of positive and negative effects. To say something harmless, it's very certainly positive for playing music with Renate. Singing and playing with you unfortunately made it harder to do with anyone else, sometimes unendurable. Nobody could read Schütz like you, with your biblical knowledge, and nobody could sight-read and catch the phrasing so that it really spoke. And who else could get us to understand Wolf? Now that

Renate has somewhat overcome her self-consciousness with all this, she plays more energetically and freely. Her high standards have been a great hindrance and still are sometimes. But now nothing really hinders her except getting tired, in her condition. But she herself now enjoys and gets excited about playing and singing Schütz. Because I like them so much, she was even practicing Schubert's Blümlein variations. She does have good musical ideas. A rapid overview of more than just the notes only comes with experience. I don't think I've learned much more during this time; perhaps I can sing a little higher. What makes me especially happy is that she really enjoys singing with me and listening to me. I can hardly tell you how much I'm looking forward to playing everything with you again. But certainly it was good that Renate had to tackle it by herself, and that the two of us are learning to play together. You have the courage to try for an "effect" now and then. As the last thing on Christmas Day, Renate wanted Schütz, and suddenly it got hold of her completely and she could keep up as never before.

And negative effects? I've missed the stimulation and admonition coming from you, both in theology and in the Christian life. You would certainly have made me more clearly aware of many things during this time, which Renate's presence gave me the opportunity to learn[:] a critical sensitivity to empty phrases and jumping to wrong conclusions, to smugness, stylized piety, and holier-than-thou petit bourgeois attitudes in the church, and to what is supposedly necessary; I feel that all this has grown in me through her presence. It will surely be good for my preaching. Just knowing she's always there listening—without much really being said—makes me look twice at everything, to see whether it's important and practical to say now. Though actually I haven't been preaching much. Through her, it seems to me, much about you is becoming clearer and more understandable, the difference in our backgrounds—yours and

mine—and what it means that you became, and are, a theologian in *this* family. Renate has made me see this in a new way. She herself probably doesn't know all this.

But in living the Christian life—there, not much has been accomplished. We were just getting started at running our own household when it was already over, and those three to four weeks were also interrupted by travel. We had begun morning Bible reading from the Confessing Church lectionary. The complete lack of a well-ordered living situation, and of everything that goes with it, I find a bit depressing for the sake of the coming baby, since I am convinced of the importance to a bird of an attractive, warm, unchanging, and well-kept nest. To put it plainly, the importance of the forms of Christian practice, Christian activities, and Christian “devotion” is something that we are just beginning to pay attention to, despite all our relativizing and questioning. And yet every time I have been worried about something, it turned out that afterward I saw to my amazement—when it became acute—that she had already understood. Likewise, the absolute trust and confidence with which Renate enters into every new situation and masters it or meets expectations makes me very happy. But that doesn't mean that everything comes easily to her. Most recently, for instance, singing carols on Christmas Day just broke [her] heart. In someone who is so sparing with words, how seriously one has to take any revelation of joy or pain!

Yes, your theological and brotherly words in your letters were like water in the desert, and in many ways they made me aware again of how great my thirst really is. It seems to me, by the way, that the generational difference between us and our women, in our formative years, education, and the world around us, is stimulating and fruitful for preaching. How difficult is the generational difference otherwise? Not very serious, I think. Renate told me recently that she hadn't

for a moment felt that this placed a particular responsibility on her. In your case the difference is probably greater in every way. But it doesn't seem to me that this would cause difficulties; instead it would be your and Maria's different backgrounds. I've been seeing this for years through you. For instance, you, your siblings and nieces and nephews were brought up to have a taste in literature that included, very early, firm and well-defined standards, really quite unusual. But I'm an example of how easily this can be corrected, the more so such an intelligent person as M[aria], who, according to my observation, is very attentive to persuasions and nuances of taste. But what help does she have besides your letters from the prison? Even with us, you had to wait awhile until we realized that Frank Thieß wasn't the ultimate and most exciting author! No doubt there will be a moment of tension between you, but couldn't it be a fruitful and stimulating one?

I shared with Renate your words "she thinks I'm a paragon of virtue and model of Christian behavior"; she really laughed at that and said she used to think so about me. The concern about being fairly categorized takes care of itself after a while. Certainly—and I'm thinking of my own case, which is of course not the same—Maria will often find a bit puzzling and excessive the understanding of "strictness" in your family, your (somewhat English) sense of humor, the "meaning of illusion," the lack of ceremony, energetic impatience, the way of estimating persons, family pride, distrust of words and "depth." But I don't think all that will just make her homesick. For me, in any case, it was one of the most beneficial experiences. If only the two of you could be together, whenever that could be.

Just before saying good-bye, when Renate came into the train compartment with me, we looked up the text for today. Isn't it a fine one for today, the ninth? You gave us the beautiful folio of

Dürer reproductions. Last night in bed we looked at it some more and were glad to see many we didn't know. And the breast of goose did us good as well. Many, many thanks. And the fine Christmas letter, which I already referred to briefly yesterday. What you write us about the experience of separation I find very comforting, as well as what you wrote recently about the phenomena of longing and of consoling oneself with substitutes. Renate and I have, in fact, never been apart for more than two weeks at the most since we became secretly engaged. What a difference between that and your situation. But the comparison doesn't make it easier. And of course, Renate has in her parents and especially her grandparents the example that a married couple can and must never be separated, and that's the only possibility that exists for her. Was your mother actually ever away from your father for a long time?

With regard to names, we are quite at a loss for a girl's name! What have you been writing recently? We may actually make some use of the money, if it works out for us to move to the Berns' in Sakrow on a short-term basis, and if getting a rented place in Dahlem would only involve us in awkward discussions. But perhaps it won't come to anything. Thanks a lot anyway.

I am doing your pipe the honor of learning to smoke it and getting on quite well with it.

"Education, dying, nobility" I found very interesting. But I haven't yet been through such grim situations as you have. I'm not sure I'd be in control in such a situation if I got the picture of what's really going on there. Education and death Socratic? The educated person as the one who has no self-delusions, and doesn't try to drown uneasiness in activity or just stick it out, but knows in the Christian faith the way to overcome it? It's getting dark; I can't see anymore. So that's all for now.

Yours, Eberhard

I'm writing again—we soldiers aren't otherwise worth turning the lights on for, but amazingly they've come on in this one [train] returning to the front, so I'll make use of them. We're going down through the Thuringian forest now. Who knows when I'll be back here again. If only there was a way now to correspond regularly and quickly. Just think, in Lissa I climbed in the window like a schoolkid to keep my promise to Renate, after my overnight visit was canceled at the last minute. I felt like a schoolkid too—part show-off, part shaky—but it turned out all right. The situation in my quarters has been rather unpleasant at times. One of the fellows was off for days at a time running around with a woman ten years older, day and night. Another, a touching nineteen-year-old, glowing with enthusiasm, was borrowing the Eher books on German history from the city library—a lance corporal with no high school education. Who's going to set him straight? "Faith"? He probably has hardly any. At home, where the women are, there's a little corner where you can uncover a remnant of religious assurance. Another lance corporal, however, showed me letters from his mother and his wife with "Jesus" faith, and spoke quite admiringly of them—it seems the bombing had brought this out. It's all very strange. Everywhere there is a secret respect for the Catholics. A Catholic sergeant remarked that the church problem was the judgment of the times (*Genetivus objectivus*). I found your sentences about the Old Testament very good. How Mrs. von Kleist would love to read them. I read them aloud to Father (Rüd[iger]); they must have given him something to think about. Who is saying anything like that in German lecture halls anymore?

Say, how can I get hold of *Witiko*? You've made me very eager to read it. Renate has now read many of his short stories. I've only read one; I read it aloud to her in Lissa and found it true, what you wrote

about his purity and the lack of curiosity about it. Like good fairy tales.

About man and wife belonging together forming a “bulwark,” I agree with you entirely. Renate used to talk, just as a young girl would, about the possibility of having different opinions. In practice, however, our need for unity in as many things as possible has just grown by itself and become intense. In matters of taste and tact, within certain limits, possibilities do exist for learning more.

Working-class folk who “know no longings,” who are always finding alternative means of satisfaction to shorten the span of tension, make the best soldiers for these times, by the way, or else the war has lasted so long that things have developed horribly in this direction. In a twelve-man dormitory you can really find yourself despising them. How quickly human beings make themselves “at home” in whatever hole they fall into, so shamelessly at home, and that makes them *such* useful, obedient soldiers!

I’m writing this while turning the pages of your letters. Perhaps only really educated people get homesick, but not intellectuals.

What you wrote about happiness and the cross did me good. Are you going to have a chapter on that? Perhaps it’s important, indeed, not to have a false guilty conscience about such things.

I hope we shall soon receive your sermon for our wedding. It’s terrible how difficult everything is these days. One is extremely careful about daring to request anything of your parents.

You are so kind about encouraging me to start writing. You have already accomplished a great deal, and I trust in your midwifery skills; that would really be your masterwork on my behalf. So far only my critical vein has grown, not my uninhibited side. I’d still rather read your writing than write myself. But who knows? You have written me so many splendid things; all I can do is touch on them, but at least

I want to show you that every bit thoroughly occupies me. I'm just waiting till we see each other and talk.

What's ahead for me? Fritz O[nnasch] wasn't in Stettin during the attack the other day—he was with his wife in Köslin. Reimer seems to be in tough situations on the eastern front. Mrs. von Kleist is writing to him. It seems Albrecht Schönherr will also be sent there. O. K. Lerche got married! I'm to be godfather to Maria-Claudia Zimmermann, and you to Christian-Matthias. Dibelius baptized them on December 27.

So I've told you some things, and you've helped me get through the first hours of separation. When shall I hear any news from you? Hopefully, Renate and her mother will have a permit to visit soon. Good-bye for now.

Yours as ever, Eberhard

Your water-clarification plant (great image!)

January 10

Well, it still isn't all clear yet. Tomorrow I go to Verona. In the meantime, I'm spending two nights in a familiar place: the Europäischer Hof. Of course, it was full. But reminding them that we, and you, stayed there last year got the priest to open up a room for me.

Now I'm going to see Ninne Kalckreuth; she sounded quite pleased on the phone. So, until the next time. Now it's off over the Brenner Pass.

Yours, Eberhard

What about Christ's fear? He expressed it out loud.

97. From Renate Bethge

Sakrow, January 10, 1944

Dear Uncle Dietrich,

Many thanks for your long letter. We were really delighted. In Lissa when Eberhard found out that he could travel by way of Berlin after all, he kept thinking about how to let you know quickly ahead of time, so perhaps you could write to him again. In the end he couldn't find a way. So it was an especially lovely surprise that even so there was a letter from you. Of course, Eberhard took it with him, so unfortunately I don't have it here now.

Yesterday morning Eberhard left, with Munich as his first stop. This afternoon he called to say that he has to go on tomorrow morning to Verona, and probably his destination is somewhere near there. He doesn't yet know the name of the place and also doesn't know whether he'll have the desk job as he was told at first. I'm rather afraid he'll have to go on further, since what they told us here ahead of time has never turned out to be right. In general people here don't seem concerned about his case. We begged Uncle Klaus to look into it, but he apparently doesn't see any real reason to do so. Other than Eberhard himself there are only women who are making any effort, and that isn't what is needed. . . . I'm afraid it will just be allowed to take its course. Of course, if anything untoward happens, I'll just press for it again but doubt very much that I will succeed.

The feeling of being separated for we don't know how long is pretty awful, especially the feeling of my own complete powerlessness over against it all. I'm thinking a lot now of what you wrote us about that. I hope our patience won't be tested for as long as yours has been. But of course, we're hoping that all this won't last very much longer. What you write about your work is extremely interesting. Of course, we are all looking forward very much to the outcome. It's really fabulous that you can work there like this; I can hardly imagine it in those surroundings.

My parents have again got their house sufficiently in shape, and

they moved back there today, with Anna. My little sisters have gone to stay with a colleague of Father's in Potsdam. So there's some peace and quiet around here again. But it's not nice for me that my parents are in the city. Probably Mother will be spending the night here often in the next few weeks, coming to help me a bit with getting the baby things ready. There will still be a lot to do on that, since with all the traveling I've hardly gotten to it at all, and plenty of other things were left undone that I want to get finished before the baby is born. So I'll have plenty to do, and that's a pretty good way to still one's fears. By the way, we have definitely settled on Dietrich as a boy's name, and truly not only because you are named Dietrich! But we don't yet have a girl's name. We were thinking of Amalie, because it's traditional on Eberhard's side and Father's, but the entire family was indignantly against it. Perhaps it's not really quite the right choice.

I hope to be able to visit you soon. We're going to apply for permission to visit together, Mother and I. The smoked breast of goose that you gave us for Christmas was really excellent, by the way. I had never had any before and could not wait to try it. You certainly know how much Eberhard likes it; otherwise you wouldn't have insisted so on giving him all of it. Maria made me a really beautiful Christmas gift, all hand knitted: a jacket with matching cap and mittens for the baby. The whole family admired it. She gave Eberhard a bottle of spiked eggnog—certainly nothing to sneeze at either. It was really sweet of her. Thank you also very much for your offer to us to use some of your money. We were thinking of accepting it when there was a chance here to rent an apartment for me, but unfortunately that didn't work out.

If you would be willing to have a word with Uncle Klaus again about Eberhard, we would be very grateful to you. Perhaps that would have more of an effect.

Many thanks for everything!

Yours with love, Renate

98. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

January 14, 1944

My dear Parents,

Susi has just left the package here for me again, for which I thank her and you very much. If I had had any idea that I would be here this long, I would have asked you much sooner not to take so much trouble on my behalf, especially not to cut your own meager rations even shorter in order to send me something. Of course, it's a great joy to me every time a package comes from you, but the joy is being tempered as time goes on by the thought that you aren't getting the nourishment you need, especially for the strenuous work you have to do now since the damage from the bombing. I had been hoping that by now you would have decided to go to Pätzig for a rest. It would really relieve my mind to know that you were, for a time at least, away from the air raids at night, the house repairs and all the tumult of Berlin in general, and having more normal food to eat. Of course, it would also give me pleasure to have you get to know the house in which I hope to be at home someday. And if it gets too lively around there with the children, you can go visit the grandmother in Krössin or, what would perhaps be the most restful, the Bismarcks in Lasbeck. Please do decide to accept one of these opportunities. Should there be some movement in my situation one of these days, you can be reached there easily, and how marvelous it would be if I then turned up in Pätzig with Maria and found you there. I know you don't like being urged to travel, and it's usually no good trying. But perhaps I could ask for it as your birthday gift to me? Most of all, you mustn't

do anything that's too much for you; everything else is minor by comparison!

You've been having birthdays yesterday and today, evenings together with K. Friedrich and Rüdiger, most likely. These days one must be grateful for every day and every hour that we still have to be together. I'm sitting here with the window open. The sun shining in is almost springlike, and I am taking this unusually fine beginning of the year as a good omen. Compared to last year, this one can only be better. All is well with me. I'm back to working with more concentration and am especially enjoying reading Dilthey. I hope to hear soon the news that you have made the trip. Just keep well. Yours with much love and thanks,

Dietrich

Many thanks to Susi for the splendid warm gloves; the cocoa balls too—they reminded me of past Christmas treats at her house. I'd like to give Michael something belatedly for Christmas. Perhaps you could just give it to him now, as you did with Tine.

99. From Eberhard Bethge

In the South, January 15, 1944

Dear Dietrich,

It's still awhile until your birthday, but I'm told that mail is taking endlessly long, so I'll write now, and maybe you'll get it in time. Heartfelt congratulations, and don't let this become a day of sadness for you. There would be plenty of reasons for it, and I'm also thinking selfishly of the unbridgeable distance that separates us. I have the impression that in any case we haven't celebrated your birthday together as often as mine. I have clear memories of mine here or there, especially, now, of that evening in Florence. Yours I remember

especially from a few times in Finkenwalde and afterward. On the last one you must have been traveling. Now we have to celebrate quietly, in a way we aren't accustomed to anymore.

Judging from the first two days, I'm getting along fine, except for one thing, as you wrote: I miss you all. I'm sitting near the place where, just in the last glimmer of twilight after the hot trip in the car, we saw the Seven Hills. It doesn't feel like January; it's warm as spring already. What is to come I don't know at all. On your day you will be looking back on a strange year, certainly without parallel in your life up to now. From seeing you and from your letters, I have the impression that you're richer for these experiences, which when I think of it makes me yearn to talk it all over with you. And it will be clear to you that with all that, you still have a lot of responsibilities to fulfill and finish.

My wishes for you come easily to mind: such a three-quarter year as I've had in the one relationship! Opportunities to write, and a little more courage to put things into readable form; perhaps someone to provide technical assistance, to help ease this tough stage in any way possible. By the way, when I was reading a few passages from your letters to Father, he and others with him were very impressed, once again, with your style. I don't understand anymore how some people find it so hard to understand. It must just be the concentration it demands from people. If only we could all just go off on a trip together, with good Italian or French or . . . meals. Here I am seeing everything by myself, the flocks of sheep in long lines in the ravines, the gray (*griggio*) oxen with their huge horns, the huge ancient blocks of the Via Flaminia beside the road.

For this day let me also thank you warmly for all your thoughts of us and of me, for your letters, the stay-awake pills, and the breast of goose; for everything these nice things stand for. Shall I hear from

you again soon? Back home everything will keep on being so hectic and under pressure, and here I am for these two days, so well off in this country house, with nothing to do but enjoy the sunshine. I'm telling myself that often, while at other times I'm eagerly snapping up bits of Italian, and then I have a conversation by letter with Renate, but it's so one-sided, I haven't had any mail yet. Of course, it wouldn't be possible—I'm just not used to it yet. By the way, imagine me drinking one of the many glasses of wine to your health!

Yours affectionately,
Eberhard

100. From Karl Bonhoeffer

January 16, 1944

Dear Dietrich,

I want to use this quiet Sunday in Sakrow for a letter to you. Weekdays are still quite unsettled, with people banging away at the windows and doors and on the roof. In between there are patients coming and whatever else the day brings. In general we've reached the point where it is getting warm enough to be in most rooms—but not all—without a winter coat on. Hopefully, it's not all in vain and will not be knocked to pieces again by the next air raid. Our house in the Kurländer Allee has been condemned as too destroyed, and the tenants have been ordered to move out. Now we shall have the written work and trips to authorities to register the damage, apply for compensation for the rent, and so on.

When the next dark nights come, we plan to stay out here at night. Now people are interested in what time the moon rises, which they never thought about before. I'm ashamed to realize how little I know about the phases of the moon. It seems that now it's the brighter nights the British have to fear—which was not the case

before—probably because of the night fighter planes. The family in Friedrichsbrunn wrote that from there they could watch an air battle when the Americans attacked in the daytime and saw airplanes crashing and prisoners being brought in, pretty exciting for the Bonhoeffer and Dreß children. In general I am observing that people who have lived through several air raids and bombings in their neighborhood, and have kept their composure, often do not remain untouched by these things later on. Their concentration and alertness suffer, and they are emotionally more excitable, irritable, or easily reduced to tears. This is also noticeable among passengers on city trains. At the house we spend a lot of time looking for things; we can't remember what we have put away in the cellar or somewhere else, so in general we are slower getting work done. Soldiers say they find sitting around doing nothing during air raids at home much more trying than being in the field, where they have to take action.

I hope we shall be able to see you again soon. I applied for permission eight to ten days ago. We were very happy to have your Christmas and New Year's letters, even though they only arrived a few days ago. Today Renate received the first letter from Eberhard from Verona. In the meantime, he has moved further south. We are in good health. Rüdiger reported to us that he found you looking well.

Love,
Father

101. To Eberhard Bethge

Dear Eberhard,
Since you went off into the unknown, my thoughts have been with you constantly. I hope to hear very soon where you have ended up. That you managed to be with Renate once again, and even to bring her back to Berlin, is most likely due to your luck staying with you,

or rather to people's good will, which you encounter everywhere you go. That is a really amazing gift with which nature has endowed you, and it does make it a bit easier thinking about you and everything that may happen to you. I don't know a single person who can't stand you, whereas I know quite a few who can't stand me. I don't have a hard time with that; wherever I find opponents, I also find friends, and that's enough for me. But it's due to your being open and modest by nature, whereas I'm reserved and more demanding. If I were a soldier along with you, I would benefit much more from you than you would from me.

I was delighted to read about how Christmas was celebrated. This time you had the main responsibility for seeing that it was a real Christmas, and I'm glad you succeeded. Wonderful that you read the Christmas story—I would love to have heard it!—and good that you held a brief service on Christmas Day, as Papa wrote me. You had a “neutrally” decorated Christmas tree, as Christoph wrote with the wisdom of a fourteen-year-old, discovering style for the first time but not yet understanding about giving up style in favor of quiet and simplicity, in harmony with the manger. I'm still enjoying thinking about you being there for Christmas. Nobody could have made up for my absence better. I was also glad that the D[ohnanyi]s were so happy to have you [there], as I learned from letters and from Klaus when he visited me. Klaus has grown up to be a nice fellow. How much more these children today know about life and are ready to deal with it than we were at the same age! I think they could turn out to be an outstanding generation, one that is also more clear-headed and open, and less fearful, than ours.

For some time I've been working on that little literary piece that was inspired by our brief time together. But as almost always happens, it's taking me longer than I thought it would at first. I'll send it to you when it's finished—if it turns out to be worthwhile.

My reading lately has been a random mixture of things, a history of Scotland Yard, a history of prostitution, finished Delbrück—the problems he deals with don't actually interest me—Reinhold Schneider's sonnets, which are of uneven quality; some are very good. On the whole, in all the most recent productions, I miss the *hilaritas*—"cheerfulness"—which every truly great and free intellectual achievement should possess. One keeps having the impression of rather tormented and strained work rather than free creative pleasure. Do you know what I mean? At the moment I'm reading a huge English novel that goes from 1500 to the present, written by Hugh Walpole in 1909. Besides that, I'm finding Dilthey very interesting, and for an hour a day I'm studying the medical corps handbook, for any eventuality.

I left off writing this letter for a few days, and in the meantime Rüdiger has been to see me and told me that you were sent to Verona at first, but beyond that he didn't know. I'm waiting day to day for news, also waiting for W., whom I've hardly seen for two weeks! You did see him, though; I'm glad about that. In the last three days I read a French novel, not bad but outrageously frank, "Mariages"—that about says it all. It reinforced my conviction that naturalistic and psychological novels don't satisfy us anymore. But we would need to talk about that. Today W. is supposed to come. Good. I hope the raid on Magdeburg didn't affect the places there you remember. If it did, it's another noteworthy sign that your past, your "apprentice" years are now behind you, and your whole attention is directed to present and future responsibilities. Your life story is unusually straight and clear, even though it has recently passed through many hard times. But now the great and joyful event approaches. I hear that Renate is doing quite well physically, which is a great comfort.

Now keep well, and stay equal to all the physical and psychological

demands, as you have been until now. The *Daily Texts* are a joy to me every day. Thank you for everything!

Yours affectionately as always,

Dietrich

102. To Renate and Eberhard Bethge

January 23, 1944

Dear Renate and Eberhard,

Since the ninth I have been thinking about you differently than previously. That just before saying good-bye, you read the *Daily Text*, Isa. 42:16, together, sheds a particular light on these thoughts. Knowing what this day meant for you, I myself read the texts over and over, feeling especially involved and grateful for them, since for me too that Sunday represented a turning point, if not in the same way as for you. It's a strange feeling to see a person, in whose well-being and fate one has somehow shared so deeply for years, go off one day into a completely unknown future, in regard to which one is practically powerless. Yet I find there are two sides to being conscious of one's own powerlessness, about which you, Renate, also wrote; there's anxiety but also somehow liberation. As long as we ourselves are trying to help shape someone else's fate, we are never quite free of asking ourselves whether what we're doing is really best for the other person, at least with respect to any major intervention in that person's life. But when suddenly almost all our possibilities to be involved are cut off, there is somewhere the awareness, behind all our fears for the other, that his life has now been placed wholly in better and stronger hands. For you, and for us, the great task in these coming weeks and perhaps months is undoubtedly to commend one another into those hands. Yesterday when I found out that you, Eberhard, are now somewhere south of Rome, it became even clearer to me that this is

what we are given to do. I am suppressing all the questions regarding this that I keep wanting to ask myself. Whatever human weaknesses, miscalculations, and guilt there are in what precedes the facts, God is in the facts themselves. If we get through these next weeks or months alive, we shall see very clearly afterward that it was good for all of us that things turned out just the way they did. The idea that many hard things in life could have been avoided if we had not kept going forward courageously is really too craven to take seriously even for a moment. Looking back on your past, I am so completely certain that what has happened up to now was right, that what is happening now too can only be right. To give up the genuine joy and fullness of life in order to avoid pain is certainly not Christian, nor is it human.

I'm now looking forward most eagerly to your first report from outside the country, Eberhard. I feel as though, to a certain degree, you see things through my eyes just as I see what is here through yours as well. So we are experiencing our different destinies, in some way, vicariously through each other. Whatever you write from out there I will believe without hesitation, and perhaps the reverse is true for you in reading my letters from here; and above all, this will be true when we can finally *talk* with each other again!

We just heard the news of the landing at Nettuno. Are you perhaps anywhere around there? Every such turn of events shows me that composure does not come naturally to me; I have to struggle every time to regain it. By the way, composure by nature is probably, in most cases, just a euphemism for indifference and indolence and thus not exactly worthy of respect! I recently read Lessing's words: "I am too proud to consider myself unhappy—I clench my teeth—and let my boat go wherever it pleases the wind and the waves. It's enough not to capsize it intentionally myself!" Should this pride and clenching of teeth be forbidden and alien to Christians? Do they always have to be cautiously prepared to be mild and calm?

Isn't there also a composure that proudly clenches its teeth? That's not at all the same as an obstinate, stolid, fixed, lifeless, and above all thoughtless surrender-to-the-inevitable. I believe we honor God better by knowing everything we value in the life God has given us, and loving and enjoying it to the full, and therefore feeling intensely and honestly the pain of whatever of life's values has been diminished or lost—although people like to belittle this as the weakness and sentimentality of bourgeois existence—rather than being dulled to what is important in life and therefore also dulled to the pain. Job's words "The Lord gave, etc." include rather than exclude that, as is clear from his teeth-clenching speeches and their justification by God (cf. 42:7ff.) over against the false, prematurely pious submission of his friends.

Renate, please forgive me for going right back to theology again. Such fragments of conversation are inevitable in letters between Eberhard and me. What I especially wanted to say and should say to you is how glad I was to hear from you directly, and in such detail. That was really an event! How grateful I am to the conductor on the troop train to Munich who turned the lights on, contrary to custom. He has no idea what a good turn he did me and perhaps many others unknown to us. Yes, that the visit was possible on December 23 and that letter on the train put my mind at rest in a new way. But when I speak of inner peace, calm, and such, don't suppose that I'm not thinking every day, almost every hour, of how to help you. Please, if it can be useful to you in any way or make things easier, withdraw some of my money, as much as you want and need; it would only make me happy! Besides that, I was thinking it would be good if you had some photos of me with you; you could use them in place of calling cards for my many acquaintances, since I can't write to them all. On that trip by car with the Hennes, did you meet Professor Reinh[old] Niebuhr? He and also Dr. Leiper and Professor Dr. Paul

Lehmann are good friends of mine. N[iebuhr] and Paul L[ehmann] also are good at languages; that is always helpful. You could also always turn to the Cedergrens; you were a guest in their home. He now has an important post in the Red Cross. By the way, you should especially remember Martin to all these people. I'll also see to it that my letters to my parents are passed to you.

In relation to this, I find that what you say about friendship—that unlike marriage and family relationships, it doesn't enjoy any generally recognized rights but depends entirely on its own inherent quality—is a very good observation. It is indeed not easy to classify friendship sociologically. It probably must be understood as a concept subsumed within culture and education [Bildung], whereas brotherhood falls within the concept of church and comradeship within the concepts of work and politics. Marriage, work, state, and church each have their concrete divine mandates, but what about culture and education? I don't think they can simply be classified under work, as tempting as that would be in many ways. They belong not in the sphere of obedience but rather in the sphere of freedom [Spielraum], which encompasses all three spheres of the divine mandates. Someone who doesn't know anything of this sphere of freedom can be a good parent, citizen, and worker, and probably also be a Christian, but whether such a person is a full human being (and thus also a Christian in the fullest sense) is questionable to me. Our "Protestant" (not Lutheran!) Prussian world is so strongly defined by the four mandates that the whole sphere of freedom has been pushed into the background. I wonder whether—it almost seems so today—it is only from the concept of the church that we can regain the understanding of the sphere of freedom (art, education, friendship, play). This means that "aesthetic existence" (Kierkegaard) is not to be banished from the church's sphere; rather, it is precisely within the church that it would be founded anew. I actually believe

this, and from here we could recover our connection with the Middle Ages! Who in our time could, for example, lightheartedly make music, nurture friendship, play, and be happy? Certainly not the “ethical” person, but only the Christian. Precisely because friendship belongs within the scope of this freedom (“of the Christian person”!?), we must defend it confidently against all “ethical” existences that may frown upon it—certainly without claiming for it the “*necessitas*” of a divine command, but by claiming the “*necessitas*” of *freedom*! I believe that, within this realm of freedom, friendship is by far the rarest—where is it still found in our world, which is defined by the *first three* mandates?—and the most precious good. It is beyond comparison with the benefits we have from the mandates; over against them it is *sui generis*, but belongs together with them like the cornflowers belong to the field of grain.

On your comment about “Christ’s fear”: it is only expressed *in prayer* (as also in the Psalms). (It’s never been clear to me why the Evangelists report this prayer, which nobody could have heard—to suggest that Jesus revealed it to the disciples in the *evangelia quadraginta dierum* is an evasion! Can you tell me something about that?)

Your reminder about Socrates, on the topic of education [Bildung] and death, might be very fruitful. I need to think about it some more. The only thing clear to me about the whole problem is that “culture” [Bildung] that fails you in a time of danger isn’t culture. Culture must be able to face danger and death—“*impavidum ferient ruinae*” (Horace) (“the ruins will hit a fearless man”)—even though it cannot “overcome” it; what does overcome mean? To find forgiveness in judgment, and joy in terror? We have to talk more about this.

Now about the name for the child you are expecting. If it’s a girl, wouldn’t Sabine be a nice name? You both have a good relationship

with her, and I find the name itself quite charming, a bit old-fashioned, but maybe just because of that. By the way, I don't think Amalie would be so bad; I also have always liked the name Angelica, which I always instinctively associate with Fra Angelico. And what do you think of Adelheid? Funny, those are all names with a long *A* in them. Perhaps they're more resonant than others (or does my subconscious somehow begin, very personally, with Maria?). But I'll keep quiet on the subject of a boy's name.

Something more for you, Eberhard: could you send me the name of the doctor for your unit? I'm noticing that Papa's name makes quite an impression on the doctors here! What kind of condition are you in?

So, that's all for today! Yours always, with you in countless thoughts and good wishes,
Dietrich

Have you paid a visit to the "Propaganda" in Rome? What all did you see? Memories of 1936 have all come alive again, but you will be remembering much more than I do from that trip. If you see the Laocoön again, look and see whether the father's head may have been a model for later images of Christ. Last time this classical man of sorrows really gripped me and stayed in my thoughts for a long time. How wonderful it would be if we could go there together! You don't need to worry about me; all is well, and there are a few *very* nice people here whom you must meet later on. If only it could be soon.—Did you get the Isophan tablets I requested for you?

I have had to take a different tone with my companion on our daily walks. Despite all his efforts to throw himself at me, the other day he let slip a remark about the Gert problem and so on, which made me despise him and treat him as coolly as I have never yet treated anyone. I've also seen to it that all the little comforts he had come to

enjoy were promptly taken away. Let him whimper around awhile if he likes—that leaves me absolutely cold—which surprises but also interests me! He’s really a pitiful figure, but certainly not a “poor Lazarus”! That we’re both godfathers to Dieter Z.’s children is very nice. Lokies’s opinion is indeed important and reassuring to me. I would *very* much like to see you, Renate! But please make that long journey *only* if it’s not too strenuous for you. I found the escapade through the window great fun. I admire such enterprise because I know I myself would be too cowardly, too obedient, and too old for that!

Incidentally, to my knowledge my parents have been apart only once in their lives, when Papa had to go on a brief inspection trip to the western front during the World War. What times those were, and what marriages! And how many forms *good* marriages can take, nevertheless—*Witiko* is one thousand pages long, so you wouldn’t be able to read it now, but someday you must read it together. Maria enjoyed it too.

I’d be very interested to hear how you are getting along with the other people there and on what basis. I’d like to listen in on a conversation between you and your comrades. Could you write about that someday? I’m still doing fine, working and waiting. By the way, I’m still optimistic in every regard, and wish you might be too! Here’s hoping for a happy reunion soon!

D[ietrich]

I’m already making efforts here to get us together somehow. I would find that a good thing in any circumstances. Do you know of a possibility? Sometimes I think that if you were here, much would already be different for me. I’m only dealing with theories; nothing concrete is happening. Is that “bourgeois”? Was that your impression too in September? To put it briefly, later we’ll do better!

What's going to happen to Rome? The thought that it could be destroyed is a nightmare to me. How good that we got to see it in peacetime. I hope to hear from you *soon*.

103. From Karl Bonhoeffer

January 25, 1944

Dear Dietrich,

We have to write well ahead of time if our birthday greetings are to reach you in time. Hopefully, it will be possible for us or Maria to visit you on that day too. We have applied for permission to visit, but not for that particular day, so as not to interfere with Maria's. What we wish you, and ourselves, is clear enough. That your freedom will come to you as a birthday gift is not to be expected, based on the previous course of your case, but we are convinced that it won't take much longer, since almost a year has passed. We are thankful that so far you have stood up to it well, have kept up your courage and desire to work, and stayed in good health. I have no doubt that these grim months have enriched your inner life. To have lived personally through everything that imprisonment means, for months on end, is surely quite different from having some acquaintance with it from outside and through conversations with prisoners, as I did back then on my observation ward. But now it's certainly been enough.

May your new year of life bring your and Maria's wishes to fulfillment soon, together with a life in peacetime and the return to your true calling. If we old folks could live to see that, it would be wonderful. One hardly dares to imagine anymore what it would be like to live without this pressure on our shoulders. But it does have something to do with age, that one gradually loses the optimism and elasticity that one once had; on top of that comes the unproductive restlessness with which one fills the time outside actual daily work

with taking precautions against the air raids at night. That is gradually tiring us out, and I think it could easily lead to an indolent resignation, if we were not refreshed by the sight of our children and grandchildren. That is something for which we old folk are grateful to you young ones. I hope we shall see each other soon. Until then, you have all my good wishes for your birthday. Despite your unpleasant circumstances, may it bring you some nice things.

Yours affectionately,

Father

104. From Paula Bonhoeffer

January 27, 1944

My dear Dietrich,

February 4 is drawing near, and I am thinking of how times change! In my mind's eye so many blissful children's birthdays pass in review, with cake, whipped cream, puppet shows, and masquerades! This makes me feel that I'm getting old; recalling one's earliest memories is surely a sign of it. Who could have imagined that I would live to see with you, that is, without you, *such* a different sort of birthday? Life is often really unbelievable. The important thing is surely to be true to oneself nevertheless, not to lose oneself, and not to despair of humankind despite all its shortcomings. I hope you'll see Maria on your birthday; then we'll come a few days later. I must tell you that the better I get to know her, the more lovable I find her. You will have a good, brave wife in her, and this is a great joy and comfort to me. May God grant that it will not be too much longer until you can be together. That is one of my birthday wishes for you.

You are urging us so to take a trip away, but there are just so many reasons not to go. It's not only your fault, so to speak, that we want to stay here. Christel is quite worn out, and we can certainly be of

some help to her. And Papa does have a great deal to do with patients, despite his old age; the doctors and sick people know how valuable he is to them, and I think that keeps him younger than if he just sat somewhere and rested.

We do stay out there most nights, so you don't need to worry about us. For your birthday we would like to ask what you would wish for from among the things in the house. Think about what you might like. Perhaps Minna Herzlieb's little cupboard, which Goethe gave her? I'll close here. God keep you and be with you through the coming year.

Love,
Mother

105. From Renate Bethge

Sakrow, January 28, 1944

Dear Uncle Dietrich,

I want to send my warmest congratulations and all good wishes for your birthday. We must really expect the next year of your life to go better than the last. You yourself wrote that you are an optimist. We are too, of course, since how else can one go on living? Thank you for the greetings that my grandparents passed on; I was very glad and have sent them on to Eberhard. I'm hoping very much for permission to visit. Hans-Walter and I applied for it together, and we're waiting every day for a reply. Hans-Walter's leave is only until the second. Now the post office has been bombed out, last night, so that nothing was delivered out here today. I hope it wasn't there yet.

I haven't had any news from Eberhard for a week already; it's really upsetting; his last letter was written on the fourteenth and fifteenth, when he had just arrived there. He isn't south of the capital after all, but just to the north, or at least that's where he was then. What has

become of him since the landing at Nettuno, of course, we don't know. At that point he wrote that he was quite content with his situation; he was in an isolated country house with a fifteen-man unit including an officer. He had the feeling that the tone among them was quite nice. He was to have a driving test the next Monday and thought he would then be assigned to that line of work, perhaps in addition to the clerk's job. If things stayed this way, we could be quite happy about it, but we can't really expect it, and since we haven't had any mail for so long it doesn't seem likely.

We're all glad to hear that you are getting on pretty well and that you can keep doing so much work. But now it's really time for this business to be over. Besides, you need to be here to baptize our baby. Who is likely to see the baby first, Eberhard or you? We still haven't decided on a girl's name, and now it's harder to do it by letter. Of your suggestions we like Angelika best, but we had already been thinking of it and not been able to settle on it; the other names you suggested were all also ones we had considered. It's funny how hard it is to decide.

I've almost finished getting the baby things ready; Mother helped me a great deal with that. I'm also going through Eberhard's clothes thoroughly, mending them and packing them away. So at least I'm not bored. Besides, I have time for piano practice. Eberhard gave me the music for Beethoven's C minor piano concerto for Christmas, my favorite concerto, and that's what I'm practicing mainly. Yesterday I was at my parents', and Hans-Walter and I played some music together.

It isn't so good that my parents are now staying in town all the time; the air raids upset Mother so. But Father is determined to stay in the house, because he thinks perhaps he could put out any fires. So, of course, Mother doesn't want to leave him all alone.

I'm sorry we don't have a proper gift for you this time. I've just

baked you a few S'le, which I'll send with Maria, along with all my good wishes and love.

Renate

106. To Eberhard Bethge

January 29–30, 1944

Dear Eberhard,

You must be getting letters from Renate every day—though they may not distribute them to you every day, so you can't avoid the torment of waiting and uncertainty, but presumably you're happy to get any letter. Not only for that reason but also because I myself find it hard *not* to be writing to you, I'm using this quiet Saturday afternoon, which is a remarkable contrast to the din of the last two nights, to talk with you a bit. How have the first days of direct contact with the war affected you, and possibly your first personal impressions of the Anglo-Saxon opponents, whom until now we have known only in peacetime? That we can't go through these fundamental experiences together is so hard for me to comprehend, since later on—*sub conditione Jacobea*—we'll need to digest them together and make use of them professionally.

When I think of you now, morning and evening, I must seriously guard against dwelling on the many worries and deprivations you are encountering, instead of really praying for you. In this connection I should talk with you sometime about prayer in time of need. This is a difficult matter, yet our misgivings when praying for ourselves are perhaps not good either. Ps. 50 says plainly: "Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me." The entire history of the children of Israel consists of such cries for help. And I must say that just these last two nights have made me face this question at the most elementary level. When the bombs are crashing

down around this building, I can't do otherwise than think of God, of God's judgment, of the "hand stretched out" of God's anger (Isa. 5:25 and 9:11–10:4), of my own unreadiness; I sense that people around me are making vows, and then I think of you all and say, better me than one of you—and it makes me realize how attached I am to you all. I won't say any more about this, I can only do that in person, but that's the way it is; it takes a crisis to shake us up and drive us into prayer, and every time I find this shameful, and it is. Perhaps it's because so far, at such moments, I've found it impossible to speak a Christian word to the others. Last night when we were lying on the floor again and one man called out aloud, "O God, O God!"—he's otherwise a pretty frivolous fellow—I couldn't bring myself to offer him any sort of Christian encouragement and comfort, but I remember looking at the clock and just saying, it won't last more than another ten minutes. I did this without thinking, automatically, probably with the feeling that I shouldn't use it as an opportunity for religious blackmail. (Incidentally, Jesus on the cross didn't try to talk the two thieves into anything—it was one of them who turned to him!)

I'm sorry to say that night before last I suffered a great loss. The man whom I've found to be by far the most intelligent and humanly likable person in this place was killed by a direct hit downtown. I would certainly have brought the two of you together later on, and we already had several plans for the future. We had many good conversations. Recently he brought me *Daumier und die Justiz* and I still have it here; a truly educated man from the working class, a photographer and father of three children. I was really shaken.

In the last few days I've again been working on that little literary piece about which I already wrote you; it's a meeting between two friends of many years' standing who have been apart for a long time during the war.

I hope I can send you their conversation soon. Don't be afraid; it's *not* a roman à clef!

Now I need to talk with you some more about my engagement. I don't need to explain to you what a "lucky strike" I've made. In Maria I find truly everything I had hoped for in a wife—apart from music, but as one can see with Ursel and Rüdiger, that isn't essential. And with regard to literature, there seems to be some accommodation taking place lately, by way of *Witiko*, which allows us to say all the decisive things. Sometime in a letter I'll tell you something about this book. But just now it's something else that is on my mind at times. You see, we actually hardly know each other, and for me—could it be my age, or my nature, or the many questions occupying me these days?—what I would call a truly exclusive and great love can only grow from knowing the other person fully, or at least from intense togetherness with her. I'm quite certain that would happen if Maria and I could be together. But as long as it all has to take place through letters and talking in the presence of other people—and we have to leave out things that are important to us—somehow it all lacks color and life for me. Now, I'm not the sort of man who consciously gets worked up about things. But I'm feeling, in Maria's letters—does it have to do with her sex, or her youth, or the way she can give herself up wholly to such thoughts?—a different intensity, which, on one hand, makes me very happy but, on the other, makes me somewhat uneasy as to whether I'm being fair to Maria. I think in my letters to her I'm being quite honest; I can't speak the way she does, and perhaps that's becoming hard on her. She does have some of her grandmother's blood in her. Do you understand what I'm saying? These things are much more important than music or literature and can only be cleared up when I really have time with her. Incidentally, weren't these the sort of problems that Gerhard struggled with before

he was married? Although it's clear that there were entirely different expectations on the woman's side.

It used to be so that just one of the problems we now have to deal with was enough to occupy us fully. Now we are supposed to take war, marriage, church, profession, housing worries, the danger to and death of people close to us, and on top of that my present particular situation, and reduce them all to one common denominator. Most people probably let these things run parallel to and separate from one another. For Christians and “educated” people that is impossible; we don't allow ourselves to be split or torn apart; a common denominator must be found in reflection as well as in an integrated personal way of life. Those who let themselves be torn apart by events and questions haven't passed the test for the present and the future. At one point [it] is said of young Witiko that he goes out into the world “to do *the whole*.” The issue, then, is the ἄνθρωπος τέλειος (τέλειος originally meant “whole” = perfect)—“Be whole (τέλειος), therefore, as your heavenly Father is ‘whole’” (Matt. 5:48)—in contrast to ἀνὴρ δίψυχος—the doubter—in Jas. 1:8. Witiko “does the whole” by trying to find his way to real life, always listening to advice from experienced persons, thus by being himself a member of the “whole.” One becomes “a whole person” not all by oneself but only together with others. This is the sense in which my previous questions to you were intended.

Are you finding the separation from Renate awfully hard to endure? I think you know pretty well how to deal with whatever your circumstances are. But the separation tugs at you badly. Yet even that should not tear us apart.

In a few days it will be my birthday. I remember gratefully how, over the years, you have made it a nice day for me, at the seminary and later through prayer, songs, music, and specially chosen gifts (last

year it was the Napoleon pictures). The day won't be hard for me otherwise. Maria will come, and you will all be thinking of me.

I have just started reading Harnack's history of the Prussian Academy; it's very good. I think his heart is really in this subject, and he said several times that he thought it was his best book. How are you doing physically? Do let me know. I'm actually still surprisingly well. The awareness that I mustn't get sick here under any circumstances must make a difference. I always have the strength and concentration for reading, not always for writing and producing something, but now and then even this goes quite well. How I'm going to get used to being around people again, I don't know yet.

That's all for now. The letter must go off. I commend you and Renate and all of us to God's loving kindness. Today's Gospel is Matt. 8:23ff. "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?" . . . "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"

In daily, faithful fellowship, your
Dietrich

107. From Eberhard Bethge

February 1, 1944

Dear Dietrich,

Only a few days until your birthday, and I still don't have any news of you all, how the most recent air raids around the thirtieth were—apparently dreadful—what happened, how things are with you and with Renate. My thoughts are constantly with you all. Even though everything here is decided for us, just like for the donkeys that toil unwillingly up the steep mountain paths here, one hangs on to this piece of personal life that becomes a torment. Your idea that precisely this is a necessary part of our situation, and that in precisely this respect we have to prove ourselves to be what we are, comforts

me somewhat. And now I have your letter in which you mention “Rüdiger’s” visit at the end. Many, many thanks for so faithfully remembering me. I was really tremendously lucky to have a few days in Berlin again and thus to feel that I hadn’t missed or been left out of anything, as far as humanly possible. Of course, even that wasn’t enough to satisfy Renate and me, and I can clearly sense from her letters how hard it is for her. Fortunately, letters are being delivered fairly regularly now. The last one is dated the twenty-second. One letter did take three weeks, however. The transit routes are being massively destroyed, get rebuilt and then smashed again. Besides, there are really few roads over the Alps at all. It’s depressing even to think about our march back home again.

You are very kind to try to see what you call my modesty in a positive light and make me glad about it. As before, my feelings about it, here in a strange place, are the opposite: I’m lacking in what you have to a high degree, the vitality to assert yourself and not take anything from anybody. I have somewhat the impression that Renate is continuing your teaching in this regard, to good effect. Perhaps the proof that you’ve taught me something is that my expectations of others have been raised, and there is at long last some confidence in my own feelings and reactions (it’s high time there was, at my age). What is missing or underdeveloped there is perhaps still lacking in Christoph, and that gets him into plenty of conflicts and unhappy moments. As to whether you could be here with me as a soldier, the changing situation in Berlin makes it less likely than ever that you could stay there. So if you must be sent out, then why not here?

There’s not much camaraderie in evidence here, rather the contrary, immense jealousy, gossip, and pushing for elbow room. The chief, of course, doesn’t know anything about my background but shows personal interest and humanity. Of course, on many things he seems to have quite different opinions. Still, one can have a talk

with him, and there is plenty of need for interpreters. But that will only be possible when the moment is right.

I'm glad you got to hear so much about Christmas. I didn't mention anything about it in my last long letter, just as now it's probably not necessary to describe my outward circumstances here. You will hear about all that anyway, and sooner. The younger generation's knowledge about life, about which you wrote, is certainly true. Perhaps that is also why they lack a certain modesty. In any case, they are growing up quite differently, with completely different views and positions. But one couldn't say that it's better and more pleasant for them than before. You all weren't just doing nothing at that age, and I think that whole problem areas and experiences are simply being suppressed and at some point are bound to come to light. But what I recently wrote about, the literary legacy and social standards, are just as good and indisputably present as they were when planted in your generation. But the political and religious standards are completely changed from what we had and are now instilled at such an early age. Why the new generation is going to be "clear-headed and open, and less fearful," as you put it, isn't entirely plain to me; perhaps just with fewer illusions?

I'm eagerly looking forward to your literary piece. I hope it will come soon! I'm mainly busy with studying Italian and writing letters. I've brought along Burckhardt's *Renaissance* and am enjoying it very much from time to time. But the noise, the constant possibility of being called away, and the lack of my own place to sit make these private occupations very difficult. There is one fellow here among these cads and pigs, an expatriate German lawyer from Tyrol, who does have somewhat different, naive views, but we have similar natural human reactions to things large and small. When duty allows, I escape with him into the valleys or the huts in the countryside (he's an interpreter).

I think too that *hilaritas*, as you wrote, is an important feature of good artistic production. I wonder if Burckhardt missed this in Michelangelo? These days everyone is so besotted with problems, fanatical and strained and grim. One could even say that they don't yet feel inwardly enough wedded to whatever position they have, be it Christian, ethical, biological, or whatever, and to the form that they have taken as an ideal. Rather, they're trying desperately to express their convictions [position], relying on others rather than themselves, none of it independent but rather dependent on that of others, with their backbones tied fast to others.

How I envy you your reading! Did W. finally come to see you? I do hope so. And has Renate been to see you? I really wished that might happen.

When I think about how I'm going to miss part of the life of our child, whom we're looking forward to so much, I lose all patience and composure. As far as how things will go, in the end I have good faith in Renate's state of health and strength, her courage and astuteness, and also in her mother's help and advice. But not being able to be there is just too crazy. This is selfish and, when I look at you, pretty stupid. Out here one doesn't become more optimistic as to how quickly things will go, but we knew about this difference between inside and outside long ago. Incidentally, the saying "you just have to have lived with such people, *Volksgenosse* . . ." looks even more desperate to me here, and the differences become even plainer.

Many good wishes to you, especially for your birthday. The *Daily Text* for the fourth will be especially thought-provoking for you. I wrote to Mrs. von Kleist some time ago from here. I wonder whether you will have a letter from me?

Always your faithful

Eberhard

By the way, I heard that Schönfeld is pretty upset, didn't get his salary. I don't yet understand it; I only hear hints. I just found out that Paton died in August; that will give you pain.

108. To Eberhard Bethge

February 1, 1944

Dear Eberhard,

Carpe diem—in this case that means I use every opportunity to write you a letter. First, I could go on writing for weeks without coming to the end of everything I have to tell you, and, second, one never knows how long it will still be possible. And since you will someday be called upon to write my biography, I want to make sure the material you have is as complete as possible! So here I go!

Today I saw Susi, nice and fresh and warmhearted. It's quite remarkable how someone who seemed as unlikely to become a pastor's wife as she did as a girl can adapt to her calling, both personally and in the church. She's really fulfilling her role, and it's lovely to see. And what were we like as boys of seventeen or eighteen? Was it much different? Yet somehow we have become pastors. How strange are the paths by which one is led to "being a Christian"! These visits are in general strikingly different, one from the next, although, of course, I enjoy each one of them. On the whole, the women are freer, less self-conscious—except for you (that was almost like sitting up in our room for an hour!). Of course, *K[arl] F[riedrich]* was very nice as well. But especially *Rüdiger*, whose visit I enjoyed very much, and who really had kind words for me (for example, the culpa wasn't mine for my parents' state of health, I was only the *causa*—Latin, naturally!), was touching, the . . . way he spoke, and kept turning to Maetz, making sure to exclude any topic that might not be within regulations. Nevertheless, I couldn't

resist mentioning our friend R[oeder] to him and hope he won't be too cross with me. I've seen nothing of *Klaus*, nor heard from him; apart from everything else, it could be that he's too sensitive by nature to subject himself to the sight of this place. In our calling we have fortunately become somewhat more robust. The recollection of December 23 continues to be for me a source of joy and pride and gratitude.

You will have heard that the last few nights have been bad, especially the night of January 30. Those here who had been bombed out came to me the next morning for a bit of comfort. But I don't think I'm good at consoling people. I can listen, but I can almost never say anything. But perhaps the way one asks about certain things and not others does in some way suggest what really matters. It also seems to me that it is more important really to share someone's particular distress and not try to wipe it away or touch it up. It's only certain false interpretations of the distress that I have no sympathy for, because they're supposed to be comforting, but it's a false kind of comfort. So I leave the distress *without interpretation* and believe this is a responsible beginning, although only a beginning, and very seldom do I get further. Sometimes I think that true consolation must come upon one unexpectedly, the same as the distressful situation did. But I admit that this can be an excuse.

Something that is often a puzzle to me, both in my own case and in that of others, is the forgetfulness about one's impressions during a night's bombing. Only a few minutes later practically everything one was thinking beforehand is just blown away. For Luther it took one bolt of lightning to change the direction of his life for years to come. Where does this "memory" go these days? Isn't the loss of this "moral memory"—what a horrid word!—the reason all ties are sundered, of love, marriage, friendship, loyalty? Nothing holds fast; nothing stays in place. Everything is short term and short

winded. But the good things like justice, truth, beauty, all great achievements, need time and steadfastness, “memory,” or else they degenerate. Anyone who doesn’t have the sense of a past to answer for and a future to plan for is “forgetful,” and I don’t know where to take hold of such persons, challenge them, and bring them to their senses. Everything one can say, even if it makes an impression at the moment, is lost to forgetfulness. So what is to be done? It’s a big problem for Christian pastoral care. You put it very well recently, that people make themselves so quickly and “so shamelessly at home.” I’m going to steal that from you and make good use of it. Perhaps you should write “prose poems”? Your language would not be bad for that purpose.

By the way, have you also noticed that uneducated people have a very hard time making objective decisions, that they allow some more or less fortuitous minor circumstance to tip the scales? I find it striking. The distinction between objective and personal thinking must truly first be *learned*. Many people never learn this (look at our colleagues in the ministry! among others).

February 2, 1944

Is it correct that you are *north* of Rome and that at present you are assigned to kitchen duty? I hope you will still get to see the city again; that must be tantalizing, to be stationed at the very gates and not be allowed in. It’s hardly any comfort that you have already seen it once. I hope to hear more soon. Whether I will get to see Renate before the baby is delivered is doubtful because the transport connections are so bad, but I’d be very glad. We could then spend a whole hour talking about you, and I would certainly learn plenty of things I don’t know yet.

Since a lot of mail has been lost in the past few nights, did you perhaps not get my letter of January 29? That would be a pity. The

one to both you and Renate (about a week ago), hopefully, you must have by now. How long I shall have to keep myself amused at my present location is still no more definite than it was eight weeks ago. I am using all my powers every day to get as far as possible with my reading and writing schedule, since what is to come is completely uncertain. Obtaining the books is, unfortunately, the one thing that doesn't work very well. So my plans get somewhat mixed up. I really wanted to get to know nineteenth-century German thought as thoroughly as possible. But I still particularly lack a good knowledge of Dilthey. Evidently his works are not to be had. I greatly regret my lack of knowledge of the natural sciences, but it's too late to catch up on that.

My current walking partner, about whom I have already written several times, is becoming more and more pathetic. He also has two colleagues here, of whom one spends the whole day crying, and the other literally wets his pants during air raids, last night even when the warning sirens started. When he told me about it yesterday, in tears, and I burst out laughing and told him off, he tried to instruct me that one shouldn't laugh at or condemn a human being in his [distress]. But that was really too much for me, and I expressed to him most emphatically my contempt for people who treat others harshly and lecture them about facing life's dangers and so forth, and themselves break down under the slightest test of their endurance. I said that was downright disgraceful and I had no sympathy for it. Besides, I would throw such people out of the guild for making it look ridiculous and so on. He was quite astonished and probably considers me a very dubious Christian. Anyway, these gentlemen's behavior around here is already becoming a byword and having an effect that can't be exactly pleasant for them. I found this experience uncommonly instructive, even though it's one of the most disgusting things I've seen here so far. I really don't think I'm quick to despise anyone

in trouble, and said so in no uncertain terms, which probably made his hair stand on end, but I really can't feel anything but contempt in this case. Seventeen- and eighteen-year-olds stand at much more dangerous posts during the air raids here, and their behavior is above reproach, and then these . . . (I almost used a military expression that would have astounded you!) go whimpering around, really enough to make you sick. Well, everyone makes a fool of himself as best he can.

I hope you won't think I've become just another foul-mouthed bruiser. There's certainly little occasion for that otherwise around here! But there's a sort of weakness that Christianity has no time for, and precisely in the name of which people demand Christian charity and drag it through the mud. We have to make sure the demarcation lines are kept clear.

Yesterday Susi brought me the big volume about the Magdeburg cathedral. I'm really thrilled by the sculptures, especially some of the wise virgins. The beatitude expressed by these wholly earthy, almost peasantlike faces is really a delight, really moving. I didn't remember them at all, but you must know them well!

Good-bye for today, Eberhard. I'm always thinking of you. Your faithful
Dietrich

109. From Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer

February 4, 1944

Dear Dietrich,

Who would have thought that today, on your birthday, you'd still be sitting in prison? Your patience is really being sorely tested. Will

you at least have a visit from our parents or someone in the family today? Maria isn't in Berlin, is she? She called me here in Leipzig from Altenburg last Saturday, but unfortunately I'd just gone to see Grete and the children in Friedrichsbrunn. It would have been very pleasant there if only our worry about you in Berlin weren't hanging over us. Every time Berlin is attacked, swarms of planes come roaring over the Harz like wild hunters, so that the whole air is full of their vibrations. One feels embarrassed about every hour in which one forgets the suffering of so many thousands and feels an urge to rush off there and try to help. But the terrible thing these days is that there is hardly any way to help. The few hours of freedom from work are certainly enough for thinking of others but not enough to give them serious support.

From Friedrichsbrunn I went to Göttingen—I hadn't been there in ten years. I've been getting invitations from there for many years, and my temporary bachelor status due to the bombing finally gave me enough mobility for it to happen. I lectured in the physics colloquium on the mechanism of rhythmic reactions, and it met with the interest I had hoped for from biologists. I was staying on Herzberger Road, diagonally opposite from where Sabine used to live. I thought about her a good deal during those days; ten years ago I stayed there at her place. Today she must be thinking and worrying about us too, especially you. As a scientist I enjoyed myself more in Göttingen than I have for a long time! It wasn't just the kindness with which I was received everywhere. I also got to see a whole lot of people again for whom pure science is simply their whole life—and I met some new ones too. I really felt “transported into a better world.” Here in Leipzig I'm fighting to get workers to put up a temporary roof to save what's left of my institute, running from one office to the next to get the plumbing and electric wiring finally repaired for my apartment, writing my fingers raw ordering replacements for the library books

and chemicals that burned, and negotiating with Osram on adding an advisory position. All the scientific work that really has my heart in it is being left undone.

Tomorrow I'm expecting a call from Maria, according to her message last Saturday, and looking forward to whatever news she may [have]. The day after tomorrow early, if nothing gets in the way, I'll go to Berlin.

All my best to you, and here's to your freedom soon!

Yours, Karl Friedrich

110. To Eberhard Bethge

February 4

Dear Eberhard,

Today on the morning of my birthday, nothing seems more natural to me than to write to you, remembering that we celebrated this day together eight times in succession. My work is put aside for a few hours, and perhaps that will actually do it good, and I'm waiting for a visit from Maria or my parents, although it's not yet quite certain that there will be one. Eight years ago in the evening, we were sitting around the fireplace together, and you all had given me the D major violin concerto, and we listened to it together. Then I had to tell you all stories about Harnack and times past, which for some reason you particularly enjoyed, and finally we decided definitely on the trip to Sweden. The year after that, you all gave me the "September Bible," nicely inscribed, and the first name on the list was yours. Then followed Schlönwitz and Sigurdshof, celebrated in the company of a good many people who are no longer with us. The singing outside my door, the prayer during the worship service that you led on these days, the Claudius hymn, for which I thank Gerhard—all these are wonderful memories, which the dreadful atmosphere here cannot

diminish. I am full of confidence that we shall celebrate your next birthday together, and who knows? perhaps even Easter! Then we'll get back to what is really our life's work, and there will be plenty of good work to do, and what we have been through in the meantime will not have been in vain. But we shall always be grateful to each other that we have been able to live through the present time in the way we are both doing. I know you are thinking of me today, and if these thoughts include not only memories of the past but also hope for a future together, even though it will be a changed one, then I am very happy.

It won't be much longer now until you have the blessed news from Renate. It will not be easy to celebrate such a uniquely joyous day among strangers, who can't help you properly express your joy and give it its place in your daily life, but rather think more or less every happy event is summed up in a glass of brandy. I wish so much for you that you may find some person to whom you can be closer—the one person who might have been that for me here, as I already wrote, was killed in an air raid—but I think it's harder for us to find what we are looking for and must do without, since we have come to expect more from friendship than most other people do. In this respect as well, it's not so easy to make do with “substitutes.”

Right in the middle of this letter, I was called downstairs, where Maria received me with the joyous news: “Renate had a little boy, and his name is Dietrich!” It all went well, only an hour and a half and there he was, with Mama and Christel as midwives! What a surprise, and how fortunate! I can't tell you how delighted I am. How ecstatic you must be! And that it all went so well, and so quickly! So now you have a son, and all our thoughts turn to the future, full of hope. What abundant gifts he stands to inherit! Your merry heart and talent for making people love you; Renate's energy, which is so uniquely a part of her charm; the ability you both have to

cope with life; your drive to be open to the world; your musicality; the quiet, wise, and down-to-earth tranquility that has always so impressed me in the portrait of your grandfather; and the truthfulness and transparency of character that you Bethges have—I'm thinking especially of Gerhard—unfortunately I never knew your father—Rüdiger's kind heart and tender conscience, and Papa's humanity—there are truly a great many positive strengths coming together here, and it won't take long until we see them begin to develop.

So he is really going to be called Dietrich. I don't know what to say about that; I hope I can promise you to be a good godfather and "great"-uncle (!) to him, and I'd be a hypocrite if I didn't say I'm really tremendously pleased and proud that you have named your firstborn after me. That he beat me to it with his birthday, a day before mine, surely means he's going to assert his independence of his namesake uncle and always keep a bit ahead. I think it's especially nice that our birthdays are so close. When he hears someday where his uncle was when he received his name, perhaps that may leave some impression on him too. Thank you very much for deciding to do this—I think the rest of the family will be pleased as well!

February 5

Yesterday many people did nice things for me, but I actually forgot all about my own birthday and just kept celebrating little Dietrich's birthday. Even the little bouquet of flowers that some of my fellow inmates picked for me, so touching, I thought of as standing by your little boy's bed. There was really no greater joy that the day could bring me. But it was only just before going to sleep that I realized you've pushed our family into the next generation. On February 3, great-grandparents, grandparents, great-uncles, great-aunts, and

young uncles and aunts were newly created. Look what you've achieved—you promoted me, for example, to [the] third generation!

Maria sat by Renate's bed for quite a while yesterday and thought she looked amazingly fresh. But apparently she said she "hadn't imagined it would be that bad." So thank God it went so quickly and so well. Ursel and Christel, in their time, took twenty-four and thirty-six hours! I wonder if that's already a sign that the younger generation is stronger. That would be amazing in view of all the psychological and physical stress of these past years. In any case, any fear that Renate might be too young is definitely over. By the way, they say the baby wasn't born too early; he came just right. That's a relief as well. Do write a few words to Mama and Christel; on top of all that they both have on their shoulders, this surprising event brought a particular responsibility, and I know from earlier occasions how exhausting a baby's birth always was for my parents. I think the fact that Mama helped bring this, her first great-grandchild, into the world will create a special bond between them.

Renate sent me some wonderful homemade "S'le" for my birthday yesterday. Maria brought me a fabulous package, and my parents gave me the little "Herzlieb" cupboard, which Goethe once presented to Minna Herzlieb. From Klaus I received Dilthey's *Von deutscher Dichtung und Musik*; I'll tell you about it later. Are you going to ask Mama and Christel to be godmothers? I'm afraid I must stop so the letter can go off. My head and heart are overflowing so with good and happy thoughts; I can't put them all on paper anyhow. But you know how much I'm thinking of you and trying to share your joy, and keep on talking with you in my mind. I think your marriage is really a fortunate one—by the way, Rüdiger recently said such nice things about it, so happily, that I was really glad—How I'd like to be following in your footsteps soon! Good-bye, stay well; God keep you

both and bless you and the little boy!

Yours ever, Dietrich

I'll write to Renate as well right away. You can then send each other the letters. Klaus also gave me a Moravian community hymnal of 1778; or have I confused things, and this comes from you? It looks like the sort of present you give, but Klaus is also very good at gift giving. From you I wasn't really expecting anything other or better than your good wishes and thoughts, and I thank you for them, even if they had to be brief amid the turmoil of your duty! I hope to hear from you soon. . . . is a prisoner of war with the British. I'll write to you as often as I can. Of course, there may be intervals when I can't, but I hope not. I'm all right.

111. To Renate Bethge

February 5, 1944

Dear Renate,

How shall I tell you how much I share in your and Eberhard's happiness? I've just written to Eberhard, and he will surely send the letter on to you, but I wanted him to get it as soon as possible. I'll never forget the moment yesterday when Maria told me, first of all, that you had a little boy and that his name is to be Dietrich. Then it was really a birthday celebration for me, but little Dietrich's birthday rather than my own. Maria told me she sat by your bed for a while and that you looked bright and cheerful. How surprised and happy your mother must have been when she arrived, to be welcomed by both you and the baby! And how good that Grandmama and Christel were both right there. And I think it's especially nice that you aren't lying in a hospital somewhere, but can be in Sakrow instead. If only the air force would spare us for the next few days; actually I think

they will. Once again we see that so many things we worry about beforehand are resolved unexpectedly simply and well in the end. So it isn't worth worrying! Tell yourself that every day now when you're thinking of Eberhard. Our affairs are really in better hands than our own.

That you have named the boy Dietrich pleases me so much. Not many people in my situation would experience anything like that. In the midst of all that is hard to bear, we keep being overwhelmed with goodness and friendliness. Isn't that the way things have always gone for Eberhard?

The *Daily Text* for February 3, which you both are reading as well, is a fine one. If your boy someday *sees* more of God's righteousness and power on earth than we do, we can consider him lucky. And the interpretive text challenges us to bow down for a while longer in *blind* trust under God's mighty hand; then we shall do that in the hope that the next generation will feel not only the might but also the grace of God's hand.

I must close so that the letter can go off. God keep you and Eberhard and your child!

Much love from your Uncle Dietrich

I wrote Eberhard that you would send him this letter too.

112. To Eberhard Bethge

February 12, 1944

Dear Eberhard,

I've been in bed with a bit of flu for a few days but am up again, and it's a good thing too, since in about a week I expect to need all my five senses in good order. Until then I intend to read and write as much as I can, since who knows when it will be possible again the way it is now.

This morning I had a great surprise. I was skimming the newspaper when my eyes fell unthinkingly on the name Dietrich, and then right nearby—still without making the connection—on the name Bethge. But then it didn't take long until I got it. Say what you like, there is something about seeing words in print; you must have felt it too; it underlines the objective fact once again, and now the world can share in the blessed event. My parents were here yesterday and told me again all about February 3 and how well everything went, and even Papa said it was an especially nice-looking baby. How fortunate that there haven't been any heavy air raids these first ten days, and hopefully we shall be spared them for a while longer. They say Renate is well, though still a little weak. I'm going to see to it that some of the good food intended for me goes to her instead, so that she can regain her strength very soon. I was also very glad to hear that you had written to her—and also to my parents, which really pleased them—and that you are getting along all right.

Are you seeing any signs of spring yet? Here winter is just getting started. In imagination I spend a good deal of time outdoors, in the midland mountains in summer, actually, in the forest glades near Friedrichsbrunn or on the slopes where one can look across Treseburg to the Brocken. I lie on my back in the grass, watching the clouds float across the blue sky in the breeze and listening to the sounds of the forest. It's remarkable how our whole outlook is shaped by childhood impressions like these, so that it seems impossible to me and against my nature that we could have had a house in the high mountains or by the sea! It's the central uplands [Mittelbirge] which are my natural environment—the Harz Mountains, the Thuringian Forest, or the Weser Mountains—and which made me who I am. Certainly there is a *petit bourgeois* side to the Harz, and parts of the Weser hills belong to the *Wandervogel*, just as there is a fashionable and a Nietzschean Engadine; there is a romantic Rhineland and a

Berliners' Baltic shore; and seaside fishermen's huts, coquettishly poor and melancholy. So perhaps "my" midland mountains are "bourgeois" (in the sense of being natural, not exalted, modest but self-sufficient (?), nonideological, content with the down-to-earth and especially "not-making-themselves-known"). It would be tempting sometime to pursue this sociological view of natural scenery.

Incidentally, Stifter has made clear to me the distinction between simplicity in its different senses, on one hand, innocent and even naive [einfältig], on the other, simple and uncomplicated [einfach]. Stifter is not naive, but rather simple (just as the "bourgeoisie" is simple). "Naïveté" is more an aesthetic concept (in theology too)—(Was Winckelmann really right to define the art of antiquity as "noble simplicity" [edlen Einfalt]? Certainly not with regard to the Laocoön, for instance, but I find "quiet grandeur" very apt). "Simplicity" is an ethical concept. One can *become* "simple," but one can only *be* innocently naive. "Simplicity" can be attained by education—and is even one of the chief aims of education—while "naïveté" is a gift. I see them as related in the same way as the concepts "pure" [rein] and "temperate." One can only *be* "pure" from one's origin or with respect to one's destiny, namely, through baptism or through forgiveness in the Lord's Supper. Like "naïveté" it implies wholeness; lost purity—and we have all lost our purity!—can be given back through faith; but in ourselves, as we live and grow, we can be no longer "pure" but only "temperate," and that is a possible and necessary aim of education.

How does the landscape of Italy strike you? Is there such a thing as Italian landscape painting? comparable to Thoma or to Claude Lorrain or Ruysdael or Turner? Or is nature so completely absorbed into art there that you don't see it as such anymore? At the moment I can only recall good pictures of cities, nothing in the realm of pure landscape.

February 13

I often notice here, in myself and in others, the difference between the need to talk, the wish to discuss something, and the desire to confess. In women the need to talk can perhaps be quite charming at times, but in men I find it repugnant. They chatter indiscriminately to anyone at all about their own affairs, and it makes no difference to them whether the other person is interested in or has anything to do with it—just because they feel the need to chatter. It's an almost physical urge, but if you've managed to suppress it for a few hours, you're glad afterward that you didn't let yourself go. Here I'm sometimes ashamed to see how people reduce themselves in their need to talk, how they jabber on ceaselessly about their affairs to others who aren't worth telling it to and are hardly listening anymore. And the strangest thing is that they don't even feel the need to tell the truth; they just want to talk about themselves, whether it's lies or truth.

The desire for a good conversation, a meeting of minds, is something else entirely. But so few people here can carry on a conversation about anything beyond personal affairs. The desire to confess is something else again. I think that doesn't happen here often because what matters, whether subjectively or objectively, isn't primarily "sin." Perhaps you will have noticed in the prayers I sent you that they don't focus on asking for forgiveness of sins. From a pastoral as well as a practical viewpoint, I would consider a "methodist" way of proceeding entirely inappropriate here. We should talk about this sometime.

February 14

If it would make things easier for Renate in any way, please don't hesitate to help yourself to my money! It's looking as though there

may be a decision on my case in a week's time. I hope so. If it turns out that they send me in Martin's direction, which I don't expect, let your mind be at rest even about that. I'm not at all worried on my own behalf, so please don't you worry either. Farewell, I have to send this letter. The thoughts, style, and handwriting are considerably impaired by a head dulled by aspirin and such. But I needn't excuse myself to you about that. When I was ill in the autumn of '41, you saw me in an even more stupid state! So, with all my good wishes,
Yours as ever, Dietrich

I'm already wondering what to give my godchild! Would Renate like my fur sleeping bag? She could crawl into it with the baby, and there are lots of furs at Maria's, so we don't need it. Have you made any contact with the chaplain for your division? Is there a possibility of your being deployed together with him, or anywhere, as a chaplain? Are you going to try?

You could get support here through Dohrmann. Write me about this sometime. Jürgen Bismarck-Lasbeck and Günther Bismarck-Kniephof are both in southern Italy. Perhaps you will run across one of them. Jürgen is considered a serious type. I don't know Günther, but of course he knows of our family.

113. From Eberhard Bethge

February 15, 1944

Dear Dietrich,
Where should I begin? You've written me so much that I hardly know where to start. And I think it has all arrived here, from that [letter] to Renate and me to the one with congratulations. Thank you very, very much for writing so faithfully. Your letters have made me

very happy, and one thing or another from them keeps coming to my mind.

Of course, I'm completely absorbed with the new situation into which Renate has plunged me so surprisingly and so well. When the major showed me and gave me the telegram on Friday (Feb. 11), with the names all misspelled, I was so shocked and happy that I actually went weak in the knees and was shivering all over. Beforehand it was just impossible for me to imagine what it would be like when the baby was there. And it's still difficult. I keep being depressed that I can't see Renate and that little being. But obviously I'm indescribably happy and thankful that it all went so well. And I'm happy for Renate. I keep saying to myself, and it takes effort, that's your son and hers. Something from the two of us. Of course, it's true that I can't talk to anyone about it. With whom should one talk about this, in every detail, but one's wife? To anyone else it is too general, but in reality it is an individual event as almost nothing else can be. I'd just like to go on and on writing to her, but unfortunately my desk duties have been piling up these days and take a lot of time. Overall I'm spending the whole day on these writing tasks, and in my free time, which doesn't come regularly at all, writing to Renate or working a bit on Italian. Besides that, I'm also driving the car fairly often and thus making myself indispensable. In this way I recently did get to see the Eternal City again, and instead of the Forum or the Pantheon, used the time I had for the living: St. Peter's, and was able to get in with a guided tour. Otherwise there are guards outside. This time it was Michelangelo's *Pietà* that made a huge impression on me, even though I already knew it's not that big, standing there in its niche. It's a work from when Michelangelo was *very* young. I now feel I want to see the church again and again. From the hilltop where we are getting our meals and so on, occasionally on a very clear day we can see its dome looming over everything.

The guided tour ended with an audience with the pope, so I saw him as well. There were about forty officers and four hundred enlisted men, and he spoke a few words with each one. He looked older than I expected from photos. How easy it is for the Catholics now, since they can largely dispense with words and preach *Habitus* and gestures. After all, it's noticeable how sensitive people are to false words, how they reject them. I couldn't make any other visits that time, because I wanted to buy something for Renate. It was time consuming because of inflation and the growing shortages. But I managed to get a gown for the baby; nothing for her personally, unfortunately.

And now to your letters, however far I shall get with them. Thanks very much for everything, including the little birthday flower. That was great that Maria could bring you the news right away, and your congratulations were almost the first I received; only Perels's came sooner. It's very nice that you are so pleased that he is named after you. I'm certain you will be a good uncle to him, and perhaps he'll be a reason for you to look in on us even more often than otherwise. I'm really envious that you got to celebrate my boy's birthday so much sooner than I did—exactly one week sooner. As for my own outward celebration, it consisted merely in the major inviting us for a glass of wine. On that day especially, but also afterward, I have felt rather as if I'd been taken prisoner—deported is more like it. Even good news that makes one tremendously happy can be tormenting.

I've already written to your mother and to Christel. We haven't finished discussing the question of godparents. I'd like to see how things go for a time before we take up the question of baptism. It was really a good thing for Renate that it turned out she was spared the not so pleasant hospital stay with strangers' hands taking care of her. I've already received a first letter from Renate herself, written on the fourth, but nothing more at this point (I'm now writing on

the seventeenth). Hopefully, it's still going well. So your birthday was largely occupied, for you as well as all the others involved, with our new citizen. That must have been quite fine. Did you get my letter for your birthday? There was no present from me this time. I think it's very, very nice that the little Herzlieb cupboard is going to be yours. When will you be setting up your apartment? I spent a good hour reading your morning reflection on your birthday, recapitulating all the years of our celebrations. Recently on the radio—which deafens everyone here throughout the day—I heard Gerhard's lovely Regensburger (Prinzchen) record, and it reminded me of so much. I've noticed here that thinking a lot about when we shall see each other again just wears me out. Whenever some of us go on leave, it makes the rest nervous. Coming home and seeing everybody again appears to me as something unimaginably splendid.

Most of my work now is desk work, and there is a lot to do, some of it interesting but overall unpalatable. That is, outwardly I have quite a good life and am also treated well. What should my attitude be toward all the things in which I have to be involved? Where does it, or doesn't it, go beyond merely clerical work? The major is interested in having me handle some things more independently from time to time, and of course he knows nothing about me otherwise. On the other hand, I don't want to make my situation worse, if there isn't any way to make it better.

The letter you wrote to me and Renate, which Renate sent me, I was just about to answer when the telegram came, so I didn't answer it at length. I especially liked the quote from Lessing. Renate sent me some photos. Cornflowers in the wheat field (blue, of course) make a lovely image of friendship (*necessitas* of freedom), sui generis next to the three mandates and belonging with them. I haven't yet seen a military doctor, and besides we're going to change our location somewhat more to the south, near the pope's summer residence. I got

the Isophan tablets; thanks very much. I haven't needed them so far, but now we are to have some sentry duty.

Nothing particular to say yet about my position among the people here. They know what I am. They're all older soldiers, stubborn and rather stolid. One, a lawyer who roomed with Eugen Rose at the interpreters' school, seems interested. Incidentally he says *very* nice things about Eugen. He's Catholic. Otherwise they're mostly "swine." They're in a very different situation from your companions there, quite secure and holding to the official line. But once in a while something human comes through. The first thing that occupies a man here is asserting himself in the dreary pecking order, who has to tend the stove, sweep the room, or peel potatoes.

I can't get to your letters of February 1 and January 30 just now. This letter has to go off, and I have sentry duty today, for the first time. There's too much traffic here now. While I'm on watch, I'll talk with Renate and you and all the others.

Yours, Eberhard

114. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

February 20, 1944

My dear Parents,

Forgive me for not writing to you regularly lately. In the hope of being able to tell you something definite about my case, I've been putting off letters from day to day. After being decisively assured that the case would be concluded, first in July '43, then—as you will remember yourselves—at the very latest September '43, and then month after month goes by without the slightest movement, and when I'm thinking optimistically that a really thorough hearing would easily clear things up, and finally when I consider the tasks awaiting me these days, once I am out—despite all my efforts to be

patient and understanding, I sometimes get into a frame of mind in which it seems better not to write letters, but to keep quiet for a while. First of all, because disordered thinking and emotions will only give rise to saying something unjust, and, second, because what one has written will usually be long out of date by the time it reaches the other person. There's always a little inner struggle to keep soberly to the facts, to chase the illusions and fantasies out of one's head and content oneself with the situation, since even when one doesn't understand why these things are necessary outwardly, one believes there is an inner, unseen necessity.

Moreover—our generation may no longer expect a life that unfolds fully, both professionally and personally, so that it becomes a balanced and fulfilled whole, as was still possible for your generation. That is probably the greatest renunciation, with the example of your lives still before us, that has been imposed on us younger folk and is required of us. Probably that is why we feel especially strongly how unfinished and fragmentary our lives are. But precisely that which is fragmentary may point to a higher fulfillment, which can no longer be achieved by human effort. This is the only way I can think, especially when confronted with the deaths of so many of my best former students. Even when the violence of outward events breaks our lives in pieces, as the bombs do our houses, everything possible must be done to keep in view the way all this was planned and intended to be. At the very least, it will still be possible to recognize from what kind of material here we build or must build.

Today Maria was here on the way to her new job. It was lovely to see her, but all this is really very hard on her. Now that Karl Friedrich's institute in Leipzig is completely in ruins, will he accept the call to Berlin after all? I'd like to see him here again. It is gradually becoming quite depressing indeed that Hans is not really getting better. It must be ghastly not to feel fully in possession of one's

intellectual faculties. I'm really very sorry. Renate is doing well, it seems? What does she hear from her husband? Perhaps she'll write me something about him when she's up and around. Who is going to operate on the baby?—I had a very nice birthday letter from Ursel, and thank her very much for it. Do go to Pätzig again sometime! It would really do you good, and my mother-in-law would look forward to it so much.

Please give my love to everyone, and much love to you—

Yours thankfully, Dietrich

115. To Eberhard Bethge

February 21, 1944

Dear Eberhard,

What an indescribable joy it was to hear from you! I also heard today from Maria that you wrote to her for my birthday—that was really an act of friendship. Thanks very much for both. Reading Job, chap. 1, it recently occurred to me that these days Satan has permission from the Lord to try and separate me from my friends—and that he mustn't succeed!

I heard very briefly today about the audience in the Vatican, and now I'm infinitely curious to hear more about it. I'm very happy that you got a taste of it, even though it's probably no longer quite the old ceremony I experienced in 1924. Nevertheless, in contrast to what you are experiencing otherwise these days, it will have been especially inspiring and important. I assume some pigheaded Lutherans will put it down as a shameful blot on your life history, and that's precisely why I'm glad you did it. I'm looking forward very much to Renate's feeling fit again and coming to see me, so I can

finally hear all about you in great detail. Otherwise I only have pieces of a mosaic that I have to fit together.

About myself, I am sorry to have to tell you that I am not likely to be out of here before Easter. As long as Hans is ill, nothing can be changed. I cannot help feeling that there has been rather too much messing about and fantasizing, while the simplest things have been left undone. I'm sure that everyone concerned means well; but it is all too easy to assume that a conversation, a new idea, or a hope is the same as an action. I am continually amazed that for the last six months nothing has actually been done, although people have actually sacrificed a great deal of time and even sleep with their deliberations and discussions. The one thing that could have taken place automatically—namely, that my case be settled before Christmas—has been prevented. I wonder whether my excessive scrupulousness, about which you often used to shake your head in amusement (I'm thinking of our travels), is not a negative side of bourgeois existence—simply that part of our lack of faith that remains hidden in times of security, but comes out in times of insecurity in the form of “fear” (I don't mean “cowardice,” which is something different: “fear” can be expressed in recklessness as well as in cowardice), fear of straightforward, simple actions, fear of having to make necessary decisions. I've often wondered here where we are to draw the line between necessary resistance [Widerstand] to “fate” and equally necessary submission [Ergebung]. Don Quixote is the symbol of resistance carried to the point of absurdity, even lunacy—like Michael Kohlhaas, who, insisting on his rights, puts himself in the wrong. You know that I've often been reminded of Klaus when reading *Don Quixote*! In both cases resistance finishes by losing its meaning in reality and is dissipated in theories and fantasies, while Sancho Panza represents the cunning and complacency to accept things as they are. I think we must rise to the great demands that

come to each of us, but also do the commonplace and necessary things. We must stand up to “fate”—to me the “neuter” gender of this word is significant—as resolutely as we must submit to it at a given time. Only on the *other side* of this twofold process can we speak of “being led.” God meets us not only as Thou but also in the “disguise” of an “It,” so my question is basically how to find the “Thou” in this “It” (i.e., “fate”), or in other words—excuse me, I really find grease spots disgusting, but I can’t write this page over again, since then the letter will be delayed even longer!—how “fate” really becomes “the state of being led.” So the boundaries between resistance and submission can’t be determined as a matter of principle, but both must be there and both must be seized resolutely. Faith demands this flexible and alive way of acting. Only in this way can we endure our present situation and make the most of it. Can we find differences here between theological existence and that of the legal profession? I’m thinking, for instance, of the extreme contrast between Klaus and Rüdiger within the “legal,” juridical standpoint. . . . on the other hand, our more flexible and lively “theological” standpoint, which is so because it is ultimately more attuned to reality.

February 23

If you have a chance to be in Rome during Holy Week, I’d advise you to attend the Maundy Thursday afternoon service (from about 2 to 6) in St. Peter’s. That is really the Good Friday service, since the Roman Catholic Church begins its feasts at noon on the previous day. As I remember (but am not exactly sure), there is also a big service on the Wednesday. It’s on Maundy Thursday that they extinguish the twelve candles on the altar, symbolizing the disciples’ running away, so that in that enormous space there is only one candle still burning in the center—Christ—then comes the cleansing of the altar. On Saturday morning about seven o’clock, there is the blessing of

the font (as I remember it, in conjunction with the ordination of young clergy), until at noon the great Easter Hallelujah is sung, the organ starts playing once again, the little mass bells peal, and the veiled paintings are unveiled again. That is the real Easter celebration. Somewhere in Rome I also saw a Greek Orthodox Easter service, which impressed me very much at the time—that's twenty years ago now! By the way, the Easter Eve service in the Lateran (beginning in the baptistery) is quite famous; I was there as well, back then. If you happen to be on Monte Pincio toward sunset, go by the Trinità del Monte church and see whether the nuns there still sing at that time of day. I heard them once and was thrilled; I think it's even in Baedeker(!).

How much do you come into contact down there with the events of the war? I would assume mainly with air strikes, like us here. The way the air war has intensified in about the last ten days, especially the heavy daytime raids, makes one wonder. Are the British deliberately challenging us to air battles in preparation for an invasion, to tie our defense forces down increasingly inside Germany?

The longer we are uprooted from our real professional and personal lives, the more we experience our lives—in contrast to our parents' lives—as fragmented. The portrayals of the great scholarly figures of the previous century in Harnack's *Geschichte der Akademie* make that particularly clear to me, and almost make me nostalgic. Where do you see an intellectual "life's work" these days? Where is anyone gathering, working through, and developing what it takes to accomplish such? Where is there the blissful lack of fixed goals and yet the planning in broad strokes, which belong to such a life? I think even for technicians and scientists, who are the only ones who still have freedom for their work, no such thing exists anymore. If the end of the eighteenth century means the end of "universal scholarship," and in the nineteenth century intensive study takes the place of

extensive learning, and finally toward the turn of the century the “specialist” has developed, today really everyone has become nothing more than a “technician”—even in the arts (in a good form in music, but in painting and poetry a mediocre one at best!). Our intellectual existence remains but a torso.

What matters, it seems to me, is whether one still sees, in this fragment of life that we have, what the whole was intended and designed to be, and of what material it is made. After all, there are such things as fragments that are only fit for the garbage heap (even a decent “hell” is too good for them), and others which remain meaningful for hundreds of years, because only God could perfect them, so they must remain fragments—I’m thinking, for example, of the *Art of the Fugue*. If our life is only the most remote reflection of such a fragment, in which, even for a short time, the various themes gradually accumulate and harmonize with one another and in which the great counterpoint is sustained from beginning to end—so that finally, when they cease, all one can do is sing the chorale “Vor Deinem Thron tret’ ich allhier”—then it is not for us, either, to complain about this fragmentary life of ours, but rather even to be glad of it. I can’t get Jer. 45 out of my mind anymore. Do you remember that Saturday night in Finkenwalde when I expounded it? Here too, necessarily, a fragment of life: “but I will give you your life as a prize of war.”

I just had a very nice letter from Renate, written January 28, still worried about you as she hadn’t heard from you for a week. That has now been happily cleared up. Are you now a secretary or a driver? Or both? You always liked making lists—shades of the first year of secondary school!—and I have often enough, unjustly, made fun of you for it. Now it will be an exemplary accomplishment that only you can bring off. I’m very glad you’ve found a companion more congenial than the ordinary types, to talk and do things with. But

how much more I'd like to be in his place. Do you suppose we shall ever do that again, or perhaps even celebrate Easter here this year, the way we used to? You see, I'm not giving up hope, and don't you either!

I'm feeling more or less well again, just very tired, as I usually am after these bouts of flu, and unfortunately that hinders any productive work considerably. Even so, I hope to finish my shorter literary piece soon. How are you holding up physically? What's the food like? When is your next leave? When shall we baptize your boy? When shall we have a talk together again, for hours and hours? Farewell, Eberhard. Stay healthy. How's your Italian coming? Are you getting to do any sort of music? God keep you. You're in my thoughts every day.

Faithfully yours,
Dietrich

February 25

Couldn't you try to write a little art history of some kind down there? What do you think of my question about the Laocoön as "man of sorrows"? My parents have just been here. All is well at home.

116. From Eberhard Bethge

February 22, 1944

Dear Dietrich,
Having the offer of a messenger, I want to use it to thank you again for your letters and to begin to respond to those of the thirtieth and February 1. I was greatly relieved to hear so quickly that you came safely through the air raids of those days. On my occasional trips a bit further south at night, I see and hear the furor, and it makes me think especially of Sakrow and of you all. It's much the same here except

that it lasts longer. But I've only experienced it rarely until now. Of course, I wasn't here for the worst of it. Those among us who have been here longer and have no experience of attacks back home get all excited and keep repeating and exaggerating every detail. I have to add that I wasn't here for the worst of it. Artillery fire in the distance disturbs one remarkably little. We know more or less how far they reach, and a few kilometers behind the lines the whine of the [shells] doesn't bother one much, although of course all our senses are on alert. I saw the [Allied] fleet at anchor on the sea in the distance; through binoculars I could distinguish the large and small units, and there were occasional flashes of so-called broadsides with that high whine. What is going on there must be enormously grim. This whole area, all the well-known beautiful places in the Alban Hills, even the papal residences look terrible and are in complete confusion with soldiers camping there. Cattle running loose are shot down and carelessly "devoured." In many houses there are wild, destructive rampages, ending with people immortalizing themselves indecently in the middle of a room. We first had to clean laboriously the house for our people there, to get rid of this and other kinds of filth.

Among my comrades I'm the youngest in terms of months as a soldier (not otherwise, of course, although most are my age or a bit older), and as I mentioned, have plenty to do to assert myself and not become the community wastepaper basket. But I must say that by and large everybody is decent to me. It's no use being oversensitive to the way people talk and their repetitious pornographic expressions. If the talk gets into spiritual matters because of my profession, here where we aren't really in danger, such self-confident older soldiers are quick to launch into a long, wordy, self-justifying declaration of their personal standpoint. There's a lot of "to each his own." Recently one of them admitted to me, after an audience with the pope, to be sure, that he was turning from a negative into a positive Catholic.

The fact that I'm married is of interest—and good—to the Catholics, who regard celibacy as an essential reason why they get taunted. All this always takes place in front of the whole staff. I have the feeling that, in this setting, it's not appropriate to get into discussions about self-justification or to contradict them very much. But maybe it's not right to hold back. I am what I am among these people. There is one "God believer" among us, but he never attacks me and only expresses himself once in a while; he's a soldier too, and to me that's now all he is. I did briefly contradict something he said on that score. Everything I say is, of course, most essentially subject to the way I have to conduct myself among people who have unshaken convictions on many matters, so I am well advised to be careful and not speak of things that are important to us.

It's deeply painful for me to drive past places you and I saw together. The day before yesterday I was near the place where we drove out one evening together in the car, a bumpy ride, and finally such hard going that we turned back. Now I am seeing how the war, in its destruction and the relentlessness with which *everything* gets sucked into it, seeks out the most beautiful places. There is no consideration whatsoever for anyone or anything anymore. Women and children wander along the roadside starving and begging for bread. And to think I'm involved in all this! Most people are completely deadened to it. What a job it will be to teach them to be *human* again.

I'm really looking forward to your piece about the encounter between the two friends. I also was glad to read about how helpful *Witiko* is to you. Yes, the problems that Gerhard had—I think I understand what you mean and believe you will really have some adjusting to do and getting to know each other. I had an easier time, entirely against my expectations or fears. At the time I did write

Gerhard a long letter and tried to knock down all his scruples. I'm not sure you should focus on this and scrutinize it too consciously.

As to whether the separation is hard for me to endure, it's not σάρξ that torments me! That's all absorbed into the spiritual pain. Yes, it's true that overall I have always been fairly able to get along, whatever my circumstances. But here too I'm discovering that I've changed. There are no fantasies anymore, toward which my longings perhaps at times used to lift me out of my present situation. Now my yearnings know the actual place where they can gain earthly fulfillment. It's as if I had just awakened. So I keep doing my work, motivated by the certainty that the time is being eaten up day by day and I shall be back again there where everything makes sense. Excuse me for the odd way this is expressed. People are interrupting me again.

I find it delightful the way you describe women being on the whole so much freer and more natural when they visit you. Klaus's silence is indeed hard to understand, although I did take his side! He was really under terrible pressure, so perhaps he just forgets to write actual letters. By the way, when Hans seemed in low spirits and needed to get some mail, I think Klaus *immediately* wrote him a very warmhearted and encouraging letter, thoughtful and nice.

Forgetting a desperate situation one has just experienced is indeed a strange thing. I wonder if it isn't a physical reaction at first, because you don't forget entirely. You take what you experienced with you as a burden into the next danger, unfortunately. You have a bodily sensation when driving out of the war zone, as I've done twice recently, but shaking it off, you free yourself from it. What you have seen and heard is a burden until you enter the Eternal City. On reaching the first houses, life begins to pick up again, in the hubbub, and once beyond the city you almost begin to feel "at home." After surviving danger people are usually more talkative; you

do this and that with zeal, when you've just climbed out of the cellar, when it's been really bad. My comrades there told me that after the worst night they were romping on the swing in their garden and jumping around like kids. The dancing after the World War! You can draw many conclusions from that observation. As for the inability of uneducated people to make and report objective judgments, I was recently talking about that with the major, who must struggle with this problem in his official capacity.

Too bad that Renate wasn't able to visit you. I was looking forward to it myself and eager to "show off" my wife to you. I'm so terribly proud of her. And she was a very pleasant sight. I'm tickled that you were so taken with Magdeburg Cathedral. I was last there a year ago in April, with Renate—we visited both it and the monastery.

Now I have to close for today. I'm thinking of you a great deal, with all good wishes and prayers.

Affectionately yours,
Eberhard

117. To Eberhard Bethge

March 1, 1944

Dear Eberhard,

I don't have anything particular to write today, but I don't want you to feel lonesome or to think for a moment that you have been somehow forgotten or that one has somehow become used to your being away. I want you to know that, as far as possible, I'm in daily conversation with you—there's no book that I read or paragraph that I write without talking with you about it, or at least asking myself what you would say about it. In short, all of this just automatically takes the form of a letter, even when there isn't really "anything to tell." That is, there would be enough to tell, but I don't know where

to begin, so I'm putting it off until that great moment when we see each other again. What a day that will be for you, when you see your son for the first time (according to my mother-in-law, who came to see me recently, he even looks a bit like me—the general opinion is that he looks like *you*, and that he has a particularly nice and distinct face), and when you see Renate again—and finally, I imagine to myself that you also look forward to being with me again and sharing the experiences and insights from a whole year; in any case, this is one of the great hopes I have for the near future. You probably also sometimes think that day will never come. It's hard to believe that we shall be able to break through the wall of obstacles that separates us from the fulfillment of our wishes. But “what delays is all the sweeter,” and I must say I am beginning this new month with great hopes and think you are doing the same. I'm making a new start at using this last part of my time here as intensively as possible. Perhaps you too can gain impressions that will be of value to you all your life. The daily threat to life most of us experience at present spurs us like nothing else to fill each moment, to “make the most of the time.” Sometimes I think I will go on living as long as I have a truly great goal to work for. Do you have this feeling too? Or is it a bit presumptuous?

I am surprised, as I have been before at times, that you deny having enough “vitality” to assert yourself and “confidence in (your) own feelings and reactions”—in any case, in the past. My experience was that in your own (naturally modest) way, you always did assert yourself in the seminar group, and also (though you always dispute it) that you stood up to me (and I don't imagine that would be so easy), and the “confidence in your own feelings” (though perhaps not after thinking it over) was, if I may say so, just what attracted me in your intellectual *Habitus*. It is most likely no accident that you, so to speak, just naturally came to have a place in our family, that we counted you

as a member before you became one, and that from the beginning your musical, artistic, and human contributions have been gladly and gratefully accepted and assimilated by the family.

The spiritual development of the younger generation has without doubt been very decisively shaped by your introducing them to making music together and keeping it up energetically, which became for them (much more than for me as a boy, for example) an element of universal human culture; the same goes for your involvement in gardening or swimming or ice skating. I am convinced that for the Dohnanyi and Schleicher children, the memories of all this will remain inseparable from memories of the period of their earliest spiritual development. In this respect it's well and good, and no accident, that you finally joined the family as the eldest of the grandchildren.

The less reflective aspect of your nature makes you more a member of the younger generation than of my own, and to this extent I can even feel like an "uncle" to you. What has impressed you among us older ones is probably the confidence that has come and been solidified through reflection, that is, not the reflection that leads to intellectualism and thus to dissolution and relativism, but [reflection] that has become a part of our whole attitude toward life and not weakened, but rather strengthened, our life's impulses. Nevertheless, I think "you younger ones" are fitter for life than we are. In America they say that the Negroes survived because they didn't forget how to laugh, whereas the Indians perished because they were too "proud." What I'm talking about is somewhere along these lines.

But that's all for today! It was only meant as a brief sign of how I'm thinking of you every day.

Faithfully yours,

Dietrich

P.S. That you succeeded, for instance, in getting Hans and Christel to sing with us is one of your best and most amazing accomplishments and truly also a form of asserting yourself! Each of us can only assert himself in certain areas. Also the appreciation you earned from the elder Mrs. von Dohnanyi means something.

118. From Eberhard Bethge

In the south, March 2, 1944

Dear Dietrich,

I was overjoyed to get your letter of February 12 on Sunday. Thanks very much. Any letter from you is an event and gives rise to a host of questions, brings me new stimuli and new ways of seeing things. Each time it's very exciting for me.

I gather that by now a decision must have been made. How long, I wonder, will it be until I hear something about it. And when you are figuring out what to do in case that becomes possible, I won't be there, and I would have liked so much to be your "spiritual clarification plant."

I've been thinking of you a good deal these days. It started early Sunday morning when the Epistle reading was 2 Cor. 6:1–10, and I saw you standing in the pulpit in Schlönwitz and remembered your splendid long sermon. For the brothers it was an event. I was playing the organ that day.

I find your observation about the landscape most suggestive. At this point I'm seeing no Italian cities at all, with very few exceptions, but only the countryside, still somewhat wintry. Beyond the Tiber valley toward the hills. Here and there on the summits a little town, all boxed together, just as we viewed Radicofani together in 1936, by the Via Cassia. But it's true, as my lawyer friend here and I were saying, that there really isn't any typical *Italian* landscape painting;

you only see it as decoration or background. What interested the Italians is always the human form, and architecture, the building of cities. Is that why they produced Machiavelli, and matters of state began so early to play a decisive role, in addition to art? Is it so that peoples of the South as such take their lush landscapes for granted and don't expect to discover anything there—or is nature their enemy, in the scorching heat? Is there any Greek, or Spanish, landscape painting? I actually don't think so. The ones who discovered and painted the landscape here, besides the antiquities, churches, and cities, were Germans of the Romantic period, of the generation around Kalckreuth, 1820–40. The beautiful Lakes Nemi and Alba, and Rocca di Papa, I've seen them all recently, but completely laid waste! How many drawings were made there—gnarled oaks, river valleys, and such. Being here brought back memories of Klaus's beautiful folios of Kalckreuth and friends, which he showed us at his house after our betrothal, and the lovely "Oak Forest" he has hanging in the stairwell.

In any case, I greatly enjoy looking at the landscape in the mornings and evenings and discovering effects of light and contours that one never sees back home. It's becoming plain to me how poor the Havel region is with its sand, like the Weser. Yet I'd rather be back there than here. The rain here comes down in buckets; then soon afterward the most gorgeous sun is warming the land, so in a few hours big fat daisies and yellow and blue [flowers] open up along the road. Nothing struggles for long; everything comes bursting out full strength. And how our troops go tramping through the world, among these people and through this landscape without the least consideration or feeling for it. All they wish for is to have the German police here, to keep order and see that work is done.

Things aren't going badly for me. There's a lot to eat at the moment, so that I really long for vegetables—just meat, meat all the

time. If only I could send some home to Renate! At the moment I have so much work, especially because of comrades being on leave, that I hardly get to anything else and barely manage a daily letter to Renate. It's been several days now of that. I'm seeing and experiencing quite a bit that is interesting and could certainly learn plenty from it, but I need to shut myself off and harden myself so as not to feel like an agent, a chauffeur, or a henchman for people like R.

It's sickening how many people get a thrill out of this business, and it can be the very same person who is otherwise quite human and likable, with whom one can talk and laugh and do things together. Of course, that's depressing. But it's true that by putting up with being here I manage to obtain a number of little comforts that aren't available to others who are stationed elsewhere.

Thanks so very much for deciding that good food intended for you goes to Renate. That's extremely kind of you. I'm somewhat worried that there do seem to be difficulties with nourishing her properly. But as these are hard days for you right now, you need it all yourself. We've been able to attend other such court hearings, but not this one. Or don't they allow anyone in at all? I'm afraid that's the way it will be. It will upset the grandparents and be hard on them.

The definition of "noble simplicity" (Winckelmann) forgets perhaps to take into account the underlying passionate character of southern peoples, out of which the quality he is referring to would have to develop—their hot blood, the aloofness of their mountains and the towns on top of them, their grandeur and hardness, their untamed vigor, everything that so surprised me on coming to Italy. In any case, it brings back ideas acquired during my education, which I now have to correct considerably on seeing for myself.

And you're already worrying about a gift for your godchild. I just can't bring myself, at this point, to ask Renate to have the baby

baptized. In the normal course of events, I could expect to be home this summer, and I want so much to be there for that. The fur sleeping bag is really wonderful. I haven't yet seen any chaplain for this division. It's not so simple, since our quarters here are pretty isolated. Perhaps we'll have to wait a little longer with the military chaplaincy.

I wonder whether you will soon behold my son, or whether you have to expect much worse things to happen? I can hardly wait for news from you.

Thinking of you as always, yours affectionately,
Eberhard

119. To Karl And Paula Bonhoeffer

March 2, 1944

My dear Parents,

So you made the long journey here again and handed in a package for me downstairs, and again I couldn't thank you for it myself but had to rely on the sergeant to do it properly for me. I hope the permit to visit comes soon! Maria probably told you that I said to her last time—although this isn't otherwise something we talk about—that our rations here had been reduced, so there was less to eat and sometimes I got a little hungry. But surely that was also because I hardly ate anything those few days when I had the flu. Now you've provided for me splendidly again, and I don't hesitate to admit that the world does sometimes look rather different when one has good food inside one, and work goes better as well. But I dread to think I might be depriving you of food, when you have so much to do all day; you need to keep up your strength now, more than I do. Now it's March again and you still haven't been away. My mother-in-law is looking forward so much to seeing you. But it's just a pity that

Maria isn't at home now. By the way, I got my first letter from her from Bavaria today. She especially likes this cousin whose children she is teaching, as well as helping with housework, and she seems comfortable there. So I hope this is the best solution for her for these final weeks—I hope that is all they will be—until we see each other again and can make plans together. Of course, it would be nicest if we could all travel together to Pätzig and then discuss the future there all together. But after our patience has been tried for this long, it's almost presumptuous to expect that to happen.

I had very nice birthday letters from Karl-Friedrich, Hans-Christoph, and Hörnchen. I was surprised by Hans-Christoph's description of how peaceful life still is in Bucharest. It amazes me that a country in Europe can still afford such a privileged existence. He himself liked it better serving with his division in Africa and Italy. Please thank all of them very much for me.

I was very impressed with Harnack's history of the academy; it made me both happy and nostalgic. There are so few people today still looking for spiritual and intellectual connections to the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries; music turns to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for renewal, theology to the Reformation period, philosophy to Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle, and today's worldview comes from the early Teutonic, distant past. But who still has any idea of the work and accomplishments of the last century, that of our grandfathers? And how much of what they knew has already been lost to us! I think that the day will come when people won't be able to get over their amazement at how fruitful this period was; it's so often disregarded and scarcely known. Could you please get me Dilthey's *Weltanschauung und Analyse des Menschen seit Renaissance und Reformation*? How is Renate getting along, and her husband and the baby? Please give my love to everyone.

With my love and gratitude to you,

Dietrich

Congratulations to Hans Walter on his twentieth birthday!

120. From Karl Bonhoeffer

March 3, 1944

Dear Dietrich,

We got your letter yesterday. It's the same for us as for you—one thinks that by the time the letter is in your hands, we shall perhaps have seen each other and it will be out of date. So we too have been writing less regularly. We are looking forward very much to the next permit to visit. Everything gets delayed because of having to go by way of Torgau. We are provisionally planning to leave for Pätzig on the thirteenth of this month. But now Karl-Friedrich is coming for a longer stay, about two weeks beginning the fourteenth, so we are undecided whether to have him at home with us for at least a few days. He himself says we should go. At present we are planning to stay here at home for the next few bright nights. This going back and forth and keeping two houses is rather strenuous for Mama. Unfortunately Lotte is very ill and hasn't much prospect of recovering. The Dreßes are now also staying in Sakrow at night until they have their things ready to move. Then Suse wants to go back to the children, while Walter will probably stay out there for the time being. Renate with her mother and baby and Christine, who is inseparable from her mother, are also there. So Christel has four generations there on top of everything else, even though we eat at three separate tables, as though in a hotel, and each family cooks for itself. Usually the swarm flies off to Berlin in the mornings and doesn't come back until evening, so she has some quiet during the day. I do wish Mama could have some chance to rest. The travel back and forth, standing in the kitchen, which she isn't used to, and her

desire to help here, there, and everywhere tires her out, although she won't admit it. It will relieve her of a great burden when, as we are certain, the end of our worries comes in the spring, at least for our family if not yet for the world at large.

March 4

Just after I applied for the visit permit to be speeded up, it has come. So this letter will probably be out of date when it reaches you. In the meantime, you have probably received the letters from Hans Christoph and the grandmother in Klein Krössin. Mama keeps wanting to write to you and is unhappy that she is so distracted.

Love from Father

121. To Eberhard Bethge

March 9, 1944

Dear Eberhard,

I heard today again from my parents that in any case you are getting along tolerably. That's not much; we'd like life to be more than just "tolerable," but it's some consolation, as long as we regard our present condition as merely a "status intermedius." If only we knew how much longer this "purgatory" will last! For me personally, I'm now being told that I shall have to wait till May! Shouldn't they be ashamed to dawdle like that? My parents are now going to Pätzig, where I hope they will have a good rest. Sepp is now back home and has pushed through his case with all his old vigor and defiant mien.

I haven't yet responded to your thoughts about Michelangelo, Burckhardt, and *hilaritas*. In one way I find it illuminating, at least with regard to Burckhardt's theses. On the other hand, *hilaritas* shouldn't be regarded just as classical jocundity (Raphael, Mozart); to name a few others, Walther von der Vogelweide, the Knight

of Bamberg, Luther, Lessing, Rubens, Hugo Wolf, Karl Barth also have some of that *hilaritas*, which I would describe as optimism about one's own work, as boldness, willingness to defy the world and popular opinion, as the firm conviction that they are doing the world *good* with their work, even if the world isn't pleased with it, and a high-spirited self-confidence. I grant you that Michelangelo, or Rembrandt as well, and—at a distance—Kierkegaard and Nietzsche follow an entirely different line from those I just mentioned. There is something less assertive, obvious, conclusive in their work, something less of having overcome, of detachment from self, of humor. However, I would apply to a few of them the concept of *hilaritas* as described, as a necessary attribute of greatness. This is where Burckhardt—probably consciously—meets his limit.

Lately I've been studying the "worldliness" of the thirteenth century, which wasn't influenced by the Renaissance but grew out of the Middle Ages, presumably from the *emperor concept* in the struggle against the papacy (Walther, Nibelungen, Parsifal—the tolerance toward Muslims embodied in Parsifal's half brother Feirefiz is astonishing!—and the cathedrals of Naumburg and Magdeburg). This is no "emancipated" worldliness, but rather a "Christian" one, though anticlerical. Where does this "worldliness," which is so essentially different from that of the Renaissance, actually break off? I think that in Lessing—in contrast to the Enlightenment of the West—I still see some of it, in another way still in Goethe and later in Stifter and Mörike (to say nothing of Claudius and Gotthelf), but not at all in Schiller and the idealists. It would be so important to trace the proper lineage here. That also raises the question of how significant classical antiquity still is. Is it still a genuine problem and source of strength for us or not? The modern view from the standpoint of the "πόλις person" is actually one that has also already passed by. The view of classicism, from an aesthetic standpoint, is only important

to a few people, the museumgoers. The fundamental concepts of humanism—humaneness, tolerance, leniency, moderation—are already present in their finest form in Wolfram von Eschenbach, in the Knight of Bamberg, and so on, and in a more accessible and inviting way than in classical antiquity itself. So how far does “culture” still depend on classical antiquity? Is the conception of history as we have it from Ranke to Delbrück, a continuum consisting of “ancient,” “medieval,” and “modern,” really valid? Or is Spengler also right, at least with his thesis of self-contained cultural domains—even if his understanding of historical processes is too biological?

The concept of history as a continuum comes basically from Hegel, who saw the whole course of history as culminating in “modernity,” that is, in his own philosophical system. So it is *idealistic* (despite Ranke’s statement that every moment in history is “immediate to God”; this *could* have resulted in a correction of the basic concept of a developmental continuum, but it did not). Spengler’s “morphology” is *biological*, and that is its limitation (what does “aging” or “decline” of a civilization mean?). For our conception of cultural formation [Bildungsbegriff], it means that we can neither idealistically consider classical antiquity as such as the foundation, nor simply eliminate it, “biologically-morphologically,” from our cultural circle [Bildungskreis]. Until we have more insight here, it would be good to base our relationship to the past, and to classical antiquity in particular, not on a general concept of history, but solely on *content* and specific *topics*. Perhaps you will come back from Italy with something important along this line? Personally, I’m afraid my relationship with the Renaissance and classicism has always been cool; they both seem somehow alien to me; I can’t really make them my own. Write me sometime what your impressions and thoughts are about this. Isn’t a knowledge of other countries and a deeper

encounter with them a much more important element of education for us today than knowing the classics? Of course, there can be philistinism either way. But perhaps it's one of our tasks to make encounters with other peoples and countries a real cultural experience that goes beyond politics or business, beyond snobbery. This would be a fruitful use of cultural and educational currents that to date have been neglected, and it would also bring us back in touch with an old European tradition.

Just now the radio is again announcing the approach of large contingents of aircraft. We could watch some of the last two daytime raids on Berlin quite well from here. We saw large formations flying with their vapor trails across a cloudless sky, sometimes through plenty of flak. The air-raid alert yesterday (March 9) lasted two and a half hours, longer than they do at night. Today the sky is overcast. I am very glad that Renate is out in Sakrow, for your sake as well. Now the sirens are starting again, so I'll have to stop and write some more later.

Again it was two hours of "bombing in all parts of the city," according to the radio. In the months that I've been here, I've been trying to observe to what extent people still believe in anything "supernatural." In general, I'm still finding three ideas that are widespread, partly expressed in superstitious customs: 1. "Keep your fingers crossed for me" is heard innumerable times a day; the sympathetic thoughts of someone are supposed to have some sort of power, and at crucial moments you want not to be alone but to feel that others unseen are watching over you. 2. "Touch wood" is invoked every evening when the question is "whether they're coming tonight or not"; it reminds us of God's wrath at human hubris, so it's a metaphysical reason, and not just a moral one, for humility. 3. "No one can avoid his fate," with the conclusion that you might as well stay where you are. A Christian interpretation of

these three points might be that they are reminders of intercession and church-community [Gemeinde], of God's wrath and mercy, and of divine guidance. On this last point one also hears very often here, "What's the use of that?!" What I don't see at all is any relic of an eschatological sort. Or have you noticed any? Write me sometime about whatever you have observed in this connection.

This will be the second time I have spent Passiontide here. I inwardly resist expressions, in letters from my mother-in-law and her mother, for instance, that speak of my "suffering." That seems like profanation. These things must not be dramatized. I doubt very much whether I'm "suffering" any more than you or most other people these days. Of course, a great deal here is horrible, but where is it otherwise? Perhaps we've made too much of this question of suffering and been too solemn about it. I sometimes used to wonder how Catholics pass by such circumstances without even saying anything. But doesn't that show greater strength? Perhaps, with their history, they know better what suffering and martyrdom really are, so they remain silent about minor harassments and hindrances. I think that, for instance, "suffering" definitely includes bodily suffering, real pain, and so on. We do like to emphasize spiritual suffering, yet this is just what Christ is supposed to have taken from us, and I don't find anything about it in the New Testament or in the acts of the early Christian martyrs. Undoubtedly, it makes a great difference whether "it is the church that suffers" or whether something happens to one or another of its servants. I think there is much that needs to be corrected here; to be frank, I am sometimes almost ashamed of how often we have talked about our own sufferings. No, suffering must be something quite different, must have a quite different dimension from what I have so far experienced.

That's enough for today! When shall we see each other again? Stay well, enjoy that beautiful country, spread *hilaritas* round about you

and keep some for yourself!

Thinking of you faithfully every day, yours with all my heart,
Dietrich

Do you see any possibility of my getting to where you are? And are you still being very sensible at all times? I hope so! We now have people here of every age from “little” Klaus’s to Papa’s age. Are you really getting enough to eat? Can we send you anything? Maria would be happy to do it. I’ve again been waiting three weeks for a visit from W.; he said he was coming and then didn’t show up, without any message. Not very considerate. But one gets used to this after a while, though I don’t really understand it. In contrast, my parents’ untiring devotion really does me good. And if you were here, so much would be different. I recently said so very clearly. But don’t worry about it! You’ve really *done everything* possible and more. I’m not sure I can say that of everyone else. There are situations in which the simplest *deed* is much more than the most extensive proposals and plans and discussions. Based on my present experience, I can say that to myself too. That journey you once made to see Gerhard and your visit (and several attempted visits) here, and my parents’ traveling here every week, and the journeys Maria has made are examples of what I mean. I really don’t want to be unfair to anyone. They’re all doing what they find themselves able to do at the moment. But Matt. 25:36 is still the most important.

Farewell! The letter is just going now!

122. To Eberhard Bethge

Laetare

Dear Eberhard,

With the news of heavy fighting near where you are, you’re hardly

ever out of my thoughts; every word I read in the Bible and every verse of a hymn, I relate to you. You must be especially homesick for Renate and little Dietrich at such a dangerous time, and every letter will only increase that longing. But isn't it an essential part of human maturity, as opposed to immaturity, that your center of gravity is always wherever you happen to be at the moment, and that even longing for the fulfillment of your wishes can't pull you off balance, away from being your complete self, wherever you are? In youth we are never entirely present, no matter where; that's part of the essential nature of youth; otherwise they would be dullards. A man is always a whole person and wholly present, holding back nothing. He may have his longings but somehow masters them and keeps them out of sight, and the more he must overcome in order to live fully in the present, the more he will keep his own counsel and have, fundamentally, the trust of the people around him, especially younger ones who are still on the road that he has already traveled. Wishes, when we cling to them too tightly, can easily rob us of what we ought to be and can be. On the other hand, when we keep our desires under control, again and again, for the sake of what we have to do in the here and now, we are the richer for it. Not to have any desires is poverty. Here I'm surrounded almost entirely by people clinging to their desires, so that they're not there for anyone else; they don't listen anymore and aren't able to love their neighbor. I think that even here we have to live as if there were no wishes and no future, and just be our true selves. It's remarkable then to see how much other people rely on us, look up to us, and even seek our advice. I'm writing all this to you because I think you too have something very important to do these days, and later you will be glad to recall that you rose to it as best you could. When we know someone is in danger, then we want to know that person is being everything he or she can be.

We can have abundant life even though many wishes are not

fulfilled; that must be what I'm really trying to say. Forgive me for coming at you with so many such "reflections," but I'm living a life of reflection here for the most part, and you'll understand that rightly. For the rest, I must add to what I said above that I believe more than ever that we are on the way to the fulfillment of our wishes, and we must not give in to resignation.

I've just been told that Ursel is coming to visit. I hope she brings Renate with her. You know that Maria is in Bavaria for a few weeks. She's helping to tutor the children of her cousin von Truchseß. It will soon be more than enough for her. Her mother was here again recently; really touching, the whole trip takes her from four in the morning till eleven at night! She is one of those people who are always wanting to do "good"; that for me is the difference between her and Maria's grandmother. I noticed this first, back then, with Herbert Jehle; a bit more selfishness would make one truly selfless!

Once again, I'm going through weeks without reading much in the Bible; I still don't know what to make of this. It doesn't make me feel guilty, and I know that after a time I'll be ravenous for it again. Can that be considered a completely "natural" spiritual process? I'd almost say so. Do you remember, it happened during our *vita communis* too; certainly there's always the danger of some laziness there, yet one shouldn't be anxious about it but trust that after a few swings the compass will point in the right direction again. Don't you think so too? Did you find the *Daily Text* Gen. 41:52 recently as helpful as I did? It wasn't a familiar one to me.

It's been a year now since our last days together and the things we did, and I was a witness at your marriage! [I'm] still amazed that I was able to be with you until that day and only left you at a time when you no longer needed me acutely. That thought truly fills me with gratitude and satisfaction, and I'm eager to know how our path will continue in the future, whether we can share it as before,

professionally in any case—as I should really like—or whether we must be content with what we have had in the past. Those were really wonderful years. If only I could hear soon, at some length, about your impressions these days. That would be really important to me.

God keep you, Eberhard.

Yours as ever, Dietrich

When do you get your next leave? I won't get away from here until the middle of May.

123. To Karl Bonhoeffer

April [correct: March] 23, 1944

Dear Papa,

Our wonderful memories of your seventy-fifth birthday a year ago will have to last for this year as well. Today it seems almost unbelievable that, just last year, we could still have such a joyful gathering of family and friends.

We mustn't let this temporarily gloomier present time rob us of the splendid past days, which still are ours inwardly. The great cantata *Lobe den Herren* that we sang in the morning and the evening of your birthday, and the sight of all those children joining in the music making, will still be very present to us all this year, truly a great joy. And for both adults and children alike, the harsh memories of the past year will only confirm in us what we meant back then. Christoph sang some Hugo Wolf spring songs for you that morning—probably by now his voice has changed. Renate made you great-grandparents a few weeks ago. My fate has perhaps brought you closer to your future daughter-in-law than might otherwise have been the case. In the course of the year the war has scattered our family. But in all these outward events, we have experienced more intensely than ever how firm are the ties that bind all the members of our big family together.

And this is because you and Mama are decidedly the center of the family, the same as ever; there's no doubt of that. For that especially I want to thank you today. I also believe you'd want me to let go of my self-reproaches over having been the cause of so much worry in this past year of your life. Certainly your concerns for me have deprived you considerably of peace and quiet in which to do your work. But I know from your letters and visits that you accept and interpret the adversities of the past year in the same way I do, and that helps me, again and again, to take these things calmly. And the confidence that better days will come again, and that the day when we are reunited in freedom will be so marvelous, keeps me going from day to day.

I'm glad you made the trip out to the country for at least a few days and hope so much that it's refreshing for you; and I'm very eager to hear what you have to tell. What did you take along to read? If this letter is forwarded to you in Pätzig, please give my warmest greetings to everyone there. What a pity that Maria isn't there now. She wrote to me that she is staying in Bavaria over Easter. It's surely better for her not to be pulled back and forth too much, so that she gets some peace and quiet. Still, that's hardly possible as long as my business hasn't been cleared up and decided.

Will Hans Walter be allowed to visit me before he goes to the front? You said he had asked about it, and I'd be very glad to see him. I'd also like very much to see a brother or sister, but I'm especially looking forward to my next visit with you and Mama.

My wish for you, dear Papa, is a better and quieter new year—one that brings us all back together again.

With deep gratitude and love to you both,
Dietrich

124. To Eberhard Bethge

March 24, 1944

Dear Eberhard,

What a joy for me to hear from you at such length! It's really quite wonderful that we are still keeping up our dialogue, and for me it is always the most rewarding one that I have. It must be one of the laws of the way our minds work that when one's own thoughts have been understood by another, they are also transformed and stimulated through the medium of that other person. This is what makes a letter such an "event," as you wrote.

I am surprised by how well you are able to concentrate on getting hold of, thinking through, and formulating thoughts so far removed from the work you have to do at present. I could well understand if there were only three issues for you at present: war, marriage, and church. That the scope of your observations and interests reaches so much farther, in such fine intellectual freedom, delights me and proves that you are your usual self. I know that for many of our brothers, standing watch at night has become very meaningful. Is it so for you too? Hopefully, it isn't taking too much out of you physically. Have you not had any more circulatory problems? They usually appeared as a result of your being tired.

The baptism of your child must often be on your mind, and I am writing about it mainly because I could imagine you might be bothered by a certain "inconsistency." We sometimes used to tell people that babies should be baptized as soon as possible for the sake of the sacrament itself, even if their fathers couldn't be there. The reasons for that are clear. And yet I can't do otherwise than agree with you in your decision to wait. Why? I still think it good and desirable and right, especially for a pastor as an example to the congregation, to have one's own child baptized soon, as long as one is truly doing it out of faith in the effectiveness of the sacrament. Nevertheless, a father's wish to participate in this act, to join in the prayers for his child, has its own relative right; and when I'm honest with myself, I

must confess I'm guided by the thought that God also loves a child who is still awaiting baptism. The New Testament has no rule about infant baptism. It is a gift of grace, bestowed on the church to be received and used in deep faith, and therefore it can also be a striking witness to faith for the congregation. But to force oneself against one's will, without being persuaded by faith to do it, is not biblical. It's not justified to baptize children just as a demonstration.

Our prayers for a baby, and our asking God to grant us the day soon when we can bring the child to be baptized together, will not go unheard. As long as we have a justifiable hope that this day is not too far off, I cannot believe that the actual day matters to God. So we can confidently wait awhile, trusting in God's kind providence, in order to do then, with stronger faith, what we would feel to be a burdensome rule if it had to be now. Of course, you must also think of Renate, who would find it hard to understand having a baptism without you there, but would probably find it deeply meaningful if it were held later. So I shouldn't have any scruples, if I were you, about waiting, and see about it later. I think it is more important to focus on baptism itself and how it can be the strongest possible expression of our faith than to carry it out legalistically.

You're probably not telling us much about your direct impressions of the war in order not to worry us. But I think even so I can imagine more or less what you are experiencing, and I think of you every day, praying that you may be kept safe. What you are doing must actually be relatively interesting; it's really all the same, in such an affair, whatever wheel of the huge machine one is helping to turn. That you are repulsed by people's interest in the business at hand, which so easily becomes part of it, I can imagine and understand. In the end, however, the one who is really intact as a person has the greater authority. I'm experiencing here too how hard it is for some

people to keep things in their proper place; often it strikes me as almost tragic.

You are getting to know a part of the world that I love so much, a great deal better than I do. How I'd like to be sitting in the car with you and seeing the Cecilia Metella or Hadrian's villa. I've never been able to make much of the *Pietà*; you must tell me sometime why you are so impressed with it.

March 25

Last night was pretty lively again. The view of the city from the roof was appalling. Still haven't had any news from the family—my parents left yesterday for Pätzig, thank God—but to the west there wasn't much going on. To me it's crazy when they announce the arrival of bombers and we are immediately tempted—as in “Holy St. Florian, spare my house, burn someone else's”—instinctively to wish the horror on other cities, anyone's neck but ours: “perhaps they won't come further than Magdeburg or Stettin,” and so on—how often someone bursts out with that fervent wish! At such moments one is very aware of our *natura corrupta* and *peccatum originale*; to that extent it is perhaps a healthy development. Incidentally, air war has been extraordinarily stepped up again in the last few days, and I'm wondering if it's once again to make up for not going ahead with an invasion.

I won't be able to make any further plans for the future until May; by now I'm beginning to doubt any such prognoses of dates and am becoming indifferent to them. Who knows whether I'll then be told “in July”? My personal future is beginning to seem a minor matter compared to the future we all share, though they are both so closely related. So I'm hoping we shall be able to discuss our plans for the future together again, and you will again be my “water purification plant”; actually I'm quite certain of that.

I've written to Maria about the state of Renate's nutrition and had a very nice letter from Renate herself. Hans W. wasn't allowed to visit me, unfortunately, so that may happen with Renate as well. But Ursel has applied for a visit; that too would be nice. The natural unselfishness of a good mother is something magnificent; there you are in luck, with your mother-in-law. You were so nice to stick up for Klaus, I liked that. . . . In any case, I'm amazed at all these fantasies concocted by supposedly dry lawyers! We'll just have to look somewhere else for sober judgments and actions!

The address I gave you recently is out of date. Please send letters to our home again. I'm still doing well here. I'm gradually becoming a part of the inventory here and sometimes don't even get left alone as much as I'd like.

You may be right that landscape painting is hardly known in southern countries; is the south of France an exception? and Gauguin? or perhaps those weren't southerners either? I don't know, what about Claude Lorraine? It's in Germany and England that landscape painting lives. Southerners *have* the beauty of nature, while we long for it and have a nostalgic love for it, like something rare. By the way, unconnected with that, do you think the line from Mörike, "What is beautiful appears blissful in itself," more or less fits in with J. Burckhardt? We go along too easily with Nietzsche's primitive alternatives, as if the "Apollonian" concept of beauty, and the "Dionysian," the one we call demonic nowadays, are the only ones. But that isn't the case at all. Take, for example, Brueghel or Velázquez, or even Hans Thoma, Leopold Kalckreuth, or the French Impressionists. They have a beauty that is neither classic nor demonic, but simply earthly in its own right; and I must say that this is the only sort of beauty that speaks to me personally. The virgins of Magdeburg that I mentioned recently and the Naumburg statues also belong here. Are we perhaps wrong to interpret Gothic art as

“Faustian” at all? Otherwise why would there be such a contradiction between its sculpture and architecture? I’d like to talk with you in depth about all these things. You *see* more, and more sharply and clearly, than I do.

Can you talk about things like this with your lawyer friend? How will it be someday when you introduce your son to these things?

That’s all for today! Otherwise you’ll never finish this letter. It makes me so happy to remember you practicing the cantata *Lobe den Herren* last year! It did us all *so much good!*

Always your faithful friend

Dietrich

March 27

Should I perhaps already be sending you, today, my special good wishes for Easter? I don’t know how long letters take to reach you, and I want you to know that during the weeks before and after Easter I feel a special bond with you through many good memories. These days I keep looking through *Das Neue Lied* and being aware that it’s mainly to you that I owe my enjoyment of Easter hymns. It’s been a year since I heard a chorale sung. But it’s strange how music, when one listens with the inner ear alone and gives oneself up to it utterly, can be almost more beautiful than when heard physically. It’s purer, all the dross falls away, and it seems to take on a “new body.” I only know a few pieces of music well enough to hear them from within, but I can do so especially well with Easter hymns. I’m getting an existential appreciation of Beethoven’s music from when he was deaf, especially the great set of variations from opus 111, which you and I once heard Giesecking play:



By the way, I've sometimes listened lately to the Sunday concert from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m., even on the atrocious radio here. How you get along without music I can't imagine, or do you have your flute with you? Couldn't you try to buy a viola da gamba or an oboe, or a good guitar? I'd like to give it to you as a present, if German money is any use to you. And if you could get something like that for me as well, it would be even better!

Easter? Our thoughts are more about dying than about death. We're more concerned about how we shall face dying than about conquering death. Socrates mastered the art of dying, Christ overcame death as ἔσχατος ἐχθρὸς (1 Cor. 15:26). Being able to face dying doesn't yet mean we can face death. It's possible for a human being to manage dying, but overcoming death means resurrection. It is not through the *ars moriendi* but through Christ's resurrection that a new and cleansing wind can blow through our present world. This is the answer to the δός μοι ποῦ στῶ καὶ κινήσω τῆν γῆν. If a few people really believed this and were guided by it in their earthly actions, a great deal would change. To live in the light of the resurrection—that is what Easter means. Do you too find that most people don't know what they really live by? The *perturbatio animorum* spreads far and wide. Unconsciously people are waiting for the word that will unbind them and set them free. But the time probably hasn't yet come when it can be heard. Yet it will come, and perhaps this Easter is one of our last great opportunities to get ready for our future task. I wish you the joy of Easter, despite everything you are having to do without this year.

Good-bye, I must close; the letter has to go.

Yours with all my heart,

Dietrich

125. From Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer

March 26, 1944

Dear Dietrich,

When you get this letter, perhaps it will be exactly a year that you've been in prison. Unthinkable for those of us who haven't experienced this! Your letters are still circulating around the entire family, and we're very happy to have them. But I would very much like to see you and talk with you again, and have requested another permit to visit. With so many of us in the family, each one doesn't get many chances, and parents and fiancée have priority.

I'm sitting here in our parents' living room, while they are in Pätzig getting to know the home of your future mother-in-law. I'm really glad that they finally made up their minds to go. Mama particularly was quite reluctant inwardly, although she so urgently needs to get away. It's just too much for her; she must have some time to relax. During air raids she doesn't show the least reaction, however, and if someone advises her in any way to be careful, she almost resents it. But of course that means a further strain on her, on top of everything else. It's too bad they're not expecting to stay much longer than a week and are hurrying back partly because they've got permission to visit you. So you'll probably see them during the week before Easter, even before you get this letter from me.

Meanwhile, I'm halfway to becoming a Berliner again. Perhaps not all of halfway, but I do expect to have things to do here more often in the near future, in connection with my new work at Osram. Of course, it's possible that I'll "evacuate" away from here again; that's a term that has become very relevant for us since you've been in prison. You'll be amazed, when you get out, to see how the world has changed in that one year. It's becoming very difficult to do any scientific work. Libraries have "evacuated" their books, making access

to them a major problem; institutes have been damaged, and people are distracted by all sorts of worries at home. It takes more energy than one can summon to force oneself to concentrate. I've left things that were 80 percent finished lying around for months and can't get them done. Yet in our field it's crucial, for technology as well, that the main purely scientific things are kept moving forward. In the long run we cannot go on living off our capital. I should be happy if I could find a quiet, suitable place to which to move, somewhere that would let me carry on my scientific and technical research, and perhaps take Grete and the children there as well. I would then concentrate my lectures in Leipzig on a few days and become a visiting lecturer there, so to speak. But I'm afraid that no such place can be found anymore.

I'm going back to Leipzig in a few days and won't be back here again until after Easter. I hope I'll get permission to visit by then. May I nevertheless wish you a "happy" Easter? All the best!

Yours as ever,
Karl-Friedrich

126. From Karl Bonhoeffer

Pätzig, March 27, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

When we came back from Tegel last Thursday, we found the permit to visit waiting. That was very distressing, since we now have to put off our visit to you until we return from Pätzig. We couldn't very well postpone the trip here again. However, Maria is hoping she will be able to visit you very soon, probably on the thirtieth. We arrived here on Friday without any particular trouble. Karl Friedrich had taken us to the railway station. We are getting very spoiled here, and I do hope that Mama will benefit from some rest during the days

here where there is nothing for her to worry about. The weather is cool and windy, usually with light snow. That has the advantage that we are not outdoors much and really have to sit still and rest. The surroundings here are very pleasant. We are enjoying being here with the Wedemeyers, both mother and children, in every way, and especially the thought that you will have no trouble feeling at home here one day. Even the many refugees from the bombing who are here are nice, considerate people. The selfless, caring nature of the mistress of the house influences everyone. On Saturday evening we had all sorts of musical offerings by the young people—cello, piano, flute, and recitations. It reminded us very much of our Saturday musical evenings when all of you were still at home. Yesterday Mrs. von Wedemeyer read aloud to us her husband's memoirs of his father. They interested me not only as the account of an exceptionally strong-willed man, who, despite being confined to a wheelchair for years, had the reins of his business firmly in hand, but also because, despite very different interests, the basic attitude to life and upbringing was hardly different from that of our Swabian families.

We shall probably go back on Tuesday, April 4, and hope to be able to visit you on Wednesday or Thursday. Mama wanted to write to you as well, but we decided that she would do so a few days from now, so you wouldn't get two letters from the same set of circumstances saying essentially the same things. I believe our stay here will do Mama good. We are somewhat worried about the most recent attack on Berlin, about which we haven't yet heard any details. We can't get through by telephone. Mama sends much love; she is just writing to Maria. We'll see you soon.

Your Father

127. From Eberhard Bethge

[Dear Dietrich, . . .]

When you are drafted into the army, first there is a time as a recruit, and then after that they start making demands. Sometimes I'm fearful about being here, but then I always manage to think of reasons to console myself. The chief here and the second in command are both personally very nice to me, but so modern and military in their attitudes that up to now I haven't been able to talk with them about my problems as I would like to do sometimes, and I'm afraid it will stay that way. There is one fellow here who said to me recently, when he was boozed up, that in peacetime after the victory the party would deal properly with types like Rain[alter] and me (academics). Of course, most of the others found this completely misplaced. Whenever I can come, we'll have a lot to think about. What will have happened by then? The Wehrmacht reports these days are calling for intrepid and steadfast hearts, that is, only from those who are interested enough to read them at all.

I'm very curious about all that you are now reading about music and in Dilthey. I haven't been able to get to any reading for weeks, except the Bible in the evenings (Psalms and Corinthians). In the last few weeks I've even had to stop working on Italian, for lack of time, and I'm already starting to forget it. But when I've finished sorting out the filing pile here, things will get better.

I would indeed like to see Sepp. I only spoke with his wife very briefly. He will surely have kept his *hilaritas*. Interesting that you've been so preoccupied with the Middle Ages, the thirteenth century. I've been feeling something like resentment against the talk of "empire" [Reich] these days, when it's in fashion.

But your observation about "worldliness" without an anti- is quite intriguing. At the moment I'm sitting out here in the country and seeing nothing of the Middle Ages or the Renaissance, only the Campagna. Farmlands, here and there an ancient paving stone and marble remains of old buildings along the road, with a frieze. To your

observations of what people believe in, here one could add fortune-tellers. Some people, in fact, keep going to them from time to time and at the same time assure you they don't believe in all that.

Now I need to write to Renate as well. The business about dramatizing one's "sufferings," describing them and making them into a role that one plays, I think I understand very well. Among other things, it's a way of defending oneself inwardly against pain, or even a form of distancing oneself from it. In the process one may indeed easily admire certain things in other people and friends.

Maria is offering to send me a package if I can provide her with a ration ticket for it. I am so well off, and Renate is so much less so, that I'd much rather it went to her. It's very kind of her. Farewell. *Destroy the first part right away.* All my very, very best to you. Soon it will be Palm Sunday and Easter.

Yours,

Eberhard

128. To Eberhard Bethge

April 2, 1944

Dear Eberhard,

So Easter too will come and go without our being home and seeing each other. But I'm not putting off our hopes any further than Pentecost. What do you say to that? By now it will be spring where you are, in all its glory, and you will be longing for the day in peacetime when you can show Renate everything you are seeing now. In normal times I expect you would have confirmed Klaus and Christoph today. Here we are having a clear but still rather cool Palm Sunday morning. How we could celebrate such a feast day with the family! But how good it is that for all these years—I think since Papa's seventieth birthday—you have been part of, and brightened,

all our family festivals. I always think it such a pity that Maria has really only gotten to know our family under the pressure of this past year; she was there for Hans-Walter's farewell party, but that's all. She was here a few days ago and gave me a vivid description of how they celebrated Papa's birthday a bit early, on March 29, in Pätzig. Maria made the journey to be there two days and see my parents. In the morning there was singing outside their door, then a birthday breakfast with just my parents, Maria, and her mother, apparently quite an epicurean breakfast with produce from the farm, later a grand feast where Hans Werner gave the birthday toast (that amazed me most of all), coffee with just the four of them again in Maria's room; then Maria and her mother had to travel on. All this really delighted me, for my parents' sake as well, since they are very open to such spontaneous acts of friendship. They are both reported to be in a more relaxed and cheerful mood, and I'm very happy about that after these dreadful months.

Maria's mother and grandmother recently hit on the idea that when Maria visits me here, I should always have a little prayer service with her, and that Maria should write down and bring questions for me, "religious problems" and such. Otherwise Maria's visit wouldn't be "satisfying" for me. It was a kind thought, but I was very pleased to find that Maria was as radically opposed to it as I was. It wasn't so easy to explain to my mother-in-law (the last time she visited) that my purpose when Maria visits is not to discuss profound questions but to get in touch with a bit of real life. She sees my present situation in such "dramatic" terms—certainly out of genuine sympathy—that she underestimates the significance of what is simply natural. I also said that such a planned procedure seemed to me to show a "lack of trust." We don't need to discuss everything thoroughly to know that we are united in certain matters. The main thing was that Maria was of the same mind, entirely of her own volition.

The other day I got to see Ursel and Dorothee here, quite by chance. That Hans-Walter was denied permission to visit is one of the things I shall keep in mind! To me that's a low-minded style of bureaucracy, and one shouldn't just let it pass without protest. I thought Dorothee looked well, but found Ursel still rather thin. I've now asked for a picture of the baby and am looking forward to it very much. Once again I openly shared my concern about Renate's physical well-being with Maria. It hurts that there is so little I can do directly. But I have also asked again that some of the food intended for me be given to Renate regularly; I don't know whether it is being done, but I hope so.

Just think, purely by chance I've suddenly taken up graphology again. I'm enjoying it very much and am now working through Ludwig Klages's book. But I am not going to try it on friends and relatives' handwriting; there are enough people here who are interested in it. However, I am convinced of the thing's reliability. You remember that as a young student I had so much success with it that it became embarrassing, and I put it aside until now, almost twenty years. But now that I think I have the dangers of psychology behind me, I'm very interested again and would like to talk about it with you. If it gets uncanny for me again, I'll drop it again right away. I could imagine that you might be very successful with it as well, because it calls for two things, in the second of which you're more gifted than I am: empathy and extremely precise powers of observation. If you like, I'll write you some more about it sometime.

In the fat (800-page) 1941 biography of Klopstock by Karl Kindt (a Christian), I found very striking excerpts from Klopstock's drama *Der Tod Adams*, portraying the death of the first human being. The idea itself is interesting, and it's powerfully executed. I sometimes used to think of rehabilitating Klopstock, so I'm finding the book quite interesting.

Maria's birthday is April 23. Perhaps you would like to send her a little greeting? She would surely like it very much. The address is *c/o* Baron von Truchseß, Bundorf near Hofheim in Mainfranken, 13a. So, this has just been a newsy letter, written simply because I wanted to talk with you this morning (in different times we'd have played some splendid music today!) and not wanting to leave you without news of me.

I have a very detailed map of the surroundings of Rome and look at it often when I'm thinking of you, imagining you driving around the roads there with which you are now well acquainted, hearing the sounds of war not very far away, and looking down from the mountains to the sea.

God keep you every day and everywhere you go! Yours as ever,
with all my heart,
Dietrich

129. From Rüdiger Schleicher

Berlin, Good Friday, April 7, 1944

My dear Dietrich,

It's high time I sent you my good wishes directly for a change; it's almost Easter, and the first anniversary of the day when you had to leave us is already past. We are thinking of you with all our best wishes during these days. This morning we went to the Annenkirche and heard Walter Dreß; it was a good service, and I was very pleased with the seriousness of his sermon. The church was completely full. The organ had been damaged by a disruption of the electrical lines, and the congregation had to sing without it, but it went pretty well. After the service we, that is, Ursel, Dorothee, and I, with Walter and Suse, went with Mother and Ilse Dreß to their new replacement

apartment in a big mansion in Dahlem. They are quite lucky to have two small rooms and a tiny makeshift kitchen.

I'm very happy that the Easter holidays have begun and I have at least two days free again (Good Friday and Easter Sunday); that does me good, because I currently have to put in rather strict service hours and am out of the house from about quarter to 8 until 7:00 p.m. Tomorrow afternoon we're going to hear the *St. Matthew Passion* at the Marienkirche (Renate will probably come with us, since she'll be visiting us over Easter for the first time with her little boy). I'm looking forward to it very much. I recently heard the first half of it in Potsdam, when Hans-Walter was here on leave, and enjoyed it greatly—in contrast to Bruckner's Ninth Symphony, which I heard a few days earlier with Carajan conducting and which left me cold. I have no feeling for Bruckner, despite the sympathy that might be expected in view of this man's life story.

Hans Walter was recently transferred to Brandis, near Leipzig, for training in instrument flying; he didn't yet know himself what other sorts of training he might receive there. We hope to hear more about it from him soon.

The letters that come from Eberhard are always gratifying, although by now things must not be easy anywhere in Italy, according to all that I've been hearing from a soldier who just came back from there. But Eberhard's sunny nature will certainly help him through every difficulty. When shall we all be able to sing and make music together again?

May things go well for you too, Dietrich; keep in good health and spirits.

Yours as ever,

Rüdiger

130. To Ruth von Wedemeyer

April 10, 1944

Dear Mother,

On your birthday when you are together with a large circle of family and friends, joyfully and thankfully celebrating this great day, please know and sense that from the quiet of a locked prison cell good thoughts and wishes are constantly flowing to you. Know that there can be no one with a heart more filled with joy and gratitude than he who since last year is permitted to call himself your son and knows that in you he has found a good mother. When Maria is with you, you will feel this through her.

I looked up the *Daily Text* readings for April 19. They direct our thoughts to those who are calling to us from the eternal realm, who are with us—Father and Max. In your thoughts you will be with them, but still very much with us and with those who need you here on earth. The time between Easter and Ascension has always been an especially important time for me. We are already looking toward the last things, yet we still have our work to do, our joys and sorrows here on earth, and through Easter we are given the strength to go on living. I'm not saying anything other than what I have experienced when I thank you today for going ahead of us on this road between Easter and Ascension; this is the blessing that Father and Max have left to you and to us. I too want to travel this road with Maria, of being wholly ready for the last things, for eternity, and yet wholly present for the tasks, for the beauty and the troubles here on earth. Only by keeping to this path can we become completely happy and at peace with one another. We shall receive with open and outstretched hands what God gives us and be wholeheartedly happy with it. And with quiet hearts we shall let go of that which God doesn't yet grant us or takes away. I know that Maria and I are of one mind in this, and

I know that you, our good mother, will be glad to help both of us when needed and when we ask your help. Thank you for everything you have done for me this past year. God preserve you in the year to come, for us and for all in your house.

Your grateful son

Dietrich

My parents were so happy with their visit to you, and you made it such a particularly lovely time for them, that I was just delighted. They feel that they get along especially well with you. Thank you so very much for those days in particular!

131. Report on Prison Life after One Year in Tegel

April 1944

The admission procedures were carried out correctly. For the first night I was locked in a reception cell; the blankets on the cot stank so abominably that in spite of the cold, it was impossible to cover oneself with them. The next morning a piece of bread was thrown into my cell, so that I had to pick it up off the floor. One-fourth of the coffee in the cup was grounds. For the first time from outside my cell came the foul curses inflicted on those detained for interrogation by the prison staff; since then I have heard the abuse daily from morning till night. When I had to line up for inspection with the other new arrivals, we were addressed as “scoundrels,” etc., etc. by a warden. Each of us was asked why he had been arrested, and when I said I did not know, the warden answered with a jeering laugh, “You’ll find out soon enough!” It was six months before I received the warrant for my arrest. As we were being taken through the various offices, occasionally one of the sergeants, who had heard what my profession was, wanted to talk with me briefly. They were told that no one

was allowed to speak with me. Another sergeant whom I had never seen before or since appeared suddenly while I was taking a bath and asked whether I knew Pastor N. When I said yes, the man declared, "He's a good friend of mine," and went away. I was taken to the most isolated single cell on the top floor, and a sign was hung outside forbidding anyone to enter without special permission. I was told that I was not permitted any correspondence until further notice and that, unlike the other prisoners, I was not to be allowed outdoors for half an hour each day, although I was entitled to it according to the prison regulations. I was not allowed any newspapers or anything to smoke. After forty-eight hours my Bible was returned to me. It had been searched to make sure I had not smuggled in a saw, a razor blade, or the like. Otherwise, during the next twelve days the cell door was opened only to bring me food and take out the latrine bucket. Not a single word was exchanged with me. I was given no information about why I had been imprisoned or for how long. I concluded from remarks overheard, and this turned out to be true, that I had been put in the section for the worst cases, with prisoners who were condemned to death and were kept shackled hand and foot. During the first night in my cell, I could hardly sleep because a prisoner in the next cell wept aloud for several hours and no one paid any attention. I thought at the time that this sort of thing went on every night, but in all the months since it has happened only once more. In those early days of complete isolation, I saw nothing of what actually goes on in the building, only what I could gather from the almost constant shouting of the wardens. My fundamental impression, which remains unchanged to this day, is that those detained for *interrogation* are treated as if they were already convicted criminals, and that prisoners have practically no possibility of asserting their rights when they are treated unjustly. Later I overheard several conversations among the wardens in which they said quite bluntly that if a prisoner should

complain of being treated unjustly, or even of being beaten—which is actually strictly prohibited—the prisoner’s word would never be believed against their own, since they could always find a colleague to testify on their behalf under oath. I have, in fact, heard of cases in which this evil practice was followed.

After twelve days my family connections became known in the prison. For me personally this made things much easier, but it was shameful to see how everything changed from that moment on. I was moved to a more spacious cell, which an orderly cleaned for me every day. I was offered larger portions of food, which I always refused, since they would have been provided at the expense of the other prisoners; and the captain came to take me for a daily walk. The result was that the staff treated me with exceptional politeness, and some even came to apologize, saying, “Of course we didn’t realize,” and so on. . . . How embarrassing!

Overall treatment: The tone is set by those wardens whose behavior toward the prisoners is the most nasty and brutal. The whole building resounds with foul curses, which are so insulting that the quieter and more fair-minded wardens are repulsed as well, but they have scarcely any influence. Prisoners who are later acquitted will have endured months of detention for interrogation, during which they are completely defenseless against being cursed as criminals, since the prisoner’s right of appeal is purely theoretical. Having private means, cigarettes, and promises for later make a huge difference. The ordinary man without connections simply has to endure it all. The same people who take out their frustrations on other prisoners bow and scrape to me, and attempts to reason with them about how they treat the others don’t get far. They will agree with what I’m saying at the moment, but an hour later they are carrying on the same as

before. I must not fail to mention that there are also a number of wardens whose conduct toward the prisoners is calm, matter-of-fact, and when possible kind; but for the most part these men remain in subordinate positions.

Food: The prisoner cannot escape the impression that he doesn't receive the full rations to which he is entitled. Often there is no trace of the meat that is supposed to be in the soup. Bread and sausage are sliced very unevenly. I personally weighed a portion of sausage, and it turned out to be 15 g. instead of 25 g. Kitchen staff and noncommissioned officers on kitchen duty can tell many a tale of what they have observed along these lines. Among seven hundred prisoners, even the slightest inaccuracy has an enormous effect. I know from reliable sources that when doctors and officers come to check on the prison diet, meat and cream sauce are added generously to the servings to be tested, so it is no wonder that the diet provided by the prison has a good reputation. In the same way, I know that meat intended for the prisoners first has the goodness cooked out of it in the pots of food for the staff. If one has the chance to compare meals served to prisoners with those served to the staff, it's staggering. Dinner on Sundays and holidays is beneath contempt, consisting of watery cabbage soup completely devoid of any fat, meat, or potatoes. On these days nobody will be checking on the food. There is no doubt in my mind that for young people imprisoned for long periods this is a completely inadequate diet. No records are kept of the prisoners' weight. Although these are detainees for *interrogation* and also soldiers, some of whom will be released directly back to combat units, it is strictly forbidden to receive food packages; prisoners are threatened with severe punishment when they are told this. Anything to eat, even sandwiches and boiled eggs that prisoners' relatives bring them when they visit, are turned away, which causes great bitterness among both visitors and prisoners.

Military police bringing prisoners to be admitted can get a meal in the kitchen, despite existing regulations.

Occupation: The great majority of those detained for interrogation spend their days without work to do, although most of them ask to be given work. They can get three books a week from a very mediocre library. Games of any sort to pass the time (such as chess) are forbidden even in communal cells, and if prisoners manage to concoct such games themselves, these are taken away and the prisoners are punished. There are no common projects for the seven hundred prisoners that could benefit the whole community, for example, digging air-raid bunkers. There are no religious services. Some of the prisoners are very young (including antiaircraft auxiliaries), and they are bound to suffer in body and soul from the lack of occupation and supervision, especially in long periods of solitary confinement.

Lighting: During the winter months prisoners often had to sit in the dark for several hours, since the staff were sluggish about turning on the lights in the cells. When the prisoners, who have the right to have the lights on, tried to attract attention by putting out their little flags or by knocking, the staff yelled at them angrily and refused to turn the lights on until the next day. Prisoners are not allowed to lie down on their cots until taps, so they have to spend the hours until then sitting in complete darkness. That is psychologically very depressing and only causes bitterness.

Air raids: There is no air-raid cellar for the prisoners. It would be a small matter, with all the labor available here, to attend to this speedily. Only a command bunker has been prepared for the commander and his staff. Moreover, during air raids only the prisoners from the top floor are locked in with the inmates in the ground-floor cells. When I asked why the inmates on the third floor were not moved to the second floor, the answer was that it

makes too much work. There is no bunker for the sick bay either. When a heavy attack rendered the sick bay unusable, we couldn't begin bandaging the wounded until the bombardment was over. The screams and frenzied struggles of the prisoners locked in their cells during a severe attack, some of whom are here only for very minor offenses or may even be innocent, is unforgettable for anyone who has heard it. Seven hundred soldiers are exposed here to the dangers of a bombing raid without any protection.

Various: The only possibility the prisoners have to communicate with the staff in case of an emergency is by putting out their little flags. Often no notice is taken of this for hours, or else a passing warden simply shoves the flag back in again without asking the prisoner what he wants. If the prisoner then knocks on his door, he is bombarded with curses. If a prisoner reports illness outside of sick-bay treatment hours, this inconveniences the staff, so they usually respond with anger; only with great difficulty can such a prisoner get himself taken to sick bay. I have twice seen prisoners being literally kicked into the sick bay; one of them had acute appendicitis and had to be taken to the military hospital immediately, and the other had prolonged hysterical convulsions. All those detained for interrogation, even for very minor matters, are taken in chains to their interrogations and trials; for a soldier in uniform this is extremely humiliating and has a depressive effect on his response to questioning. The orderlies whose job it is to empty latrine buckets as well as to distribute food are given the same small amount of soap for washing as ordinary prisoners, for whom it is already scarcely enough.

Part 3:

Holding Out for the Coup Attempt: April–July 1944

Part 3

Holding Out for the Coup Attempt: April–July 1944

132. To Eberhard Bethge

April 11, 1944

Dear Eberhard,

I really wanted to write to you during the holidays, but due to many very well-meant visits I had less peace and quiet than I should have liked. I couldn't even get a letter to Maria finished. I'm already so used to the silence of being alone that it only takes a little while before I am longing for it again. I can't even imagine spending my day the way I did before or the way you do now. As you know, even in earlier days I used to have trouble lasting through family celebrations; I hope this problem won't have grown any worse. I do greatly long for a good conversation, but meaningless talk gets on my nerves terribly. It's the same with the usual sort of music on the radio; I hear it not even as music but just as empty racket. There's surely a danger in all this. Even so, I think you must often feel the same way now. One's feeling for quality can't simply be stifled; it only gets stronger from year to year.

How did you spend Easter? Were you in Rome? How did you manage your homesickness? I could imagine that this is even harder

in your situation than in mine, because diversions and distractions don't take care of it. It's necessary to muster up the whole range of ultimate truths in order to get clarity with oneself, and for that you need a lot of time to yourself. For me the first warm days of spring are somehow wrenching, as they probably are for you. When nature comes into its own again but the tensions in our own lives and the historical communities in which we live remain unresolved, we feel the split especially strongly. Or it may just be a sense of longing, and perhaps it's good for us to long for something again. For myself at any rate, I must say that for many long years I have been living, not without goals and work to do and hopes that completely absorbed me, but without personal yearnings, and perhaps that makes one old before one's time. Everything has become too "objective" [sachlich]. Almost everyone nowadays has goals and work to do. It's all tremendously objectified and thingified. But who today can still afford strong personal feelings, real yearnings, and take the trouble and spend the energy to carry around a sense of longing within him, to explore it and let it bear fruit? A few sentimental hit songs on the radio with their labored naïveté, empty and primitive, are the pitiful remnant, the maximum that anyone will allow in terms of being stirred inwardly—awfully dreary and impoverished. So let's really be glad when something affects us deeply and feel enriched by the pain it brings us. High tension gives off big sparks (or isn't that a physical fact? well, you translate it into the right language!).

I have long had a particular affection for this season between Easter and Ascension Day. Here, too, there is great tension. How should people endure tensions here on earth when they know nothing of the tension between heaven and earth? Do you have *Ein Neues Lied* with you? I remember so well learning Ascension hymns with you, including the one that is still my favorite, "On this day we remember. . . ." By the way, just about now we are beginning the

tenth year of our friendship. That's a pretty large slice of our lives, and we've shared the past year hardly less intensely than the former years of our *vita communis*.

April 23 is Maria's birthday. She'll have to celebrate it alone again, and I have the impression that both of us—I mean you and I—will be getting home about the same time. I have been told not to expect any change in my current situation for the time being, and this comes after having fresh promises made to me once a fortnight until now. I can't call that either right or clever, and I am keeping my own counsel about it, which I very, very much wish I could talk over with you. But on a practical level, I just have to go along with it, since my view of things can't have any effect. I'm hoping for Pentecost!

Yesterday I heard someone say that these last years have been lost years for him. I'm glad I have never for one moment had that feeling; I've never even regretted my decision in the summer of '39. Instead, I am wholly under the impression that my life—strange as it may sound—has gone in a straight line, uninterrupted, at least with regard to how I've led it. It has been a continually enriching experience for which I can only be grateful. If my present situation were to be the conclusion of my life, that would have a meaning that I believe I could understand. On the other hand, all this might be a thorough preparation for a new beginning, which would take place in marriage, peacetime, and with new work to do.

A nice letter has just come from Rüdiger, from which I gather that you too aren't exactly hanging about in base camp. I'd like to know a lot more about your daily life. Are your lodgings bearable? But you're used to quite a bit, having been at boarding school. I was very happy to see the seventy-fifth-birthday pictures again, with you there among the grandchildren, when my parents brought them along recently.

Your photo of Lissa, which I still think is rather good, is in the front of my *Daily Texts*.

I'm very glad that my parents were so pleased with their visit in Pätzig. The way my mother-in-law appears to have looked after them was so touching, and even Papa sounded really happy about their stay. Of course, it's odd the way my mother-in-law always kisses Mama's hand, something that I can't bring myself to do. I don't feel it's appropriate, in my profession; besides, it probably has something to do with my reserved Swabian background. I expect that the more distant of my honored relatives will take offense at some point, but certainly in vain. By the way, my mother-in-law's selflessness seems to make a particular impression on everyone who meets her.

I'll close now for today, as I have to do another handwriting analysis; that's the way I now spend the hours in which I can't do any real work. This letter is somewhat disjointed because I kept being interrupted while writing it. But I think you'd rather have it than none at all.

I think of you often, every day, and commend you to God's care.
Affectionately yours,
Dietrich

133. From Ursula Schleicher

April 18, 1944

Dear Dietrich,

This week Rüdiger has gone to Stuttgart and Speyer on business, and Christine has been invited to a country house in Mecklenburg along with Gudrun Diem. So Dorothee and I have come to spend a week with Aunt Ruth and have a bit of a rest. This is a splendid place to

do that, and the weather is wonderfully springlike. In the garden, the daffodils, squills, violets, crocuses, and daphne are in bloom, just delightful. Aunt Ruth's eyesight keeps getting worse, but she enjoys the splashes of color and is pleased with each one. I spend most of my time on the deck chair in the arbor, just enjoying the outdoors. I have Stifter's *Der Nachsommer* to read, so I am leading an unusually tranquil life and enjoying it very much. After all there was to do at Renate's, baby care and so on, I was quite worn out.

We think about you a lot and wish you could be here. It's very hard that once again you don't get to enjoy springtime.

Aunt Ruth is as lively as ever and interested in everything, but she does look older. She complains about her fading eyesight and about great difficulty with sleeping. Unfortunately, her daughter-in-law here has had a bad attack of diphtheria but is now better.

We are really being spoiled here. Dorothee is happy that she finally has enough to eat. She has to study hard; at the moment she's working on history. She is hoping to take her exams [Abitur] this autumn, but I'm not so keen, because she'll only be sixteen in May. Christine is about to start confirmation class. Since she has very good religious instruction in school, it will only take her a year. We will be sending her to the class in Potsdam.

Hans-Walter hasn't been deployed yet after all; he's being trained for another three to six months as a long-distance aircraft radio operator. He is stationed near Leipzig, so we will surely be able to visit him sometime. He was pretty let down that he wasn't allowed in to see you, especially since Klaus Dohnanyi is also your nephew and did get in, and *he* was expecting to go on active service soon. The letter you wrote him when he was called up has helped him often, and he really wanted to talk with you. Maybe it can still happen sometime. Little Dietrich is doing well; he's growing and will be taken to the photographer soon, and you too will get a picture. The

pictures we have taken aren't so good, but Eberhard thinks he has discovered one hundred likenesses! Even though there's really more baby pillow than baby to be seen.

Now I'm hoping to have my permit to visit soon; Rüdiger has already applied for me twice, so we can finally see each other again after so long.

So good-bye for now. I wish you all the very, very best, with all my heart.

Yours, Ursula

Love from everyone here.

134. From Eberhard Bethge

April 21, 1944

Dear Dietrich,

Since we didn't get to see each other at Easter, we have to keep hoping for the next holiday. Meanwhile, you have sent me some more thoughtful greetings, and I'm happy that you give me the important job of setting new dates. I spent a very quiet Easter here with letters from Renate and lovely flowers, was able to take short walks and read some Burckhardt (*Kultur der Renaissance*). Are you familiar with Cardano's autobiography from the same period? It must be a noteworthy example of objective self-observation; he's a doctor. Does your father have it? The spring is already quite beautiful here, especially in the ravines, but I hardly ever get out to see other areas. We like bad weather, however, since it's then generally quiet in the air.

I too need to think of what should be done about Klaus's and Christoph's confirmation. How difficult these things have become. Maria's birthday is the day after tomorrow; I wrote a note to her.

Will she be able to come and see you? Instead of such celebrations yesterday, we had promotions and then a glass of wine to the Führer's health for April 20. The conversation was pretty sluggish. Your father wrote to me a few days ago, quite touched by the improvised birthday party in Pätzig. He even wrote which chorale was sung. I take it they weren't there long?

What you write about the idea of holding devotions with Maria has been in my thoughts for a while. I must say, I don't really understand how the elderly Mrs. von Kleist went off on such a tangent; despite the great "sensation of spiritual encounter with you" (sorry!), isn't she too vigorous and knowledgeable about life? You will be glad when these efforts to train you in the family's ways come to an end, well-intentioned though they may be. In my case, my mother's totally different attempts, through other people, to "change" Renate, to make her "say what she feels," are getting me into a nervous state, especially in this letter-writing situation. It's a combination of a lack of sensitivity, egoism, and trying to help. Mother doesn't understand how a wife's reticence toward everyone else, including an instinctive refusal to be drawn into mother-daughter gossip, can be such a cause of rejoicing for her husband. I keep trying to think what I could write my mother that would be fruitful, even to the point of starting a fight that would bear fruit. It's so annoying not to be able to settle things face-to-face. In this present situation, a letter would perhaps be too deeply distressing. Is it really such a stupid, difficult thing, being a mother-in-law?

It's too bad that there is hardly any possibility for Renate to visit you. What should happen is that I should come, and we could go in the car to see you. It's really touching for me, the way you are helping again to provide for Renate's needs. Thank you so much. It reassures me a lot. If Maria knows as well, it will be all right. Renate is just alone for the time being. It's a pity I can't help her get through

this first period where her day consists of laundry and cooking from morning till night, and she has to struggle through everything by herself.

I have never looked into handwriting analysis and have been suspicious of it, perhaps out of fear that I couldn't be detached enough. But now I'd be interested in hearing about it sometime.

When is the egoism of one person offensive like the altruism of another (or even the same person)? Naive egoism can have an endearing sort of disarming quality. Being aware of it and affirming it can actually draw Christians together. In your family, is it the result of generations of upbringing based on insight into human nature?

This recent death was news to me. I'm very sorry. I did in fact send you greetings a while ago. So shall I get them back?

I have been struck with how, among the comrades here who are Catholic, religion consists entirely of rules and commandments, and how deep-seated this remains despite all the things that eclipse it. It gives them their standard by which to make judgments. By the way, White Sunday is quite important to them; some have sent greeting cards and rosaries back home or to godchildren.

So, may things go well for you, and keep up your courage about the dates.

Your devoted

Eberhard

135. To Eberhard Bethge

April 22, 1944

Dear Eberhard,

Today I heard from my parents again about how things are going for you. I'd always be happy to know a great deal more, but it's very

reassuring to know that you are well. Papa was very pleased with your letter, and so was Maria with yours of April 5. Many thanks; it was a *very* good and kind thought on your part.

When you write that this will be an important time for my serious work, and that you are looking forward to what I'll have to tell you later and to what I've written, you mustn't indulge in any illusions about me. I've certainly learned a great deal, but I don't think I have changed very much. There are people who change, and many who can hardly change at all. 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. As a matter of fact, I don't think you've really changed either. Self-development, of course, is a different matter. Neither of us has really experienced a break in his life. Of course, we have deliberately broken with a good deal, but that again is something quite different. Even these times in which we are now living don't represent a break in the passive sense. When I was younger, I sometimes longed for something of the kind, but today I think differently about it. Continuity with one's own past is actually a great gift. Paul lets both 1 Tim. 1:13 and 2 Tim. 1:3a stand side by side. Often I'm amazed at how little, in contrast to almost all the others here, I wallow in past mistakes and so forth, thinking for instance that if I had done this or that differently, how much would have turned out otherwise today. That does not torment me at all. Everything seems to have taken its inevitable, necessary, and straightforward course, determined by a higher providence. Do you feel that way too?

Lately I've often wondered why we lose our sensitivity to hardships, or say we do, after enduring them for a long while—how can that be explained? Thinking back to those weeks a year ago, I'm really struck by how differently I now see the same things. That

this is a natural defense mechanism is not enough of an answer for me; I'm more inclined to consider it a clearer, more sober estimate of our own limited possibilities and responsibilities, which enables the development of genuine love for our neighbor. As long as our imagination is aroused and whipped up, loving our neighbor remains something vague and generalized. Today I can take a calmer view of people, their predicaments, and needs, so I'm better able to help them. Instead [of] becoming less sensitive, I'd rather call it detachment; but of course it is always a job, each time, to change the one into the other. I don't think we need reproach ourselves in such situations if after a time we no longer get so fired up and tense about things. Still, we must stay aware of the danger of not seeing the forest for the trees and keep our feelings alive as well as our heads clear. Do these thoughts make any sense to you?

Why is it that, without any reason that one can see, some days are so much harder to bear than others? Is it growing pains? Or times of testing? Once they're gone again, the world suddenly looks quite different.

The other day I heard the angel scene from *Palestrina* on the radio, and it made me think of Munich. Even then, that was the only part I especially liked. Someone here is a great "*Palestrina* fan" and can't understand why it doesn't mean more to me. He was thrilled that I did enjoy the angel scene.

Please give my best regards to Christoph when you have a chance. How is he turning out in the long run? After being unproductive for so long, [I] feel more creative now that spring is coming. I'll tell you more about it next time. Meanwhile, stay well and keep up your spirits. In spite of all, I'm still hoping for a joyful reunion soon!

Yours ever, with all my heart,

Dietrich

136. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

April 26, 1944

My dear Parents,

Since your last visit it will probably be a while again until I can talk with you, so I'd at least like to let you know by letter that I am getting along well. This second spring that I am spending in this cell is very different from the first, a year ago. Back then all my impressions were fresh and vivid; deprivations and pleasures were more intense. Since then, what I'd never thought possible has happened—I've gotten used to it, and the only question is whether I've become less sensitive, or more detached—each is probably true in different areas. The things toward which we become insensitive will soon be forgotten; they really don't matter. On the other hand, things that we have worked out for ourselves, consciously or unconsciously, will never be forgotten, since they have changed from being powerful experiences to taking definite shape as clear insights, purposes, and plans, and as such will keep their meaning for our future life. It certainly makes a great difference being in prison for a year instead of a month; one gains not only interesting or strong impressions but a huge new dimension in one's life. I believe, however, that there are certain inner preconditions for being able to assimilate this aspect of life safely. I think long prison sentences for very young people are highly dangerous for their personal development. The onslaught of impressions is so violent that it is likely to sweep a great deal overboard. I'm so grateful to you that you have kept making everything easier for me with your regular visits, letters, and parcels. From the very first letter, my joy at receiving each of them hasn't lessened any and still encourages me to use my time here to the full. I also want to thank my brothers and sisters for all

their letters—I've just received very nice ones again from Ursel and Karl-Friedrich.

Could you perhaps try to get me Ortega y Gasset's new book, *Das Wesen geschichtlicher Krisen* (Deutsche Verlagsanstalt Stuttgart-Berlin), and if possible also his previous one, *Geschichte als System*; also Heinz Pfeffer's *Das britische Empire und die USA* (Dünnhauptverlag 1944)?—And I'd like Ursel please to get something for Dorothee's birthday from me, if possible. It's her last birthday before her exams [Abitur], and there are surely books she wants.

I hope you'll decide on another trip to the country house. I'd be very pleased if you did. Hope we'll see each other again soon!

Yours, with much love and gratitude,

Dietrich

137. To Eberhard Bethge

April 30, 1944

Dear Eberhard,

Another month has gone by—is the time rushing by for you the way it is for me here? I'm often surprised at this myself—and when will the month come when you come home to Renate, and I to Maria, and the two of us can meet again? The feeling that any day great events can shake the world and change all our personal circumstances is so strong in me that I'd like to write to you much more often, because we don't know how long we still can, but most of all so as to share everything with each other as often and as long as possible. Actually, I'm firmly convinced that by the time you get this letter, the great decisions will be moving along on every front. So in the coming weeks we shall have to be stouthearted, and that is what I wish you. We have to keep our wits about us so that nothing

catches us off guard. In view of what is coming, I'm almost inclined to quote the biblical δεῖ . . . , and I feel something of the “longing” [Neugierde] of the angels in 1 Pet. 1:12, to see how God will go about solving what seems beyond any solution. I think it has now come to the point where God will arise and accomplish something that we, despite our inner and outer involvement, can only take in with the greatest astonishment and awe. Somehow it will be made plain—for those with eyes to see—that Ps. 58:11 and Ps. 9:19–20 are true; and we shall have to repeat Jer. 45:5 to ourselves every day. For you, separated from Renate and your boy as you are, it's even harder than it is for me to go through this, and I'll especially be thinking of you, as I am already doing now.

How good it would be for us both, I feel, if we could live through this time together and stand by each other. But [it's] probably even “better” that we can't, but rather that each of us has to go it alone. It's hard for me not to be able to help you in any way—except by thinking of you. I really do, every morning and evening and when I read the Bible and often during the day too. Please don't worry about me at all; I'm getting along uncommonly well; you'd be surprised if you came to see me. People here keep saying to me—and I'm very flattered by it, as you can see—that I “radiate such peace” and that I'm “always so cheerful”—so that if I occasionally experience myself as anything but, I suppose it's deceptive (which I don't really believe!).

What might surprise or perhaps even worry you would be my theological thoughts and where they are leading, and here is where I really miss you very much. I don't know anyone else with whom I can talk about them and arrive at some clarity. What keeps gnawing at me is the question, what is Christianity, or who is Christ actually for us today? The age when we could tell people that with words—whether with theological or with pious words—is past, as is the age of inwardness and of conscience, and that means the age

of religion altogether. We are approaching a completely religionless age; people as they are now simply cannot be religious anymore. Even those who honestly describe themselves as “religious” aren’t really practicing that at all; they presumably mean something quite different by “religious.” But our entire nineteen hundred years of Christian preaching and theology are built on the “religious a priori” in human beings. “Christianity” has always been a form (perhaps the true form) of “religion.” Yet if it becomes obvious one day that this “a priori” doesn’t exist, that it has been a historically conditioned and transitory form of human expression, then people really will become radically religionless—and I believe that this is already more or less the case (why, for example, doesn’t this war provoke a “religious” reaction like all the previous ones?)—what does that then mean for “Christianity”? The foundations are being pulled out from under all that “Christianity” has previously been for us, and the only people among whom we might end up in terms of “religion” are “the last of the knights” or a few intellectually dishonest people. Are these supposed to be the chosen few? Are we supposed to fall all over precisely this dubious lot of people in our zeal or disappointment or woe and try to peddle our wares to them? Or should we jump on a few unfortunates in their hour of weakness and commit, so to speak, religious rape? If we are unwilling to do any of that, and if we eventually must judge even the Western form of Christianity to be only a preliminary stage of a complete absence of religion, what kind of situation emerges for us, for the church? How can Christ become Lord of the religionless as well? Is there such a thing as a religionless Christian? If religion is only the garb in which Christianity is clothed—and this garb has looked very different in different ages—what then is religionless Christianity? Barth, who is the only one to have begun thinking along these lines, nevertheless did not pursue these thoughts all the way, did not think them

through, but ended up with a positivism of revelation, which in the end essentially remained a restoration. For the working person or any person who is without religion, nothing decisive has been gained here. The questions to be answered would be: What does a church, a congregation, a sermon, a liturgy, a Christian life, mean in a religionless world? How do we talk about God—without religion, that is, without the temporally conditioned presuppositions of metaphysics, the inner life, and so on? How do we speak (or perhaps we can no longer even “speak” the way we used to) in a “worldly” way about “God”? How do we go about being “religionless-worldly” Christians, how can we be ἐκ-κλησία, those who are called out, without understanding ourselves religiously as privileged, but instead seeing ourselves as belonging wholly to the world? Christ would then no longer be the object of religion, but something else entirely, truly lord of the world. But what does that mean? In a religionless situation, what do ritual [Kultus] and prayer mean? Is this where the “arcane discipline” [Arkandisziplin], or the difference (which you’ve heard about from me before) between the penultimate and the ultimate, have new significance?

I have to stop for today so this letter can go off right now. I’ll write more the day after tomorrow about this. I hope you understand more or less what I mean, and it’s not boring you. Good-bye for now! It’s not easy, always having to write without a response; you must forgive me if that makes it something of a monologue. I’m really not reproaching you for not writing—you have too much else to do!

Yours as ever, I think about you very much,
Dietrich

I have a little more time to write after all.

The Pauline question of whether περιτομή is a condition for justification is today, in my opinion, the question of whether religion

is a condition for salvation. Freedom from περιτομή is also freedom from religion. I often wonder why my “Christian instinct” frequently draws me more toward nonreligious people than toward the religious, and I am sure it’s not with missionary intent; instead, I’d almost call it a “brotherly” instinct. While I’m often reluctant to name the name of God to religious people—because somehow it doesn’t ring true for me there, and I feel a bit dishonest saying it (it’s especially bad when other people start talking in religious terminology; then I clam up almost completely and feel somehow uncomfortable and in a sweat)—yet on some occasions with nonreligious people I can speak God’s name quite calmly, as a matter of course. Religious people speak of God at a point where human knowledge is at an end (or sometimes when they’re too lazy to think further), or when human strength fails. Actually, it’s a *deus ex machina* that they’re always bringing on the scene, either to appear to solve insoluble problems or to provide strength when human powers fail, thus always exploiting human weakness or human limitations. Inevitably that lasts only until human beings become powerful enough to push the boundaries a bit further and God is no longer needed as *deus ex machina*. To me, talking about human boundaries has become a dubious proposition anyhow. (Is even death still really a boundary, since people today hardly fear it anymore, or sin, since people hardly comprehend it?) It always seems to me that we leave room for God only out of anxiety. I’d like to speak of God not at the boundaries but in the center, not in weakness but in strength, thus not in death and guilt but in human life and human goodness. When I reach my limits, it seems to me better not to say anything and to leave what can’t be solved unsolved. Belief in the resurrection is *not* the “solution” to the problem of death. God’s “beyond” is not what is beyond our cognition! Epistemological transcendence has nothing to do with God’s transcendence. God is the beyond in the

midst of our lives. The church stands not at the point where human powers fail, at the boundaries, but in the center of the village. That's the way it is in the Old Testament, and in this sense we don't read the New Testament nearly enough in the light of the Old. I am thinking a great deal about what this religionless Christianity looks like, what form it takes, and I'll be writing you more about it soon. Here perhaps we in particular, midway between East and West, will be given an important task. Now I really have to close. How good it would be [to] have a word from you sometime about all this. It would really mean a lot to me, more than you can probably suppose. By the way, do read Prov. 22:11–12 sometime. This bars the way to all escapism in the guise of piety.

Wishing you the very, very best, with all my heart
yours, Dietrich

138. From Eberhard Bethge

May 5, 1944

Dear Dietrich,

Your letter of April 11 reached me a few days ago; thanks very much for. . . . I also received a greeting from the daughter of . . . and was especially happy about that because it sounded very sensible. Meanwhile, I'm completely electrified by the hope of being able to bring you, so to speak, greetings in person in a few days' time. If only nothing happens to prevent it. That would be absolutely dreadful, since I've already raised hopes about it at home. But surely it will be all right. And then, shall the baptism really be without you? It's such a pity that things have turned out this way again. Hopefully, I'll at least get to see you. How I'd like to talk with you, for one thing, about the military chaplaincy question; it's been going through my head these

past few days. I shall already have the half year's "probation" time, so to speak, when I return from my leave. I don't imagine it would be easy, and perhaps it isn't even objectively feasible. Only I'd like to find out more about it. I'll discuss it with Justus.

Many thanks for your long letter. Where do you keep getting such excellent stationery? Renate and I often worry about the shortage, but somehow we always manage to find a bit more. Do you have to listen to these radio broadcasts that stay on all day? Quite often I hear three all at once, and if I'm already feeling rather tired or under emotional pressure they torment me, like dreadful bodily pain or real nausea. Together with the daily stories in the newspapers, which aren't ashamed of any topic or picture, these broadcasts are all the nourishment that most people get. Everyone here has some nude pinups hanging above his bed, while I have pinned up, over my writing desk, a large picture of a little Italian donkey and next to it a calendar, where I often note quite interesting relationships between my subjective sense of time and objective time. It's good having this desk job, since I don't have every noncommissioned officer breathing down my neck, only the company sergeant major, who, since I stay on good terms with him, pays less and less attention as time goes on, and the major who behaves as though he is educated in these things. We have relatively good living quarters. But the people whose house this is have now moved some one hundred meters away into one of the laborers' houses, because they were afraid to stay so near the highway with the Stukas continually tearing up another section of it and the single railway track that runs beside it. Also, other low-flying aircraft keep turning up quite suddenly. In the town south of here I recently found Schumann's *Kleine Stücke* and *Kinderszenen* under the rubble, and sometimes I refresh my senses with them on the miserable piano here. Some of its keys (such as the A) don't obey orders anymore, but I get enough of a sound that memory does the

rest, and I keep on enthusiastically; still, only two or three times so far.

It's been quite a while since I saw anything more of this area, not to mention Rome, which is now almost completely out of the question. I've been reading some more of the Burckhardt. Incidentally, in reading Paul's letters I've again been struck mightily by the apostle's "self-confidence." The Psalms and Paul. The other day I received another issue of the mission paper; these reports, in which every journey, every morsel of food received, every person you encounter is stereotypically described as the answer to prayer, I find heavy going and really have trouble understanding them.

I was very much surprised by your analysis of your "getting older," seeing things more objectively, and not having a keen sense of longing, in recent years.

That hadn't been clear to me, but it's actually quite plausible. Can you say something about my situation, in which all my feelings and thoughts are now concentrated on the personal experience of marriage and love for Renate, while excitement about the church's affairs and devotion to its cause have, for want of new stimulation, stagnated somewhat? My conscious "missionary" drive, which in earlier years was perhaps more or less naive, has given way to a continual effort to grasp and understand things, people, and circumstances in a vaguely "human" way, if you can imagine what I mean. The other day Rainalter asked me to come for a walk, bring my Bible, and read to him from the Gospels and Epistles and other fine things, which we did. But I can't record that as anything special, or tell it to you with great hopes and exclamations. It was "very nice" but matter of fact. How hard it is, by the way, to explain many of our circumstances and views from former times!

Unfortunately, I didn't bring *Das Neue Lied* along, and indeed I've missed it. Next time I'll pack it. You are not quite right about

the tenth year, by the way. We first came together at the end of April 1935. It's really remarkable that such a new beginning was still possible. When shall we get home? Our major has a fabulous attitude. The other night he, the sergeant major, Rainalter, and I sat up in the orderlies' room drinking wine until 2:00 a.m., and toward the end he talked about the end of the war, that it could only be positive. Otherwise we wouldn't experience what would come later; we'd just get together somewhere, "dig in" like hedgehogs, and hold out until the last man falls; "wouldn't we, Rainalter and Bethge?" That would be true soldiery, the highest degree of honor. I now expect to be home for Pentecost.

You ask about my quarters. We even have a bathroom, where we make a fire now and then and really get clean; that's a great amenity. We sleep on camp cots with mattresses and blankets—no sheets, of course. It's all quite tolerable.

I'd really look forward to the life of a military chaplain. What can I say?

Monday evening, May 8

Your letter of April 30 has already come today, and I'm delighted with the many things that, I must say, are highly exciting. Some of them are expressed somewhat more naively and primitively in the questions I wrote above.

It disturbs me that you seem to hear from me so seldom. I can no longer recall exactly when I wrote, but am quite certain that I've answered every letter more or less in detail and at length. Renate has just written in these words to me (about passing letters around): "But I'm always a bit worried, first of all about my grandparents, and if I've happily given them letters, I'm afraid that they don't pass them on." I had just made it clear to her once again that one needn't be concerned

about uncomfortable situations like having to repeat requests to pass the letters along. So today I enclose without delay a letter for you that is quite old, long out of date.

These last few days before I leave are getting on my nerves unbearably. First, I fear that major events will interfere, and second, the bombing and strafing attacks on our road have increased enormously, day and night. They rob me of all rest and composure.

What would you think of the *Daily Text* for Ascension Day as the scripture for the baptismal service? I enjoyed the picture so much. Maria has written me another nice letter, but I don't have a quiet moment to answer it properly. I do hope I'll get to see you.

Yours as ever, most gratefully,
Eberhard

139. To Eberhard Bethge

May 5, 1944

Dear Eberhard,

Your leave should be due about now, so that you can get to know your son. I keep hoping my letter will be forwarded to you and thus be out of date. But since everything is so uncertain nowadays—and long experience suggests that everything is more likely to stay the way it is than to change soon—I'll write to you anyway. Christel visited me yesterday and told me that you are doing reasonably well and are managing at least to make Renate happy with a letter every day. It really is worthwhile having Renate stay in Sakrow so that at least you don't have to worry about her during the air raids here. I'd like to talk to Renate myself sometime, but there doesn't seem to be a way to arrange it. I'm just happy that *we* were able to see each other in December. That was truly a good deed on the part of your father—

in-law—probably one of his best, since he doesn't know how good it was. I wish so much for you that you can come soon, even though it's depressing that we probably still won't see each other. I'm doing fine personally, and so is my case, but the question of the date is still wide open. But all good things come overnight, so I'm confidently waiting and hoping. In my previous letter I enclosed an address that you can use if you like, but it isn't necessary, I just wanted to let you know.

A few more words about "religionlessness." You probably remember Bultmann's essay on "demythologizing the New Testament." My opinion of it today would be that he went not "too far," as most people thought, but rather not far enough. It's not only "mythological" concepts like miracles, ascension, and so on (which in principle can't be separated from concepts of God, faith, etc.!) that are problematic, but "religious" concepts as such. You can't separate God from the miracles (as Bultmann thinks); instead, you must be able to interpret and proclaim them *both* "nonreligiously." Bultmann's approach is still basically liberal (that is, it cuts the gospel short), whereas I'm trying to think theologically. What then does it mean to "interpret religiously"?

It means, in my opinion, to speak metaphysically, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, individualistically. Neither way is appropriate, either for the biblical message or for people today. Hasn't the individualistic question of saving our personal souls almost faded away for most of us? Isn't it our impression that there are really more important things than this question (—perhaps not more important than this *matter*, but certainly more important than the *question*!)? I know it sounds outrageous to say that, but after all, isn't it fundamentally biblical? Does the question of saving one's soul even come up in the Old Testament? Isn't God's righteousness and kingdom on earth the center of everything? And isn't Rom. 3:24ff.

the culmination of the view that God alone is righteous, rather than an individualistic doctrine of salvation? What matters is not the beyond but this world, how it is created and preserved, is given laws, reconciled, and renewed. What is beyond this world is meant, in the gospel, to be there *for* this world—not in the anthropocentric sense of liberal, mystical, pietistic, ethical theology, but in the biblical sense of the creation and the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Barth was the first theologian—to his great and lasting credit—to begin the critique of religion, but he then put in its place a positivist doctrine of revelation that says, in effect, “like it or lump it.” Whether it’s the virgin birth, the Trinity, or anything else, all are equally significant and necessary parts of the whole, which must be swallowed whole or not at all. That’s not biblical. There are degrees of cognition and degrees of significance. That means an “arcane discipline” must be reestablished, through which the mysteries of the Christian faith are sheltered against profanation. The positivism of revelation is too easygoing, since in the end it sets up a law of faith and tears up what is—through Christ’s becoming flesh!—a gift for us. Now the church stands in the place of religion—that in itself is biblical—but the world is left to its own devices, as it were, to rely on itself. That is the error. At the moment I am thinking about how the concepts of repentance, faith, justification, rebirth, and sanctification should be reinterpreted in a “worldly” way—in the Old Testament sense and in the sense of John 1:14. I’ll write you more about it.

Forgive me for writing in German script; normally I do that only when writing for my own use. Perhaps what I’ve written was more to clear my own mind than for your benefit. I don’t really want to trouble you with problems that you presumably don’t have time to deal with; maybe they only torment you. But I can’t do otherwise than share my thoughts with you, simply because only in that way do

I get them clear for myself. If that does not suit you at present, please say so.

Tomorrow is Cantate Sunday, so I'll be thinking of you and enjoying many pleasant memories.

My parents were just here and told me how nice and healthy your little one is and how well the radiotherapy is clearing up the mark on his chin. I've arranged for Renate to get some extra food very soon, and hope it comes through as I've been promised.

Good-bye! Be patient, as we are, and keep well!

You're in my thoughts every day.

Yours affectionately,

Dietrich

140. To Eberhard Bethge

May 6, 1944

Dear Eberhard,

It made me extraordinarily happy today that you thought of me on April 24 in such a nice and kind way. I don't have anything else in particular to tell you today, just how good it is to hear back from you now and then. Thanks very much!

I didn't know there was any friction between your mother and Renate. If it's really so, you must ask your mother emphatically to clear up whatever the causes are. . . . It could be that all the female members of our family aren't easy to have as daughters-in-law. But it is the business of parents-in-law to recognize the strengths of their daughters-in-law, and actually it's always the wife's exclusive love for her husband that causes trouble. Renate is so young that you can't just leave a conflict like that up to her to solve. You will surely find the right word to say to your mother. Renate is too young to be able

to handle this with your mother properly. Pardon me for interfering, but I think you did ask for my advice.

More soon about handwriting analysis, since you're interested.—Unfortunately, because of that death, your last letter didn't get through to me. Was it returned to you, and what was the date? Did the envelope have your return address on it?

I'll write soon about "egoism" in Christians ("selfless self-love") and so forth. I think on that we are of one mind. Too much altruism is oppressive and demands too much. "Egoism" can be less self-seeking, less demanding!

I hope you are still getting all my letters, about every week or two? Enough for today! Farewell, dear Eberhard. Thanks for everything and keep well!

Yours, Dietrich

Cantate Sunday

Have just been listening to beautiful morning music, Reger, Hugo Distler; a good way to begin Sunday. Only it's bizarre when announcements like "enemy air squadrons approaching . . ." break right into the music. The connection between the two isn't that immediately obvious.

Last night I was thinking again about what mothers-in-law are supposed to do. I don't think it's impossible, actually, that Mrs. von Kl[eist]—who has not always handled my relationship with Maria very well—did indeed, together with my mother-in-law, suggest the idea of our having devotions together. She's always imagining that Maria "isn't up to" being my wife and needs me to introduce her to theology and what not. Actually, her knowledge of me is very one-sided. Anyway, that idea was shelved a long time ago. I'm certain that mothers-in-law are not meant to do any upbringing—what gives

them the right? It's her privilege to receive a *grown-up* daughter or son, and she ought to see how they enrich the family and not criticize them. She can enjoy her children, be available when asked for help and counsel, but is free of any responsibility or educational role in their marriage; that's actually a privilege. I think when a mother-in-law sees that her child is really loved—and I must say again, the women in our family love their husbands with an intensity and exclusivity that is quite rare; this might in itself cause difficulties, but it's a great thing (just think of Susi and Sabine, and Christel now too, each of whom has her own problem with her husband!)—she should just be *glad* and put everything else aside, especially any attempts to alter character! There aren't many people who know how to appreciate reticence, but I think Papa and Mama could.

Sirens are going off; I'll continue later. So, it was pretty heavy again, and I'm always glad to know that Renate is outside the city. Back to reticence: it all depends on *what* the person is keeping to herself, and also on whether there is one person with whom she can be completely open; in both respects, your mother really has every reason to be confident and glad. I think it's banal to talk about mothers-in-law being jealous; it's rather that there are two kinds of love, a mother's and a wife's, and that is the source of much misunderstanding. Furthermore, it's much easier for sons-in-law than for daughters-in-law to get along peaceably with their mothers-in-law. Naomi and Ruth in the Bible are a unique example to the contrary.

Another thing: letters sent to my deceased friend are all supposed to be returned to the sender. Was there a return address? Could you perhaps write again, to the new address or home? I'd hate so much to miss even one letter. I'm almost sure you have the letter back by now. I'll also look into it here again.

I don't know Cardano at all. Is he available in German? You write

so casually that bad weather is welcome because of the air raids. From that I gather that it's pretty unpleasant much of the rest of the time. But even so, it's hard for me to get a picture of your situation in this regard. You are rather tight-lipped about it, so I'm right to draw conclusions. Of course, you don't want to worry Renate . . . but you could tell *me* what it's really like!

Recently I was in the city again a few times, and the result has been quite satisfactory. But since the question of the date is still unresolved, I am really losing interest in my case; I quite often forget about it for weeks on end.

That's all for now. God keep you, and us all!
 Your devoted Dietrich
 How's your Italian going? And what are your thoughts now about Dohrmann?

141. To Renate and Eberhard Bethge

May 9, 1944

Dear Renate and Eberhard,
 Your hoped-for leave, very soon, is joyous news for me too. If it really comes true, that you will be together again in a few days—as with all such hopes, one must dampen one's anticipation, right up to the last minute—and if you then have your child baptized, I'd like you not to allow my absence to cast the least shadow over your happiness, especially you, Eberhard. I'm going to try to write something for you, for the baptismal service, and you know that all my thoughts will be with you there. It grieves me, of course, that the unexpected has happened and once again I am unable to celebrate this day with you, but I've become quite reconciled to it. I believe nothing that happens to me is without meaning, and that it is all right for all of us,

even though it goes against our wishes. As I see it, I'm here for some purpose, and I only hope I may fulfill it. In the light of the great goal, all the things we have to give up, and the wishes denied, are not of much account. Nothing could be more undignified and wrong than to make a calamity of my present fate, precisely at such a rare moment of joy as you will have in these days. It would go entirely against my feelings and take away the confidence with which I regard my situation. As thankful as we are for all our personal joys, we mustn't for a moment lose sight of the great things that we're living for, and they should shed a special light, rather than gloom, on your days of happiness. I couldn't bear it if what is happening to me now were to cloud in the slightest way your few weeks of happiness, which have been hard enough to arrange. That indeed would be a calamity, but the other is not. My only concern is to help you, as much as I can, to keep these radiant spring days—I expect you'll also be celebrating your first wedding anniversary together—as bright as possible. Please don't think for a moment that in doing so you would fail me in any way; far from it! And above all, please don't imagine that I'm only bringing these words out with difficulty for your sake. Instead, they represent my most sincere wish, and I'd be truly pleased and delighted if you would fulfill it.

If we could manage to see each other during these days, it would be wonderful, but please don't worry unnecessarily about that either—I still have vivid memories of December 23. And please don't give up a day just to bring me something. I know you would be glad to do it, but it would weigh on my mind. Of course, if your father could arrange for you to visit me through the same channel he used in December, I'd be extremely grateful. Anyway, I know you'll be thinking of me every morning when you read the *Daily Texts*, as I do of you, and I'm very glad that now you'll be able to read from the Bible together again morning and evening. It will be important

for you, not only in these coming days but in the future as well. And don't let these coming days be clouded for you by the thought of how short they are and how soon you will have to say good-bye again. Don't try to do too much, let people come and see you instead of driving around everywhere, and take time to enjoy quietly every hour of the day as a great gift. It's my personal opinion that the next few weeks will bring such great and surprising events that one truly doesn't know at the beginning of your leave how things will be by the end. As much as these events will affect our personal destinies, I do hope they won't rob you of the essential peace of your days together. How good that you can be together just at this time and share every decision. If something to eat arrives from Silesia in the next few days, please have it yourselves, to make your days together more enjoyable!

How I would have loved to baptize your little boy. But that isn't the important thing. Most of all, I wish that the day of baptism will help to assure you that your child's life, and your own, are in safekeeping, so you can look to the future with confidence. Will you choose the text for the baptism yourselves? In case you're still looking for one, how about 2 Tim. 2:1, or Prov. 23:26 or 4:18 (I just discovered this last verse recently—and think it's beautiful)?

Now I don't want to bother you with too long a letter right when you first see each other again! I just wanted to send my good wishes and say how much I'm rejoicing with you. Be sure to play plenty of good music!

Wishing you every good thing imaginable, with all my heart,
Your devoted Dietrich

142. To Eberhard Bethge

May 16, 1944

Dear Eberhard,

I've just heard that you said you were expecting to arrive this morning. You can't imagine how relieved and happy I am that you can be here just now. Even I would almost be ready for once to speak of "providence" and "prayers being answered," and maybe you would too. It would have been very hard for Renate if things had gone otherwise, and surely for you as well. Now that I have also received your letters today, at the same time as the news of your arrival—as a sort of greeting in advance, thanks very much—I really find it much better that your superior must manage without you for a while. I would hardly have been up to the kind of situation you describe on that wine-drinking evening. But under the influence of alcohol things often do look rather different from naked reality, and there is a *façon de parler* among these people that often stands in astonishing contrast to their actual behavior. I notice this during air raids here time and again, with mixed amusement and embarrassment. Anyhow, it's much better that way!

Today you're seeing your son for the first time! When will I finally get a picture of him?—and hopefully one of you with him as well! Take plenty of snapshots. My letter to greet you on your arrival must be there by now. Even though the letter I got from you today has aroused a keen desire for another good talk with you, I'm so happy just to know you're here that all these personal wishes are overshadowed.

I think it would be right for you to talk about the chaplaincy question with someone here; the best would be with Dohrmann himself. Mama can arrange that easily, or possibly Deta Hase if she is in town. There are, of course, two sides to it, also with regard to possible developments, and it would make a difference where you were stationed and with what sort of unit. I would think that nowadays you can preach the gospel quite freely and that at least

you would find attentive listeners. If it gets to that point, I'll write you in greater detail and would gladly also send you meditations for sermons.

I'd also have a good look into a transfer to the medical corps. Papa or perhaps Ursel could introduce you to the garrison doctor here, Dr. Kleeberger, for instance. Then you'd presumably have to take a training course in Guben. Now that you've passed your probation time at the front, all this is much more feasible. How's your health? Are you classed as "conditionally KV" or what?

What will seeing each other again be like for the first time after a long separation? It will surely take you only a few hours to get over the strangeness that every absence causes. What a lot you'll have to tell each other!

You needn't worry about running out of stationery, I think. Besides my stock of rough draft paper, I may have a possibility of getting some here. But do let me know when you really run short. Your correspondence really mustn't be limited in that way as well. I hope the package for Renate from Upper Silesia comes soon. I do *not* want you to bring me any of it; it's for you to enjoy together. Since all I have to do here is to wait, I really don't need much, and it's one of the things that makes me most happy, to be able to offer you a little something, even from in here. Enjoy these coming days to the full, with all my good wishes.

Love from your devoted
Dietrich

I'm still going to write something for the baptism. How about Ps. 90:14 as the text? I was also thinking of Isa. 8:18 but found it a bit too general.

143. To Ursula Schleicher

Dear Ursel,

Please give the enclosed to Eberhard and Renate. It's a small token that I am thinking of them on the baptismal day. It could be that someone will manage to come in the afternoon that day and bring you a present from me for my godson. It will be a nice, relatively young businessman who would be happy if you'd invite him in for an hour. He can tell you a lot about me, and one can have a good conversation with him. He wants me to baptize his fourth child after my release, and he's a good violinist. But please don't mention names of other people here. The whole thing is supposed to be a surprise, and I'm not yet sure if it will work out, getting the present. I wish you all a wonderful day. If it works out for me to see Eberhard, that would be marvelous. But he mustn't spoil his few days of leave with applications and requests. I'm just happy to know that at this very time he's here. Do discuss thoroughly the question of a chaplaincy or medical service!

Best regards to Rüdiger and to our parents. And thank you all so much for all the things you're always doing for me. But—how much longer?

Affectionately,
Dietrich

I almost forgot to wish you a happy birthday! My wish for you is that Hans-Walter and Eberhard can both come home soon for good, and that next year your whole family will be gathered again at your house, in peacetime.

144. To Renate and Eberhard Bethge

May 18

Dear Eberhard and Renate,

I've wanted so much to write something for you for the baptismal day. It hasn't turned out the way it should have. I'm only sending it to you to show how much I am thinking of you. Thank you again for asking me to be godparent to your child and for naming him after me. My wish for you is that you will look back on this day of baptism especially happily, and that it helps you fill this brief time together—which hopefully will soon turn to uninterrupted togetherness!—with a substantial meaning that will last even through times of separation. Some memories torment us, and some strengthen us. This day will be one that gives strength.

Who will baptize him? Who will be godparent? How will you celebrate? I hope to hear about all this soon, best of all from you yourselves. Please think of me without any regrets. Martin has had nearly seven years of this! That is something else altogether. The twenty-first will be a day of rejoicing for me, too! How splendid that you got back exactly on your first wedding anniversary!

Wishing you great joy and peace,

Your devoted Dietrich

I just heard—after no longer thinking it possible—the marvelous news that I'll see you here tomorrow. So I'm spending today getting ready for that hour. Who managed to arrange it? Whoever it was, I'm really *very* grateful.

**145. Thoughts on the Day of Baptism of
Dietrich Wilhelm Rüdiger Bethge**

**Thoughts on the Day of Baptism of D. W. R.
May 1944**

You are the first of a new gene[ration in our family. Never mind if] your coming [confuses us a little about our generational re]lationships, as we sud[denly see ourselves moving ear]lier than expected into the second, third, and fourth generation. It's clear, nevertheless, that you are the eldest, you lead the procession of the next generation, and you will have the incomparable advantage of sharing a good part of your life with the third and fourth generations before you. Your great-grandfather will be able to tell you about people he knew personally who were born in the eighteenth century; and some day, long after the year 2000, you will be the living bridge for your descendants to an oral tradition going back over 250 years—all that, of course, *sub conditione Jacobeae*, “if the Lord wishes, we will live.” So your birth is a particular occasion for us to reflect on how times change, and to try to discern the outlines of the future.

The three names you bear point to three houses with which your life is, and [should] remain, inseparably linked. The house of your grandfather on your father's side was a village parsonage. Simplicity and health, a communal and varied intellectual life, unpretentious enjoyment of the good things of life, in natural and un-self-conscious sharing with ordinary people and their work; a capacity for looking

after oneself in practical matters and a modesty founded on inner contentment; these are the enduring earthly values that found their home in the village parsonage and that you will find in your father. In all life's circumstances they will give you a firm foundation for living together with others and for genuine accomplishment and inner happiness.

The cosmopolitan culture of the old middle-class [bürgerlich] tradition represented by your mother's home has created, in those who inherit it, a proud awareness of being called to high responsibility in public service, intellectual achievement and leadership, and a deep-rooted obligation to be guardians of a great historical heritage and intellectual tradition. This will endow you, even before you are aware of it, with a way of thinking and acting that you can never lose without being untrue to yourself.

It was a kind thought on your parents' part to have you named after a great-uncle, a pastor who is a good friend of your father's; he is currently sharing the fate of many other good Germans and Protestant Christians, and so he has only been able to look on from afar as your parents married and you were born and baptized, but he has great confidence and joyful hopes for your future. He tries always to keep up the spirit—as he understands it—that is embodied in the home of his parents, your great-grandparents. He considers it a good omen for your future that this was the house where your parents first met, and he hopes that one day you will be aware of and thankful for its spirit and draw upon the strength that it gives.

The old village parsonage and the old middle-class house belong to a world that will have vanished by the time you grow up. But the old spirit will survive the period of its misjudgment and its actual failure, and after a time of withdrawal, renewed inner reflection, probing, and healing will create new forms for itself. To be deeply rooted in the soil of the past makes life harder, but also richer and more

vigorous. There are fundamental truths in human life to which it always returns sooner or later. We can't hurry it; we have to be able to wait. "God seeks out what has gone by," the Bible says (Eccl. 3:15).

In the coming years of upheaval, it will be the greatest of gifts to know that you are safe in a good home. It will be a bulwark against all dangers from without and within. The time when children arrogantly broke away from their parents will be past. The home will draw children back to their parents' care; it will be their refuge where they find counsel, calm, and clarity. You are fortunate in having parents who know from their own experience what a parental home can mean in stormy times. Amid the general impoverishment of spiritual life, you will find your parents' home a treasury of spiritual values and a source of inspiration. Music, as your parents understand and practice it, will bring you back from confusion to your clearest and purest self and perceptions, and from cares and sorrows to the underlying note of joy. Your parents' ability to cope with life will lead you early [on to] help yourself with your own hands and not to despise any manual task. Your parents' gift of gaining effortlessly the goodwill of others will bring you many friendships and help when needed. The devotional life [Frömmigkeit] of your home will not be noisy or wordy, but it will teach you to pray, to fear and love God above all, and to do the will of Jesus Christ gladly. "My child, keep your father's commandment, and do not forsake your mother's teaching. Bind them upon your heart always. . . . When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you" (Prov. 6:20–22). "Today salvation has come to this house" (Luke 19:9).

I would wish you could grow up in the country; but it will no longer be the countryside where your father grew up. The big cities, where

people expected everything life has to offer, every pleasure, where they swarmed together as if for a festival, have brought death and dying upon themselves with every imaginable horror, and women and children have become refugees fleeing these terrifying places. The age of big cities on our continent seems to be over. The Bible says Cain was the original founder of cities. Maybe there will still be some world-class metropolises, but their luster, seductive though it may be, will have something uncanny for Europeans, in any case.

On the other hand, the great migration out of the cities will change the countryside completely. The quiet and seclusion of country life has already been invaded by radio, cars, telephones, and the bureaucratic organization of almost all aspects of life. If millions of people who can't let go of the pace and expectations of city life move to the country, if whole industries are moved to rural areas, the urbanization of the countryside will progress rapidly and change the whole basic structure of rural life. There are just as few villages like those of thirty years ago left as there are idyllic South Sea islands. People long for solitude and quiet, but they will have a hard time finding it. Nevertheless, in this time of change, they will gain from having a plot of land under their feet from which to draw strength for a new, simpler, more natural and contented life of daily work and evening leisure. "There is great gain in godliness combined with contentment . . . if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these" (1 Tim. 6:6-7). "Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with the food that I need, or I shall be full, and deny you, and say 'Who is the Lord?' or I shall be poor, and steal, and profane the name of my God" (Prov. 30:8). "Flee from the midst of Babylon . . . she could not be healed. Forsake her, and let each of us go to our own country" (Jer. 51:6ff.).

We grew up with our parents' and grandparents' experience that each person can and must plan, develop, and shape his own life, that there is a life work on which one must decide, and that he can and must pursue this with all his might. But from our own experience we have learned that we cannot even plan for the next day, that what we have built up is destroyed overnight. Our lives, unlike our parents' lives, have become formless or even fragmentary. Nevertheless, I can only say that I have not wanted to live in another time than ours, even though it tramples on our outward happiness. More clearly than in other ages, we realize that the world is in God's wrathful and merciful hands. In Jeremiah's words: "Thus says the Lord: I am going to break down what I have built, and pluck up what I have planted. . . . And you, do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them, for I am going to bring disaster upon all flesh, says the Lord; but I will give you your life as a prize of war in every place to which you may go" (chap. 45). If we come through the wreckage of a lifetime's acquired goods with our living souls intact, let us be satisfied with that. If the creation is being destroyed by its very Creator, what right have we to grumble about the destruction of our own work? It will be the task of our generation, not to "seek great things," but to save and preserve our souls out of the chaos, and to realize that this is the only thing we can carry as "booty" out of the burning house. "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life" (Prov. 4:23). We shall have to bear our lives more than to shape them, to hope more than to plan, to hold out more than to stride ahead. But for you, the younger, newborn generation, we want to preserve that soul, which will empower you to plan and build up and give shape to a new and better life.

We have lived too much in our thoughts; we believed that by considering all the options of an action in advance we could ensure it, so that it would proceed of its own accord. We learned too late

that it is not the thought but readiness to take responsibility that is the mainspring of action. Your generation will relate thought and action in a new way. You will only think about what you have to answer for in action. For us thought was in many ways a luxury afforded to onlookers; for you it will be entirely subordinated to action. "Not everyone who *says* to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only one who *does* the will of my Father in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

For the greater part of our lives, pain was a stranger to us. Avoiding pain, as far as possible, was one of our subconscious guiding principles. Subtlety of feeling, intense awareness of one's own pain and that of others, are both the strength and the weakness of our way of life. Your generation will begin early having to bear privations and pain and having your patience severely tested, so you will be tougher and more realistic. "It is good for one to bear the yoke in youth" (Lam. 3:27).

We believed we could make our way in life with reason and justice [Recht], and when both failed us, we no longer saw any way forward. We have also overestimated, time and again, the importance of reasonableness and justice in influencing the course of history. You who are growing up in the midst of a world war, which 90 percent of humankind doesn't want but for which they are giving their lives and goods, will learn from childhood on that this world is ruled by forces against which reason can do nothing. Thus your generation will deal with these powers more soberly and successfully. In our lives the "enemy" did not really exist. You know that you have enemies and friends, and what each means, enemy and friend, for your life. From childhood you will learn to fight your enemy in ways we never knew and to trust your friend unconditionally. "Do not human beings have a hard service on earth?" (Job 7:1). "Blessed be the Lord, my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle; my rock and

my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield, in whom I take refuge" (Ps. 144:1-2). "A true friend sticks closer than one's nearest kin" (Prov. 18:24).

Are we moving toward an age of colossal organizations and collective institutions, or will the desire of innumerable people for small, manageable, personal relationships be satisfied? Does the one have to exclude the other? Isn't it conceivable that it is precisely the vast scale of world organizations that allow more room for life at the personal level? A similar question is whether we are moving toward a time when the fittest will be selected, that is, toward a society ruled by aristocracy, or toward a uniformity in all outward and inward human living conditions. Although there has been a very far-reaching equalization of material and spiritual living conditions among human beings, the sense of quality, cutting across all levels of today's society in seeking the human values of justice, achievement, and courage, could create a new selection of people, to whom the right to provide strong leadership will be given. We can give up our privileges without a struggle, recognizing the justice of history. Events and circumstances may arise that take precedence over our wishes and our rights. Then, not in embittered and barren pride, but consciously yielding to divine judgment, we shall prove ourselves worthy to survive by identifying ourselves generously and selflessly with the whole community and the suffering of our fellow human beings. "But any nation that will bring its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I will leave on its own land, says the Lord, to till it and live there" (Jer. 27:11). "Seek the welfare of the city . . . and pray to the Lord on its behalf" (Jer. 29:7). "Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until the wrath is past" (Isa. 26:20). "For

his anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning” (Ps. 30:5).

You are being baptized today as a Christian. All those great and ancient words of the Christian proclamation will be pronounced over you, and the command of Jesus Christ to baptize will be carried out, without your understanding any of it. But we too are being thrown back all the way to the beginnings of our understanding. What reconciliation and redemption mean, rebirth and Holy Spirit, love for one’s enemies, cross and resurrection, what it means to live in Christ and follow Christ, all that is so difficult and remote that we hardly dare speak of it anymore. In these words and actions handed down to us, we sense something totally new and revolutionary, but we cannot yet grasp it and express it. This is our own fault. Our church has been fighting during these years only for its self-preservation, as if that were an end in itself. It has become incapable of bringing the word of reconciliation and redemption to humankind and to the world. So the words we used before must lose their power, be silenced, and we can be Christians today in only two ways, through prayer and in doing justice among human beings. All Christian thinking, talking, and organizing must be born anew, out of that prayer and action. By the time you grow up, the form of the church will have changed considerably. It is still being melted and remolded, and every attempt to help it develop prematurely into a powerful organization again will only delay its conversion [Umkehr] and purification. It is not for us to predict the day—but the day will come—when people will once more be called to speak the word of God in such a way that the world is changed and renewed. It will be in a new language, perhaps quite nonreligious language, but liberating and redeeming like Jesus’s language, so that people will be alarmed and yet overcome by its power—the language of a new righteousness and truth, a language proclaiming that God makes peace with humankind and that God’s

kingdom is drawing near. “They shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for them” (Jer. 33:9). Until then the Christian cause will be a quiet and hidden one, but there will be people who pray and do justice and wait for God’s own time. May you be one of them, and may it be said of you one day: “The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day” (Prov. 4:18).

146. To Eberhard and Renate Bethge

Dear Eberhard and Renate,

I cannot tell you how delighted I was by your visit, and your bold decision that both of you should just come in together was splendid. If only M[aetz] weren’t such a pedant, perhaps it could have been even longer. But it was wonderful just the way it was. I was especially pleased to see you, dear Renate, looking so bright and cheerful—but no wonder; you must be so happy to have Eberhard here right now. And I thought you, Eberhard, looked far better than usual, but this too is no wonder, when you have such a nice wife. It was marvelous to have a conversation with you again. I’d like to know whether there are any two people who can tell each other and understand as much as we can, in an hour and a half! That takes practice, and we’re now in the tenth year of it—that’s right, it is the tenth, and I’m really proud of that. What you told me about your experiences in the last few weeks and days was very moving, though I’m in a hurry today and can’t respond in detail. I wish you above all a chance to rest here, outwardly and inwardly—you need it, after this hair-raising time. I was so sorry about the air raid just when you came; I breathed a sign of relief and gratitude when I got your telephone message. Asking what things “mean” is often burdensome, but don’t you think it’s pretty important, after all, to know at least *why* all this is necessary

and we have to put up with it? Although the “what for” question has its problems; that is clearer for me since being here.

The person bringing this letter is also bringing my warmest wishes for the baptismal day and a check for a gift for my godchild, if not the gift itself. I’m very pleased that this is possible, and you will certainly have a good conversation with my kind messenger. Be sure to tell him plenty and have him take notes, so I get all the news. He will also be glad to tell you about me and my life here. I think it’s very nice of him to make this contact between us on this day. By the way, he is a keen musician. Maybe you can get something going together. (Sometime I’d like very much to see the “Schütz” that you so enjoyed.) He has his own plumbing business and is originally from Holland. So, I’m sure you will enjoy his visit and tell him lots!

What hurts me most these days is not being able to help you properly with all the things you have to think about. But Friedr[ich] Justus will do everything as usual, and I think Wagner is a very decisive man in this area. Perhaps you can still ask about the medical corps. There must be a man to whom one could make a sensible inquiry about that. Would Zutt perhaps know someone? I’m asking everyone in the family please to help you as much as they can. In the end one never knows what is best for someone else.

I’ve been eager all along for the day when you came home from the front for the first time, and I never doubted that you would come back the same person who went away, and there would be no change in the understanding between us about everything. Now that this is a reality, I can’t describe how happy it makes me.

Do you suppose we might be able to meet a second time, on the grounds that today’s visit was interrupted by the air raid [warning] (M[aetz] certainly doesn’t remember how long it lasted; he was much too upset!)? My parents would surely offer you the possibility again.

It would be so marvelous if that could work. We still have so much to talk over.

That's all for today. I had to write this very hastily in the sick bay—that's why I sound a bit muddled. Once again, much love to everyone and good wishes to you, for your little boy and for a beautiful day!

Affectionately your devoted

Dietrich

What about District Military Chaplain Bunke in Spandau (brother of the lawyer in Königsberg), who knows me—could he perhaps help? He belongs to the Confessing Church.

I think you will find well-disposed bosses almost anywhere, so you don't have to stay with the one you have now on that account.

By the way, the goat cheese is really magnificent!

I'm enormously pleased by the firm position you took about the Catholic confessor.

How grand that you are doing the baptism yourself! I'd like to have a copy of the sermon!

147. To Eberhard Bethge

May 20

Dear Eberhard,

This letter is written just to you again; whether you discuss any of it with Renate is, of course, up to you. Today I would like to try and respond to the question that seems to me the most important one for you at present. At one point you asked what it meant that all your thoughts are occupied with your love for Renate, and the hard experiences of the last three weeks must have made that especially

clear to you. To begin with, I must say that everything you told me moved me so deeply that I couldn't stop thinking about it for the rest of the day, and I had a restless night. I'm infinitely grateful to you for that. It was a confirmation of our friendship, and besides it's rousing all my life forces and fighting spirit again, making me defiant and clear and hard. I also can't get rid of the feeling that there is a tension in you that you can't escape entirely, and I'd like to make a brotherly attempt to help. Please receive it in this spirit!

When you are in love, you want to live, above all things, and you hate everything that represents a threat to your life. You hate the memories of these last few weeks; you hate the blue sky that reminds you of them; you hate those planes, and so on. You want to live with Renate and be happy, as you have the right to be. And you have to live, for Renate's sake and for little Dietrich's (and even big Dietrich's). You have no right to talk the way your chief did the other night; on the contrary, that would be irresponsible on your part. You must sort that out with him quite calmly sometime. What is necessary goes without saying, but you could never follow that course just out of some personal emotion. However, there is a danger, in any passionate erotic love, that through it you may lose what I'd like to call the polyphony of life. What I mean is that God, the Eternal, wants to be loved with our whole heart, not to the detriment of earthly love or to diminish it, but as a sort of *cantus firmus* to which the other voices of life resound in counterpoint. One of these contrapuntal themes, which keep their *full independence* but are still related to the *cantus firmus*, is earthly love. Even in the Bible there is the Song of Solomon, and you really can't imagine a hotter, more sensual, and glowing love than the one spoken of here (cf. 7:6!). It's really good that this is in the Bible, contradicting all those who think being Christian is about tempering one's passions (where is there any such tempering in the Old Testament?). Where the *cantus firmus*

is clear and distinct, a counterpoint can develop as mightily as it wants. The two are “undivided and yet distinct,” as the Definition of Chalcedon says, like the divine and human natures in Christ. Is that perhaps why we are so at home with polyphony in music, why it is important to us, because it is the musical image of this christological fact and thus also our *vita christiana*? This idea came to me only after your visit yesterday. Do you understand what I mean? I wanted to ask you to let the cantus firmus be heard clearly in your being together; only then will it sound complete and full, and the counterpoint will always know that it is being carried and can’t get out of tune or be cut adrift, while remaining itself and complete in itself. Only this polyphony gives your life wholeness, and you know that no disaster can befall you as long as the cantus firmus continues. Perhaps in these coming days you have together, but also in the days of separation that may follow, many things will be easier to bear. Please, Eberhard, don’t fear and hate the separation, if it should come again, and all its dangers, but have confidence in the cantus firmus.

I don’t know whether I have said this clearly; one seldom speaks of such things and one can

148. To Eberhard Bethge

May 21, 1944

Dear Eberhard,

I had just written the date of this letter, to be with you in my thoughts during these hours of preparation for the baptism and of the service itself, and at that very moment the sirens began. Now I’m sitting in the sick bay, hoping that today at least you have been spared an air raid. What times these are! And what a baptism! What memories for years to come! What is important is to channel all these impressions,

so to speak, the right way in one's mind; then they will just make you more defiant, harder, clearer, and that is good. A baptismal day like this doesn't allow for softer moods. When in the middle of a threatening air raid God sends out the call, the gospel call to God's kingdom through baptism, it's remarkably clear what this kingdom is and seeks. A kingdom stronger than war and danger, a kingdom of power and might, a kingdom that is eternal terror and judgment for some and eternal joy and righteousness for others. It is not a kingdom of the heart but reigns over the earth and the whole world, not a passing but an eternal kingdom that builds its own highway and calls on people to prepare its way; a kingdom for which it is worth risking our lives.

Now they've started shooting, but it doesn't seem to be getting too bad today. How I'd like to hear you preach in a few hours' time. Your sermons that I've heard—the last one was at Christmas—have always opened my eyes anew to the Bible and God's word. I'm hoping very much to hear something about this sermon and the rest! I'd also like to hear your liturgy. Of course, I would wish that you could listen to the sermon yourself, but for Renate and the family it's certainly better this way. I can't think of anyone else who could do it as it should be done. For you it is a sacrifice, on one hand, and after all that has gone before, a significant intellectual accomplishment, which I very much admire, but, on the other hand, surely also a very special joy.

At eight this morning I heard, as a fine beginning for the day, a chorale prelude on "Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan"; I listened to it with thoughts of you and of my godchild! I hadn't heard an organ for a long time, and its sound was like a fortress in time of trouble. I'm particularly sorry that your letter in which you asked me to be godfather got lost. I am sure you said some kind, comforting, and encouraging words that would have done me good, and I would have been, and am, very grateful. Do you suppose it might still turn up?

Or would you write me a few words to replace it? I suppose you'll also have to make an after-dinner speech today and will mention me. I'd like to hear what you said. Especially because we so seldom say such words to each other, one feels a hunger for them now and then. Do you understand that? Perhaps it's stronger than usual here in this isolation; we used to take everything for granted, and actually we still do—even so! By the way, here the other day did you find that “talking is harder” now than before? I didn't in the least; I'm just asking because you wrote something of the sort recently.

Perhaps you were surprised at yesterday's letter, which was meant to say something to *you* but, on the other hand, was so helpless itself. But isn't that the way it is? One is trying to help and is oneself the most in need of help. The part about the *cantus firmus* was actually written more for Renate's sake than yours, that is, more for the sake of your concord with each other than as if I thought you didn't already know all that well enough. The image of polyphony is still following me around. In feeling some sorrow today at not being able to be with you, I couldn't help thinking that sorrow and joy, too, belong to the polyphony of the whole of life and can exist independently side by side.

The day before yesterday you said something about how perhaps my lot was better than I knew. Certainly, Eberhard, I am in much less danger than you are, and in this respect I would give a great deal to be able to change places with you. That's not just a manner of speaking; it automatically keeps entering into my prayers. I've already seen and experienced more of life than you have—except for one crucial experience that you have, which I still lack—but perhaps that's precisely why I have already had more of “my fill of life” [*lebessatt*] than you as yet. So the advantage you see in my situation is, from my viewpoint, relatively slight. Isn't it rather the case that you are experiencing all sides of life, its happiness and its dangers, and isn't

that better than having the breath of life choked off, so to speak, the way it is for me here? I'm certainly not asking for pity, and I don't want to trouble you about it. Instead, I do want you to be *glad* about what you have, which is truly the polyphony of life (forgive me for riding my newfound hobbyhorse!).

There's the all-clear signal. I'm glad for your sake. There are two wonderful lilac bushes standing on my desk, brought to me by such a kind man. I'm looking at the photos you brought me of the baptismal candidate. I've also lit the big cigar and am enjoying it immensely—thanks very much! Whom does he look like? I think Renate and you! His forehead is definitely yours, the rest from Renate. I think he's just splendid, and if he should take after me physically, I can only wish him my freedom from toothaches and headaches, my calf muscles and my sensitive gums (this last being, however, a mixed blessing). For other things he can do better elsewhere. I can't tell whether he has my mouth, as you say, since mine has never struck me as anything particular, so I don't think of it as an advantage. For the rest, he is inheriting the best part of me, my name. I've always been satisfied with it, and as a boy I was even proud of it. Believe me, I shall always be a good godparent to him and always do whatever is in my power to help him. I don't think he could choose a better one! I've been thinking some more about where Renate could go. Of course, she would be even lonelier elsewhere, and nearness to her mother is worth a great deal to her, even for a possible short notice.

The story you told me is still with me, very vividly. If only we could experience all this together! I'd rather be there, together with you, than "safe" here, alone. But when I consider how many dangers you have been through in your life (including the danger of what might have been the wrong marriage), and how, up to the last few days, you have actually had visible proofs of being protected and

how good things have kept happening to you unexpectedly (your engagement and marriage rather sooner than the parents planned, being able to stay at home so long, your home leaves during the winter), my mind is at rest; I'm convinced that you are well taken care of in God's plan. If your thoughts about the war nowadays are sometimes only of death, probably you are underestimating the many and various ways of God. The hour of our death is foreordained, and it will catch up with us everywhere, no matter where we turn. And we have to be prepared for it. But "he knows ten thousand ways to save us from death's power. He gives us food and meat, a boon in famine's hour." Let's not forget that. Sirens again.

It's now the twenty-second. Good that you are out there! I've heard much about yesterday and am very happy about it. Maria liked your sermon very much; even the brief sketch of it that I received made sense to me. And what fine hymns! You were thinking of me as well when you sang Schütz! Apparently you were in better voice than ever. Both of these are hymns I really love. You gave what I wrote a very honored place in the proceedings; I hadn't intended it that way, but I'm happy if you were pleased with it. It must have been a strange experience for Papa to read that text. I'd like to hear a bit more about that.

I'm very glad that Per[els] and Mama are concerning themselves immediately with the Dohrmann business. Can't Klaus do anything? If you need to be legalized for a chaplaincy, this would have to be done immediately. You couldn't very well ask for special consideration. The whole issue is different now from what it was five years ago. Still there are, of course, conditions that one could not accept. That would then be a sign from God not to pursue this path any further. For God alone protects you, nothing else.

I'm sending you a letter to give Niebuhr, in case the need arises. We should also arrange a place to meet, in case it's ever useful; I think

we could always stay in touch, later, through N[iebuhr] and Uncle George. Good-bye for today! Is there anything I can do for you and yours?—The pictures of the little boy are so delightful!—God protect us all!

With all my heart,
Your devoted Dietrich

How was the surprise visit?

Dear Eberhard, Here is the letter, which you can always use to identify yourself. It's true, isn't it, that you were with me when I visited there? (And it's clear to you that it is addressed to Professor von Dietze in Freiburg?) I think you ought to be well and reliably introduced. He is a very kind, lively, and interesting man, a good friend of Paul Tillich's, and his main area is ethics. So, I won't bother you with anything more today. It's one o'clock in the morning, and I'm waiting in sick bay for the air raid of which we just had a warning. Quousque tandem? Good-bye for today!

Affectionately yours,
Dietrich

May 22

149. To Renate and Eberhard Bethge

May 24

Dear Eberhard and Renate,
I don't know how to express my wishes to you for Pentecost except by using a word that I seldom speak. I wish you a blessed Pentecost, celebrated with God and with prayer; a Pentecost in which you feel the touch of the Holy Spirit; a Pentecost that will be for you, in the coming weeks and months, a *rocher de bronze* of memories. You

need days you can look back on, not with the pain of having been deprived, but as a source of strength from something that endures. I've been trying to write you a few words on the *Daily Texts*, some of them today during the air raids, so they are a bit sketchy and not as well thought through as they should have been. But perhaps you'll read them together in the mornings, so that, if need be, they compensate in a small way for a church service. Eberhard, does remembering Pentecost mornings in Finkenwalde still feel so good and significant for you too? For the rest, I wish you fine weather, much pleasure with little Dietrich, and many nice and quiet hours and good music!

If the air raids keep on like this, I don't dare ask for another visit from you. I really understand *very* well your staying in Sakrow. You mustn't think that by doing so you would be failing me in some way. It was so wonderful the other day, and just being able to write is a very great help. I'd just like to be kept informed about your business with Dohrmann. But you *really* don't have to meet with H. again just for my sake—that can be done by letter. It would *only* make me sorry that it took up your time. I keep looking at the baby pictures again and again, and it will be hard to part with them. I hope when I return them you'll send me some to replace them soon. Especially the one where he's on his tummy, looking directly into the camera, I find so expressive: what a mixture of wonder, trust, and childish awe we see in the face of a newborn baby. Doesn't he actually have his "face" and expressions already to a surprising degree for his age? I heard that you took many pictures at the baptism, and [I] look forward to them.

I'm now reading, with great interest, Weizsäcker's book on the "worldview of physics" and hope to learn a good deal from it, even for my own work. If only we could share our thoughts. Earlier we used to read and discuss things like this together.—The latest news from Italy has stirred me up again. All sorts of things may still happen

in the next couple of weeks. We can't ponder enough the last verse of the hymn you sang at the baptism. Farewell for now, have a good holiday, and don't forget
Your devoted Dietrich

150. To Eberhard Bethge

Dear Eberhard,

Today it's a week since you were here. I wonder how you are spending the days together. I often think that for you it's quite good—objectively—that I'm not there, so just you two can be together without any third party. How do things stand now with Dohrmann? I'd really like to know! If you do manage to come again, it would be best after four in the afternoon; then I can see to it that we are disturbed less. I would let you know the day; then you wouldn't need to apply for it in advance. It would be wonderful if we could manage that. Since Maria won't be coming now for at least six weeks, perhaps it could really be done.

Probably there's no chance of your going back to anything like the same circumstances. How grateful Renate must be to be spared the anxiety of these days and weeks. I think it's too bad you didn't do any more drawings of the landscape down there. The one page I still remember vividly. You were born with a much greater variety of gifts than I and you keep discovering new ones, whereas in my case there's nothing more to discover. Actually, you are more talented than I am in most things. You are undoubtedly more musical, besides being able to draw and knowing something about paintings, at both of which I'm a dead loss. You learned to ski and play tennis better than I in just a few weeks, although I'd been doing both for decades, not to mention technical and practical abilities—and all this in your case is talent, not training. In my case, on the other hand, it's

almost all due to my training, without which I'd be a pretty boring customer. If, however, both come together in your son, we can really expect great things.

On your promotion: funny as it may be on one hand, on the other it's certainly also the recognition that you are always receiving naturally, which is nice, isn't it?

On being a godparent: in the old books, a godparent often plays a special role in a child's life. Children growing up often long for understanding, kindness, and advice from other adults besides their parents. Godparents are those to whom the parents point their children for this purpose. The godparent has the right to give good advice, whereas parents give orders. I myself did not have such a godparent . . . but I can imagine that I'd have quite liked having one and could have done with his advice. You did not have one either, did you? But this is the way I see one of my future duties as godfather. (My uncle Otto Bonhoeffer would have been well qualified for this, but we saw him too rarely.) I would think mainly of male godparents for boys and female ones for girls.

I'll ask Papa to get some Pervitin—or some Isophan—for me, and for you as well. I'm writing to him myself. I hope very much to hear from you soon. All the very, very best!

My love to you and Renate and your little one,
Dietrich

151. To Eberhard Bethge

May 27, 1944

Dear Eberhard,

Thanks for the greeting from the two of you. But you know, such a short letter is as if someone whose visit one has awaited for a long

time just opened the door for a moment, stuck his head in with a friendly nod, and disappeared again. I think you ought to write me again, so I don't feel out of place with my letters and questions. At least it would make things much easier for me. Do you understand that?

In case you can manage another visit, Thursday, June 1, after 4:00 p.m., or Sat[urday], June 3, after 1:30 p.m., would be times to consider. I'll have them ask you. But some things are still easier to say in writing than in conversation, so please don't put everything off until a visit, which is still an uncertain possibility.

It seems to me that someone should speak to Bunke. What does Dohrmann himself say? I know somebody who knows Senfleben. Perhaps Hans von Haeften? or Walter Dreß? The former you can just telephone and give my greetings. Just keep things moving, while enjoying as much leisure as you can!

It's an odd feeling to hear Velletri mentioned in the news, surely for you especially! Did you get the thing about the cantus firmus and my questions and the meditations for Pentecost?

Thanks very much again for your greeting, and all best wishes,
Yours as ever, Dietrich

152. To Eberhard Bethge

May 29, 1944

Dear Eberhard,

I hope that despite the air raids you both are enjoying to the full the peace and beauty of these warm, summery days of Pentecost. Inwardly, one learns gradually to put life-threatening things in proportion. Actually, "put in proportion" sounds too negative, too formal or artificial or stoic. One should more correctly say that we

just take in these daily threats as part of the totality of our lives. I often notice hereabouts how few people there are who can harbor many different things at the same time. When bombers come, they are nothing but fear itself; when there's something good to eat, nothing but greed itself; when they fail to get what they want, they become desperate; if something succeeds, that's all they see. They are missing out on the fullness of life and on the wholeness of their own existence. Everything, whether objective or subjective, disintegrates into fragments. Christianity, on the other hand, puts us into many different dimensions of life at the same time; in a way we accommodate God and the whole world within us. We weep with those who weep at the same time as we rejoice with those who rejoice. We fear—(I've just been interrupted again by the siren, so I'm sitting outdoors enjoying the sun)—for our lives, but at the same time we must think thoughts that are much more important to us than our lives. During an air raid, for example, as soon as we are turned in a direction other than worrying about our own safety, for example, by the task of spreading calm around us, the situation becomes completely different. Life isn't pushed back into a single dimension, but is kept multidimensional, polyphonic. What a liberation it is to be able to *think* and to hold on to these many dimensions of life in our thoughts. I've almost made it a rule here for myself, when people here are trembling during an air raid, always just to talk about how much worse such an attack would be for smaller towns. One has to dislodge people from their one-track thinking—as it were, in “preparation for” or “enabling” faith, though in truth it is only faith itself that makes multidimensional life possible and so allows us to celebrate Pentecost even this year, in spite of air raids.

At first I was a bit disconcerted and perhaps even saddened not to have a letter from anyone for Pentecost this year. Then I said to myself that perhaps it's a good sign, that no one is worried about

me—but it’s simply a strange drive in human beings to want others—at least a little—to worry about them.

Weizsäcker’s book on the *Weltbild der Physik* continues to preoccupy me a great deal. It has again brought home to me quite clearly that we shouldn’t think of God as the stopgap [Lückenbüßer] for the incompleteness of our knowledge, because then—as is objectively inevitable—when the boundaries of knowledge are pushed ever further, God too is pushed further away and thus is ever on the retreat. We should find God in what we know, not in what we don’t know; God wants to be grasped by us not in unsolved questions but in those that have been solved. This is true of the relation between God and scientific knowledge, but it is also true of the universal human questions about death, suffering, and guilt. Today, even for these questions, there are human answers that can completely disregard God. Human beings cope with these questions practically without God and have done so throughout the ages, and it is simply not true that only Christianity would have a solution to them. As for the idea of a “solution,” we would have to say that the Christian answers are just as unconvincing (or just as convincing) as other possible solutions. Here too, God is not a stopgap. We must recognize God not only where we reach the limits of our possibilities. God wants to be recognized in the midst of our lives, in life and not only in dying, in health and strength and not only in suffering, in action and not only in sin. The ground for this lies in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. God is the center of life and doesn’t just “turn up” when we have unsolved problems to be solved. Seen from the center of life, certain questions fall away completely and likewise the answers to such questions (I’m thinking of the judgment pronounced on Job’s friends!). In Christ there are no “Christian problems.” Enough on this; I’ve just been interrupted again.

May 30 in the evening

I'm sitting up here in my cell, the house is quiet, a few birds are still singing outside, and there's even a cuckoo calling in the distance. These long, warm evenings, which I'm now experiencing here for the second time, exhaust me somehow. They make one long to be outdoors, and one could do crazy things if one weren't so "sensible." Could one perhaps have become *too* sensible already? After such a long time of deliberately beating back every desire one has, two serious consequences might follow: either one is burned out inside, or things all build up until one day there's a terrible explosion. Another conceivable consequence would be that one becomes truly selfless; I myself know best that this is not the case with me. Perhaps you will say that one shouldn't beat back one's desires, and you might be right. But look, this evening, for instance, I couldn't dare picture myself really sitting with Maria in your garden by the water and then talking with each other on into the night, and so on, and so forth. That is simply self-torture, which hurts physically. So I escape into thinking, writing letters, being glad about your happiness, and—for my own protection—forbid myself my own desire. Paradoxical though it may sound, it would be more selfless if I didn't need to fear my desire but could give it free rein—but that's very hard.

Earlier in the sick bay I happened to hear "Solveig's Song" on the radio.

It really moved me. To wait faithfully an entire lifetime—that is the triumph over the hostility of space, that is, over separation, and time, that is, over transience. Don't you think that such faithfulness alone makes one happy, and unfaithfulness unhappy? So, now I want to get some sleep, since the night will most likely be disturbed again. Farewell! Thinking of you very much,
Yours, Dietrich

Maetz is away at present, and the man filling in for him isn't very pleasant. From the standpoint of avoiding air raids and for other reasons, an afternoon visit is better; the best would be Saturday aft[ernoon] (June 3). If that's *immediately* before you leave, however, I really do not want you to make the long trip up here. In the afternoon you must ask at once to speak to the OvD (not the UvD)—it would be a sergeant or noncommissioned officer. If you don't have it approved by Saturday, perhaps *Maaß* could be asked to approve a continuation of the permit that was interrupted by an air-raid warning, because you have to return to the front. It's just a purely technical question. It would mean telephoning *Maaß* on Friday or on Saturday morning, so that things would work out for Saturday afternoon.

153. To Hans-Walter Schleicher

June 2

Dear Hans Walter,

I heard from Eberhard that you are unexpectedly on leave. I'm very happy for you, and for all of you, that you can be together again for a week as in earlier years. So there are still pleasant surprises from time to time! It's really a very nice thought on your part to visit me despite the short time you have here. Of course, I'd be particularly glad to see you. But you know, without specific permission the most that is possible would be a very brief greeting, no time to tell each other anything, and I definitely wouldn't want you to make the long trip here for that; it's not even certain that we'd see each other at all. And unfortunately they're very stingy with the permissions. If I'd been able to see and talk with you, I'd have many things to ask you, probably most of all what you now think about the generation of

young people about your age, after the experiences you have had. Do you feel isolated and strange among them? Or on what basis do you find yourself part of them? Do your conversations go beyond the usual things soldiers talk about—which are probably the same in every time and every place on earth—and in what way? What interests do these people have—or if that word sounds too high-flown or intellectual, what matters to them? What do they want and wish for themselves? What do they believe, and what are the guideposts of their lives? Probably those to whom such questions apply have always been in a minority. But on the other hand, they're the only ones who count for the future. Is it your experience that the way of living you learned at home is an advantage in living with other people, or is it the opposite, that it mainly gets you into difficulties? Do you have the feeling that perhaps in our homes we have attached too little or too much importance to certain things? In short, all such questions, which surely you ask yourself often, I would very much like to discuss with you. After all, the most important question for the future is how we are going to find a basis for living together with other people, what spiritual realities and rules we honor as the foundations for a meaningful human life. If you find a quiet hour (after your leave!) and feel so inclined, do write to me. I would like it very much. Renate can give you the correct address. If you then give me the field postal address of your unit, I'll write back to you. Enough for today. Enjoy your days off as much as you can! I often think of you and wish you the very, very best for the days to come. My love to your parents and sisters, and to you yourself, from
Your Uncle Dietrich

154. To Eberhard Bethge

Dear Eberhard,

The enclosed meditations are intended just for the two of you. But if you would rather not listen to “someone else’s” voice, don’t hesitate to put them aside. Your own thoughts will be of more help to Renate these days. Last time when you were leaving, you wrote at the time that you even read the *Daily Texts* on the train. I was very glad to hear that then and now have remembered it again.

I get a kick out of Mr. Linke and the enthusiasm with which he keeps talking about you. What he especially admired was that you “didn’t tell me what I wanted to hear,” which is what he says everyone else does in such a situation. I said that was just what was good, that we didn’t need it. He was obviously very impressed in other ways as well. This kind of conversation is a new world to him, and I myself think that—very objectively—it’s rather rare.

By the way, when you asked what I meant by “talking is harder” now, I had the feeling that you were keeping back something else that you really wanted to say. Is that true?

Would you please tell Ursel that the sport trousers I have here aren’t the right ones? The white pair isn’t much use to me here. What I need are the light brown summer trousers. Those I’ve got here are ripping in all directions.

I’ll write to you in Italy about the Song of Solomon. I would in fact read it as a song about earthly love, and that is probably the best “christological” interpretation. As for Eph. 5, I’ll have to think about it some more. On Bultmann, I hope you will find something there already, unless it has been lost. Are you on such good terms with your colleague R[ainalter] that you could speak to him about the miracle of correspondence? I’m a little surprised you did.

Thanks very much for all your help with my personal questions.

When you simply say, “That’s not the way it is!” it does carry a lot of weight with me. But the proof will only come at the moment when all depends on what you said being right. That’s the difficulty. Apart from this purely personal problem, which was originally quite unexpected for me, there are also the objective problems of having a child and of being able to feed one’s family. You would say the same applies to you. Yet it makes a difference whether the facts have already been created, or one is only beginning to create them in a responsible way. That things are just “happening to me” is certainly the most comforting thing about it all, and an encouragement to faith—quite apart from the fact that I couldn’t possibly conceive of them *not* happening to me! but in the end I am still the one who is responsible, and I’m not twenty-five-years old anymore. Therefore, I shouldn’t, and couldn’t, simply stumble into something. The way my present status is being dragged out is, of course, very questionable in many respects. But perhaps some day it will turn out to have been the right thing. Now I don’t want to plague you any longer with these issues. You have enough other things to think about. Only when I have heard from you again will I have some more to say to you about it.

All my good wishes for these last few days, and please keep me up to date on developments in your affairs. Yours as ever, with all my heart,

Dietrich

The baptismal sermon will follow tomorrow. Many thanks again!

155. From Eberhard Bethge

June 3, 1944

Dear Dietrich,

The elation over that very special visit has stayed with me for a long time. Afterward in the streetcar I thought of many more questions and comments, and now I have your previous letter and a new one as well. What is missing is the one with the discussion on Bultmann. You were really in form and present and encouraging, and the whole situation had something refreshing and cheering about it in every respect. It is indeed a good thing to value the technical details of living together, to know about and manage them in an informed way. When I got home, first I ate supper with Justus, his wife, and Renate, and then we all sat for a while with her grandparents (your parents) and with Karl-Friedrich, who is very warmhearted and always extremely interested in you. I told all of them about you and clarified a number of things. The latest word from Sab[ine] is her “congratulations to the great-grandmother”; otherwise there is the older message from G[ert]: “Can I do anything?” The grandparents have now left for Pätzig. I hope they’ll have fine, warm weather there.

As for my affair, first of all Dö[hring] has spoken with the gen[eral], evidently with less than encouraging results. The regulations were against it. One must first have served as a soldier and then *again* in the parish ministry; *then* one could be called up as an army chaplain. But in fact, the need is pretty substantial, so he noted my name. The regulations may be changed, so he would keep me in mind. Dö[hring], for his part, would keep reminding him. What isn’t clear to me yet is whether to wait for these regulations to be canceled. Justus mentioned the Church Min[istry] as a possible difficulty that had not been considered so far, in case it should be

asked. He said the ministry would be *very* unfriendly toward our cases. Tomorrow I'm still going to get some information on the technical procedure, through Bunke. It's stupid that all this is so difficult and time consuming. Otherwise my departure would certainly be easier for Renate.

Thanks very much for the pharmacy items. Now I should be well provided with everything.

But I especially want to thank you for your parting words. It's really always you now who says something to me, instead of the other way around as it should be. These three weeks have been splendid beyond compare, and I'm glad to have had such a good conversation with you, in spite of all our fears to the contrary. It has given me a good "push forward" once again. Then I'm happy that we baptized our boy, and about how all that took place, and that you were able to contribute your words to it, so fully and so meaningfully.

This evening on the way, I was telling Justus that you were studying the Bultmann problem extensively (without going into detail), and he immediately said that this has been settled, that Bult[mann] is a completely impossible man who should be excommunicated, one who denies, perhaps a philosopher, but who should not be allowed to be a teacher of theology. It's remarkable how this problem doesn't bother people; they want definite, solid statements—in spite of everything. I'm eagerly looking forward to what you will still write to me. How do we Protestants escape the actual surrender of "ground" [Raum] from generation to generation, or along the line (to put it roughly) from Barth to Bultmann to Bonhoeffer, a surrender that has *in fact* made enormous progress over against the liberal period, despite all the fresh starts and restitutions? What attracted people to Barth, to the Conf[essing] Church? The feeling that here [they would find] a certain bulwark of the truth—the

“Old Testament prophetic,” the perception of a certain (compared to others) standing up for the oppressed. The reasons for all this were left undiscussed, understood as little as before, or quietly rejected, even deplored, as steps backward into dogmatism; and anyone who ventured to leap into them soon became sterile. The other need of human beings today, besides the need for truth and compassion, which is at least equally as strong, especially for educated people, the need that today’s world otherwise ignores, for a space for rest and contemplation, to take refuge in quiet and acts of worship [gap in the text]

everywhere to Catholicism, which was now increasingly proving itself to be a bulwark for the first need, besides its unsurpassable ritual offering. Here it doesn’t seem that all “ground” is being surrendered. Yet it does seem to me in Italy, both among my comrades and in the life of the Italian people as I experienced it there (as far as all that isn’t problematic for me), as though there, too, things are in fact crumbling.

So how are we to concretely claim our “ground” in the world? What is the role of ritual, and what is the role of the prophetic? And ultimately, what importance does the Christ[ian] tradition in which we stand have? The “ideas” that people have of it, with which they should be nourished and have been nourished? But all that is precisely what you are thinking about.

The way things are going in Italy now, I shall probably no longer be able to reach even the northern[most] point. Then I’ll have to try to find my people again. Somehow or other, things will work out. But it’s a pity that the chapl[aincy] effort seems to be put off indefinitely.

Where is Maria now that she won’t be coming for such a long time? I forgot to ask you. In the end I think that, in fact, you have no

reason to worry, that it's a matter of situation and of time. Besides, at the beginning everything regarding the other part gets so over

Did someone *refuse to* give you the Dostoyevsky? I can well imagine that you would like to read it. Being set free through one's ability to think, and thus share in the multidimensionality of life, also includes, essentially, a sense of meaning, of aims, of having things to accomplish; otherwise it's the person who doesn't think who is to be envied. I wonder what you mean when you say that only faith truly makes it possible to live life multidim[ensionally].—You would need to bring out more precisely why the reason for recognizing “God in health and strength, and action” lies in the “revelation in Jes[us] Chr[ist]”; what does “*center of life*” mean here?

Without God—Cath[olicism] Protest[antism] agree in rejecting!
Not from God. “Crisis![”] existential philos[ophy] psychotherapy

Barth, Bultmann; lib[eral] theology; Schlatter; Althaus; Tillich

“Sinners” not [the] righteous.
Aristocratic Christianity?

156. To Eberhard Bethge

Dear Eberhard,

That was really something very special, didn't you think? I'm sorry that in the morning I had to do so much and you had to get ready in such a hurry, but you understand that I didn't want to let this opportunity pass. . . .

The one question. . . . To the contrary, [I] think. . . . to Ps. 37:3b. . . . will write to Justus as well and. . . . The sender of the

[package is] a farmer in Silesia, Mrs. Keller; send her a note of thanks for the [package, and send] twenty marks sometime, or whatever amount you want, and ask her to send something again occasionally, when she has a surplus. She is glad to do it. You must write plainly, since her German isn't very good. This address is specially reserved for you!

My best to both of you, and as always, many thanks for everything.
Yours, Dietrich

157. To Eberhard Bethge

Dear Eberhard,

I feel like a silly kid, keeping from you that I've been trying my hand at poetry here from time to time. I've kept it a secret from everyone until now—even Maria, who would be the one it concerns most!—simply because I was embarrassed somehow and I didn't know whether she might be more shocked than pleased. You are the only one whom I can be sure of telling it to somewhat reasonably, and who I hope will pour cold water over my head if need be and tell me plainly to forget it. So I'm sending you a sample today, first, because it feels silly to me to have a secret from you, second, so you can have something to read on your journey that you didn't expect, and third, because the subject is on your mind at the moment, and it may express something similar to what you, too, are thinking when saying good-bye to Renate.

For me, this confrontation with the past, this attempt to hold on to it and to get it back, and above all the fear of losing it, is almost the daily background music of my life here, which at times—especially after brief visits, which are always followed by long partings—becomes a theme with variations. Saying good-bye, the experience of the past, whether it's yesterday or years ago—they soon

run together—is something that is demanded of me repeatedly, and as you yourself wrote: “Once again the stress of saying good-bye. Remarkable how little one benefits from practice in this.” In this attempt I’m sending you, everything depends on the last few lines. I think they turned out too short; what do you think? It was strange how the rhymes just came by themselves. The whole thing was written at once, in a few hours, and hasn’t been polished. Now, since I am telling someone about it for the first time, I see that I can and must send it to Maria as well. Even though some of it will shock her, she must feel nevertheless what is meant. I’d be glad to hear a word from you about it. Perhaps in the future I shall repress such impulses in myself and spend my time more usefully. If you like, I can also send you another one to have a look at.

Is the Dohrmann business now out of the question altogether? Of course, this is very much on my mind, but I can’t say it depresses me particularly. I have too strong a feeling that your paths are being directed from above, and that is better than anything we can undertake. Certainly one must try everything, but only to become more convinced of what God’s way is, and to be able to pray the Ninety-first Psalm more confidently. But if there’s anything else I can do, let me know.

From our conversation the other day, I saw again that no one can interpret my thoughts better than you can. That’s always such a satisfying feeling to me. How and where are you going to find your unit again, after the troops have been cleared out of Rome? May God keep you, wherever you may be.

Yours ever, with my deep gratitude,

Dietrich

158. Poem "The Past"

The Past

You left, beloved bliss and pain so hard to love.
What shall I call you? Life, Anguish, Ecstasy,
my Heart, of my own self a part—the past?
The door slammed shut and locked,
I hear your steps depart, resound, then slowly fade.
What remains for me? Joy, torment, longing?
I know just this: You left—and all is past.

Do you feel how I reach for you now,
how I clutch you as with claws,
so tightly that it must hurt?
How I wound your flesh
till your blood oozes out,
just to be assured you are near,
you bodily, earthly fullness of life?
Do you sense my terrible longing for pain of my own?
that I yearn to see my own blood
just so that all will not fade away
into the past?

Life, what have you done to me?
Why did you come? Why did you pass by?
Past, when you flee from me—
are you not still my past, my very own?

As the sun sinks ever faster over the sea

as if drawn down into the darkness,
so your image sinks down, down, down,
no holding it back—
into the sea of the past,
and a few waves bury it.

Just as warm breath
dissolves in cool morning air,
so your image melts before me
so I no longer know
your face, your hands, your form.
A smile, a look, a greeting appears to me,
but then it crumbles,
dissolves,
brings no comfort or closeness,
is destroyed,
belongs only to the past.

I want to inhale the fragrance of your being,
absorb it, abide in it,
as heavy blossoms invite bees for a sip in summer's heat
and make them giddy;
as privet berries make the hawk moth drunk at Night;—
but then a harsh gust comes and destroys fragrance and blossoms,
and I stand like a fool
before what has disappeared, is past and gone.

I feel as if red-hot tongs were tearing pieces out of my flesh,
as you, my past life, hurry away.

Frenzied defiance and rage beset me,
I sling wild, useless questions into the void.
Why, why, why? I keep asking.
When my senses cannot hold you,
life passing, life past,
I want to think and think again
till I find what I have lost.
But I feel
how everything above me, around me, under me
is smiling, enigmatic and unmoved
at my most hopeless efforts
to catch the wind,
to recapture what is past.

Evil enters my eye, my soul.
I hate what I see,
I hate what moves me,
I hate all that lives and is lovely,
that claims to compensate my loss.
I want my life, I demand my own life back,
my past,
you.

You—suddenly tears fill my eyes,
perhaps under a veil of tears
I'll regain your whole image,
you yourself
completely?
But I shall not weep.

Tears help only the strong,
they sicken the weak.

Weary, I arrive at evening,
welcome the cot to lie down on,
promising to let me forget
when possessing escapes me.

Night, snuff out what is burning, grant me complete oblivion,
Be benevolent to me, Night, do your kind service,
to you I entrust myself.

But Night is wise and mighty,
wiser than I and mightier than the day.

What no earthly power can sway,
where reason, senses, defiance, tears give way,
Night pours over me from sheer abundance.

Unharmd by hostile time,
pure, free, and whole,
you are brought to me in a dream,
you, all that's past; you, my life,
you, yesterday's day and yesterday's hour.

Your closeness awakens me in the dead of night
and I'm terrified—

have I lost you again? must I forever seek you in vain,
you, my past, my own?

I stretch out my hands
and pray—

and I discover:

Your life's most vital piece may be
the past, a gift you may regain
through gratitude and rueful pain.

Grasp God's forgiveness and goodness in the past,
pray that God keep you this day and to the last.

159. To Eberhard Bethge

June 6, 1944

Dear Eberhard,

Just to experience this day with you, and in some way with all of you together, I'm hurrying to write you this note. It wasn't a surprise to me, but still, facts are entirely different from expectations. The *Daily Text* and the interpretative verse call us all to the center of the gospel—"redemption" is the word around which everything turns. In faith, during the coming weeks, and with great assurance to meet our common future, let us confidently commit your path and all our paths to God. χάρις καὶ εἰρήνη!

Yours, Dietrich

160. From Eberhard Bethge

June 6, 1944

Dear Dietrich,

Many thanks for your letter. The sermon came with it, and I thank you especially for the two meditations, which I have already read once for myself. Thank you very much for your helpful, brotherly words.

The matter of Renate's cooking facilities has, of course, been straightened out much better than we had feared. The person doing it is being particularly nice to Renate in her situation. What I learned from Bunke: (1) A l[on]g questionnaire on personal details and past,

the same as for officers, etc. (2) Based on that, an intelligence check is done for the General Command, which is also passed to the Gest[apo], recommendation from one's local party leader, etc.; mostly *very* time-consuming. (3) A check with or inquiry to the army chap[lain] in charge in Italy; perhaps also here with the district military chap[lain] (B[unke]) or Dohrmann, who has to get the consent of the Ministry for Church Affairs; possibly about how to proceed, since B[unke] is open to discussion. (4) Check as to my knowledge and suitability by Dohrmann. (5) Assignment first to a field hospital unit, from there after a time possibly to one or more divisions.

B[unke] thought it would be very difficult, however. *No one* [has been] appointed from his military district in the past one and a half years. The responsible general in the chaplaincy department is Weidemann. Now the considerations and actions as to how to get over this first obstacle, Weidemann, will have to proceed here without me.

Mr. Linke's comment (no "saying what you want to hear") is odd and surprising. Mrs. von Kleist wrote today how happy she was to hear that the grandparents let me use their permission to visit: "How heartrending it must have been for you both." Of course, it was "heartrending," but even so, our hearts being moved wasn't in the forefront. Instead, we were in fine spirits, focused, and very quickly in medias res. But that's also because you aren't easily offended, so to speak, and don't whine about having your "role" acknowledged.

The Bultmann letter is still missing. I can rely on comrade R[ainalter], to the extent that I tell him anything.

Today things began in the west. I wasn't expecting it yet, but I'm glad that you finally won a bet. I heard here from the wife of one of my comrades that the Velletri people all managed to meet up on the twenty-fourth, in good shape, at the northern place. By now they

will have moved on. And I must look around. Hope I get to it. With my very, very best wishes and thanks, and keep up your spirits.

Yours, Eberhard

Wednesday night. Many thanks for the letter that I found here at the parents', as well as the one for Justus; he'll get it tomorrow. I'm on my way tomorrow morning.

Yours, Eberhard

161. To Eberhard Bethge

June 8, 1944

Dear Eberhard,

During these first hours while you're sitting on the train, going farther away from us hour by hour, my thoughts are accompanying you, and maybe this letter will get to your new destination about the same time you do. I was especially glad to get another letter from you this morning. It puts my mind at rest that you were as glad of our time together as I was, since I was already concerned about having robbed you of that entire afternoon. What kind of incomprehensible regulation about the mil[itary] chap[laincy] business is this? We shall pursue the matter very thoroughly, and you can be quite sure that we won't miss any possibility. Otherwise, in many ways, you must have left with a lighter heart than you had feared at first. We had put off seeing each other again from Christmas to Easter to Pentecost, and one holiday after another passed by. But the next holiday will certainly belong to us; I no longer have any doubt about that.

Nice that you got to see Karl Friedrich. He wrote me such a good letter again. For Klaus it must be difficult to find a way to get started, after such a long time. I know that it's really not from

any lack of warmheartedness. . . . Klaus inherited Mama's tendency to complicate things and her natural urge to help, along with Papa's uncommonly wise caution, but without Mama's uninhibited energy and Papa's focus on that which is within reach. I think that he himself must suffer some from this. There's hardly anything more stimulating than a conversation with him, and I can hardly imagine a more big-hearted, generous, and noble character than his, but for the simple and necessary decisions in life, he's not the man. . . . You see, there are always reasons not to do something; the question is whether you do it in spite of them. If you only want to do things that have *every* reason in their favor, you'll end up never doing anything, or else it won't be necessary any longer, since others will have taken over for you. Yet every real deed is one that no one else can do, only you yourself. It's clear to me, however, that I need first to give this speech to myself; you know best how often I have trouble making up my mind about petty things. I must have inherited this, by the way, from my grandfather Bonhoeffer.

I was very happy about the greetings from Sabine and G. (I hadn't heard about *either* of them! Why do people always forget to tell me important things? I had asked about them often enough.)

You ask so many important questions about the thoughts that have pre-occupied me lately that I'd be glad if I could answer them myself. It's all still at a very early stage, and as usual I'm guided more by my instinct for responding to questions that may arise than being already clear about them. I'll try to describe my position from a historical angle. The movement toward human autonomy (by which I mean discovery of the laws by which the world lives and manages its affairs in science, in society and government, in art, ethics, and religion), which began around the thirteenth century (I don't want to get involved in disputing exactly when), has reached a certain completeness in our age. Human beings have learned to manage

all important issues by themselves, without recourse to “Working hypothesis: God.” In questions of science or art, as well as in ethical questions, this has become a matter of course, so that hardly anyone dares rock the boat anymore. But in the last hundred years or so, this has also become increasingly true of religious questions; it’s becoming evident that everything gets along without “God” and does so just as well as before. As in the scientific domain, so in human affairs generally, “God” is being pushed further and further out of our life, losing ground. The historical views of both Catholics and Protestants agree that this development must be seen as the great falling-away from God, from Christ, and the more they lay claim to God and Christ in opposing this, and play them off against it, the more this development considers itself anti-Christian. The world, now that it has become conscious of itself and the laws of its existence, is sure of itself in a way that it is becoming uncanny for us. Failures, things going wrong, can’t shake the world’s confidence in the necessity of its course and its development; such things are accepted with fortitude and sobriety as part of the bargain, and even an event like this war is no exception. In very different forms the Christian apologetic is now moving against this self-confidence. It is trying to persuade this world that has come of age that it cannot live without “God” as its guardian. Even after we have capitulated on all worldly matters, there still remain the so-called ultimate questions—death, guilt—which only “God” can answer, and for which people need God and the church and the pastor. So in a way we live off these so-called ultimate human questions. But what happens if some day they no longer exist as such, or if they are being answered “without God”? Here is where the secularized offshoots of Christian theology come in, that is, the existential philosophers and the psychotherapists, to prove to secure, contented, and happy human beings that they are in reality miserable and desperate and just

don't want to admit that they are in a perilous situation, unbeknown to themselves, from which only existentialism or psychotherapy can rescue them. Where there is health, strength, security, and simplicity, these experts scent sweet fruit on which they can gnaw or lay their corrupting eggs. They set about to drive people to inner despair, and then they have a game they can win. This is secularized methodism. And whom does it reach? a small number of intellectuals, of degenerates, those who consider themselves most important in the world and therefore enjoy being preoccupied with themselves. A simple man who spends his daily life with work and family, and certainly also with various stupid affairs, won't be affected. He has neither time nor inclination to be concerned with his existential despair, or to see his perhaps modest share of happiness as having "perilous," "worrisome," or "disastrous" aspects. I consider the attack by Christian apologetics on the world's coming of age as, first of all, pointless, second, ignoble, and, third, unchristian. Pointless—because it appears to me like trying to put a person who has become an adult back into puberty, that is, to make people dependent on a lot of things on which they in fact no longer depend, to shove them into problems that in fact are no longer problems for them. Ignoble—because an attempt is being made here to exploit people's weaknesses for alien purposes to which they have not consented freely. Unchristian—because it confuses Christ with a particular stage of human religiousness, namely, with a human law. More about this later, but first a few more words about the historical situation. The question is Christ and the world that has come of age. The weakness of liberal theology was that it allowed the world the right to assign to Christ his place within it; that it accepted, in the dispute between church and world, the—relatively mild—peace terms dictated by the world. Its strength was that it did not try to turn back the course of history and really took up the battle (Troeltsch!), even though

this ended in its defeat. Defeat was followed by capitulation and the attempt at a completely new beginning, based on “regaining awareness” of its own foundations in the Bible and the Reformation. Heim sought, along pietist-methodist lines, to convince individuals that they were confronted with the alternatives “despair or Jesus.” He was winning “hearts.” Althaus (continuing the modern positivist line in a strongly confessional direction) tried to regain from the world some room for Lutheran doctrine (ministry) and Lutheran ritual, otherwise leaving the world to its own devices. Tillich undertook the religious interpretation of the development of the world itself—against its will—giving it its form through religion. That was very brave, but the world threw him out of the saddle and galloped on by itself. He too thought he understood the world better than it did itself, but the world felt totally misunderstood and rejected such an insinuation. (The world *does* need to be understood in a better way than it does itself! but not “religiously,” the way the religious socialists want to do.) Barth was the first to recognize the error of all these attempts (which were basically all still sailing in the wake of liberal theology, without intending to do so) in that they all aim to save some room for religion in the world or over against the world. He led the God of Jesus Christ forward to battle against religion, πνεῦμα against σάρξ. This remains his greatest merit (the second edition of *The Epistle to the Romans*, despite all the neo-Kantian eggshells!). Through his later *Dogmatics* he has put the church in a position to carry this distinction in principle all the way through. It was not in his ethics that he eventually failed, as is often said—his ethical observations, so far as they exist, are as important as his dogmatic ones—but in the nonreligious interpretation of theological concepts he gave no concrete guidance, either in dogmatics or ethics. Here he reaches his limit, and that is why his theology of revelation has become positivist, a “positivism of revelation,” as I call it. To a great

extent the Confessing Church now has forgotten all about Barth's approach and lapsed from positivism into conservative restoration. Its significance is that it holds fast to the great concepts of Christian theology, but it appears to be exhausting itself gradually in the process. Certainly these concepts contain the elements of genuine prophecy (which include the claim to the truth as well as mercy, as you mentioned) and of genuine ritual, and only to that extent does the message of the Confessing Church get attention, a hearing—and rejection. But both remain undeveloped, remote, because they lack interpretation. Those who, like, for example, P. Schütz or the Oxford or Berneuchen movements, who long for “movement” and “life,” are dangerous reactionaries, backward looking, because they want to go back before the beginnings of revelation theology and seek “religious” renewal. They haven't understood the problem at all, so their talk is completely beside the point. They have no future whatsoever (except possibly the Oxford people, if only they weren't so lacking in biblical substance). As for Bultmann, he seems to have sensed Barth's limitation somehow, but misunderstands it in the sense of liberal theology, and thus falls into typical liberal reductionism (the “mythological” elements in Christianity are taken out, thus reducing Christianity to its “essence”). My view, however, is that the full content, including the “mythological” concepts, must remain—the New Testament is not a mythological dressing up of a universal truth, but this mythology (resurrection and so forth) is the thing itself—but that these concepts must now be interpreted in a way that does not make religion the condition for faith (cf. the περιτομή in Paul!). Only then, in my opinion, is liberal theology overcome (which still determines even Barth, if only in a negative way), but at the same time the question it asks is really taken up and answered (which is *not* the case with the Confessing Church's positivism of revelation!). The fact that the world has come of age is no longer an occasion for

polemics and apologetics, but is now actually better understood than it understands itself, namely, from the gospel and from Christ.

Now to your question of whether the church has any “ground” left to stand on, or whether it is losing it altogether, and the other question, whether Jesus himself used the human “predicament” as a point of contact, so that “methodism,” criticized above, is in the right.

June 9

I’ll stop here and write more tomorrow. I need to get a letter off to Maria as well. Many thanks for your letter of June 6, right before you left. Ursel, whom I saw for a few minutes yesterday, has already mentioned the name of Weidem[ann]; I was able to tell her that he is well known to Sack, whom Justus knows well. Justus left me a message this morning that he believes the outcome will be favorable. So I hope that all hindrances will be overcome. The conditions that remain are easy to fulfill, and since you’re Rüdiger’s son-in-law, the location will be no problem either. As for Dohrm[ann]’s interview on your suitability, you needn’t be afraid. When you say that you were a sem[inary] inspector and were working on a doctorate with Wolf, he’ll avoid delving into a lot of questions. Bunke is certainly well disposed, and surely Dohrm[ann] as well. So, it should work out.

The Bultmann letter was sent to Italy several weeks ago (shortly before you left there). So I think it is waiting for you there.—Linke probably meant, with his comment, that he clearly found you “someone one can talk to” without sentimentality or sniveling. By the way, if we’re talking about “roles,” yours is without doubt much harder, and I was very glad to see you go off to meet the future so cheerfully and bravely. In short, it was grand for both of us to be together, and I can’t imagine that this will ever change in the years ahead. It’s a real asset, one that may have taken time and effort to

acquire, but how well we have been rewarded for what we have invested in it.

That's all. All the very, very best! Thinking of you with devotion and gratitude,

Yours as ever, Dietrich

162. From Eberhard Bethge

On the train

June 8, 1944

Dear Dietrich,

I was very surprised and excited to get your letter with the poem enclosed. Father seems to have forgotten it and gave it to me last night when I was practically already in bed. I read it right then (everything was sealed), and now in the train I've read the verses several times. I wonder if it was only because I think I know you so well, in many situations and many of your thoughts, that it was so exciting and moving for me to read them. I don't really think so. Anyone reading it would most likely hardly believe that it was by someone who almost never writes poetry; they would think it was the fruit of long practice and work. But of course, you have been very much concerned with language and expression before now. I recognize here your compact style, its terseness and succinctness, clarity of statement, together with very fine, vivid imagery.

What will Maria probably have to say about it? The ending, whether others might find it too short, as you yourself fear? For me, the general themes, that is, the experience of our being together, your letters, and so forth, are immediately fully present. And yet I wouldn't know how to express it more beautifully. I did consider whether you ought to find a more "conciliatory" title when you give

it to her. Or, put differently, don't send her just this by itself, or just things in this tenor. You express yourself so compellingly and vividly here that it could make her feel (and she *cannot* read it "objectively") that this alone is who you are in your situation there. It is who you are, certainly, but you are also living, feeling, and thinking in other dimensions as well, and also very vividly.

You'll see what I mean, won't you? It could be too hard on her to make yourself known only in this way. And such poetry as this has a more personal effect than anything else. I'd be very happy to read more, and new ones. I've read this one several times. Shall I mention a few details? When I read it again, however, I myself am in doubt again about what I thought I had noticed, and as a whole it affects me strongly and compellingly. I'm grateful to you for sending it to me. The fourth line reminds me of a book title, of a not very serious novel probably, which has been advertised lately. Probably you won't have seen it. Might the sentences "till your blood [daß dein Blut] . . ." be said in a more restrained way? In the third stanza it seems to me that perhaps the phrase "(it) dissolves" [löst sich auf] isn't quite new enough, after the image above of "crumbling," since you otherwise keep finding new expressions. I thought at first that the line "before what has disappeared, is past and gone" [vor dem Entschwundenen, Vergangenen] [would be] phonetically better turned around ("is past, disappeared"). But you want always to end with "past." Could you just say "slung" instead of "I sling" [schleudre ich]? For me it isn't completely clear why you wrote "at my most hopeless efforts" [über mein hoffnungsloses Müh'n]. The paragraph about the night is especially beautiful. Is the "but" in "But the night is wise [Aber die Nacht] . . ." an archaic "but"? The only thing I don't quite like is "and I experience the new" [und ich erfahre das Neue], (just) the expression "the new."

Forgive me for behaving like a schoolteacher, but you did ask

me to comment on it. I really wish I could express to you how much the whole thing surprised and impressed me. Line for line. For your closest relatives and others close to you, there's likely to be an embarrassed reaction or, in any case, great sensitivity to something created by a relative. My immediate reaction was great joy and admiration, and it brought to life for me again, compellingly and convincingly, what you have otherwise touched on in your letters. Maria should be very happy with it, despite any pain. Of course, it is not easy, but it has a simplicity, nothing superfluous. When I read it, strangely enough, I picture you sitting at the grand piano, playing. Is this kind of musicality so strong in these verses?

I'm going to leave the train in Munich and get a pass to break my journey there, because in Munich at Theresienstraße they're most likely to know our new position, through radio contact and so on. Maybe they'll also give me an identity card to cover all eventualities, so that I don't get whisked off.

Evening

I'm actually lying between white sheets once more in the Europäischer Hof hotel, living off your connections again. The same sister is still at the reception desk and had a couch made up for me, as the hotel is overcrowded.

Friday morning

This morning I was still able to reach Renate by telephone and heard that all was going well. Another letter has come—a pity it arrived one day too late. Now I shall have to wait longer for it. Do you suppose it's the one with the part about Bultmann?

Saturday

Although I still don't yet know when I'm leaving or where I'm going, I'll finish this letter now anyway. Yesterday I sat together with Ninne, and today I'll see Sepp's wife again and will later hear whether those at Theresienstraße know yet where I am to go.

So now I'm existing between my two current existences, sending off my thoughts, in different degrees of warmth, in both directions.

To you, very very warm greetings!

Thinking of you as always,

Yours, Eberhard

163. From Eberhard Bethge

June 16, 1944, Friday

Dear Dietrich,

I must just quickly send you another greeting, before I finally leave the country. After being spoiled recently, I'm greatly missing hearing anything from you for so long. The attempt of that office you know about to find my unit took an amazingly long time. In fact, they didn't find out anything, and now I have to try some other way—and keep hoping—to reach my destination. But despite not seeing further than one day at a time, these days have really been splendid.

The best of all was that Renate could come, with the help of her parents and Bärbel. And thanks to you, the Europäischer Hof was very forthcoming and generous with everything we needed.

This time saying good-bye was all the more wretched because I've had to come back to the room and wait almost the whole day. It will be a mercy to be on a moving train in an overstuffed compartment. And this evening, in addition, the Armed Forces High Command report came about attacks on England with the high-explosive devices. One can't imagine yet what these are like—what

immediate effects, what comes afterward. The fear—will all of you become affected by some of this as well?

Ninne K[alckreuth] was lovely. We went together to see her again. She has some quite independent, original ways of expressing herself and also a certain charm. In your honor I invited her to dinner, paid for and using coupons. Sepp's wife was also very nice to us when we went up there, out of curiosity, for fifteen minutes.

What about you? You must be following whatever you can hear, with great suspense.

When I arrive, I hope it won't be too long to get my mail. Thinking of you as ever with very best regards,
Yours, Eberhard

164. Notes I, Tegel, end of June 1944

Aphrodite—the embrace of nature. The yearning in the world.
Human and animal

Hermes—the guide, lord of pathways (“Hermae”).

Spirit of the night, night is mother of all secrets, nothing far and nothing near

World of Hermes not a heroic world, merriment, god of highwaymen and thieves, smiling, roguishness, luck, playing pranks

“God”—is not a perceivable unity
“Hades”—that which has been
“the human being”—not an animal
Dionysus—not Homeric

“He who has thought the deepest thoughts, loves what is most alive”
Hölderlin on Socrates/Alcibiades

Human form—animal form unspiritual, monstrous, unbounded
against the ideas of worry, unquenchable yearning and lust for death.
Against the tendency toward the *supernatural* as *hubris*. Therefore
“instead of a symbol of the absolute, instead of monstrosity that
confounds the senses,
the perfect *human form*.”

Guilt and freedom, not the humility that takes all the guilt upon
oneself, but the other sort that knows oneself not to be the only cause
of what has happened.

165. Notes II, Tegel, end of June 1944

“Ye gods, to meet again, then, is also a god!” (Helen and Menelaus)

The divine not in *absolutes*, but rather in the natural human form.

“Theomorphism, not anthropomorphism” (Goethe)

No self-revelation by the gods.

Apollo reveals “what is right,” but not himself.

166. To Eberhard Bethge

June 21

Dear Eberhard,

Many thanks for your last letter from Munich before your departure. I can imagine that coming back to that empty room would be wrenching. But then again, it was unexpected bliss that you had a few more days together. It must have made you very happy that everyone just naturally volunteered to make it possible for you! Now you're off somewhere looking for your unit, and I hope that when you get there, some good letters will be there to greet you—that is, assuming that your field mailing address hasn't changed. Today I actually just want to send you greetings. I don't dare enclose the ongoing theological discussion or any poems, because I don't know whether this address will still reach you. As soon as I find out, more will be coming. I'm *very* grateful to you for your judgment and criticism of the poem. Confronted by these newborn children of mine, I feel rather at a loss and without any yardstick. I think you are right in all your criticisms. But I'm in some despair over finding anything to replace the line "And I experience the new" that won't disrupt the whole structure of the closing lines. But something may still come to mind.

This morning we had the nastiest of all the air raids so far. For several hours my room was so dark from the cloud of smoke that hung over the city that I would almost have switched on the light. I have already heard that everything is all right at home. Renate is still in Sakrow with the baby, most likely, and could do any shopping she needed in Potsdam. Nothing has ever happened there yet. I'm not pleased that my parents are just now coming back. They ought also to move to S[akrow] for the time being. Regarding the deployment of our new weapon, I am very confident and calm.

Having to spend these beautiful, long summer days here for a second time is rather hard for me sometimes, but one just can't choose where one has to be. So one must find the way again and again through the petty, annoying thoughts to the great thoughts that give one strength.

At the moment I'm reading the quite outstanding book by W. F. Otto, the classical philologist at Königsberg, on "the gods of [ancient] Greece." As he says at the end, it's about this "world of faith that arose from the riches and depth of existence rather than from its cares and longings." Can you understand that this formulation, and the exposition that goes with it, have something I find very attractive, and that I am—*horribile dictu!*—less offended by gods who are so portrayed than by certain forms of Christianity? that I almost believe I could claim these gods for Christ? For my current theological thinking, this book is very valuable. By the way, there's a good deal about Cardano in Dilthey.

Farewell for today! I await news of your whereabouts daily and am always with you in my thoughts.

Yours with all my heart,

Dietrich

167. Poem "Fortune and Calamity"

Fortune and Calamity

Fortune and calamity
 that rush to strike us and overwhelm,
 are at first
 barely distinguishable
 like heat and frost to the fingertips' sudden touch.
 Like meteors

hurled from far above the earth,
brilliant and threatening,
they steer their course over our heads.
Victims stand dumbstruck
before the rubble
of their lusterless, everyday existence.

Grand and sublime,
destroying, conquering,
fortune and calamity,
invited and uninvited,
make ceremonious entry
into shattered people's lives,
adorning and robing
those they visit
with solemnity and blessing.

Fortune is full of horror,
calamity full of sweetness.
Inseparably both, the one and the other,
seem to issue from the eternal.
Great and terrible are both.
People from far and near
come running to see
and gape
half envious, half shuddering
at enormity,
where powers above the earth,
blessing and destroying,
appear

in a confusing, forever entangled
earthly drama.

What is fortune? What calamity?

Only time divides them.
When the unfathomable thrill
of sudden event
turns to tiresome, tortuous duration,
when the day's endlessly dragging hour
finally unveils to us calamity's true form,
then most people turn away,
disillusioned and bored,
weary of the monotony
of calamity's familiar tune.

This is the hour of faithfulness,
the hour of mother and lover,
the hour of friend and brother.
Faithfulness transfigures all calamity
and quietly envelops it
in gentle, celestial resplendence.

168. From Eberhard Bethge

“Il Balcone,” Montevettolini (Pistoia)

June 26, 1944

Dear Dietrich,

By now I hope you will have heard that my trip went very well,
with the stopover and finally my arrival at my unit's location. The

pass they finally gave me in Munich carried me much faster than usual past the dangerous cliffs of the mustering points in Verona and Bologna. So I only spent one day in Verona and joined a most outstanding tour of the city with a corporal as guide. I've never experienced anything as good by way of an introduction. He showed us a great deal, and we learned something about it as well. It felt like peacetime, and tired though I was, I was quite happy to be along. In Bologna, I must say, things were rather disorganized, and I spent a night on a bare tiled floor without any covers over me. Then the next day turned out very well; all the moisture heaven had saved up for some time just kept pouring down. So I could safely hitchhike in the daytime and reached my new location in glorious Tuscany (see above) without seeing a single plane. When I got here, they said we'd be moving further north very soon, but we're still here. I was immediately plunged into the complete mess the files were in, so much that I've had no time to think about anything until today. But now I'm more or less through it. My outfit's retreat must in fact have been pretty chaotic and awful. But they did all get safely through the traps with all their vehicles intact. It all happened so fast that the field hospitals in Rome and Civitacastellana (the one near us) had to be surrendered to the enemy, and only the very light casualties were sent along on foot. Here for the moment it's much quieter and more pleasant [than] the last months in Rignano. We're a long way from the highway, so we see the planes, especially mornings and evenings, always from more of a distance. Of course, there's some anxiety about how we shall get over the passes when we have to move again. They are being fully illuminated and under constant surveillance. This town is high up, with a castle (Castell di Medici, now Borghese, with nice, educated people and children) and a church, and has a pleasant climate. I have a good office facing north, that is, it's fine in this heat. It's only unpleasant when one has to drive a car somewhere

in the daytime. Then one has to have a buddy ride on the fender to keep watch. The first morning after getting here, I was surprised by a “parade,” which is unusual. The reason: another fellow and I were being promoted to corporal. That means 150 lire for ten days’ pay instead of 125. Among the reasons given was how cleverly we got ourselves back to our unit. And this, after having had ideas already in Munich. I’m probably playing along *too* well.

I was glad to get here though, because the day in Munich after Renate left and the next two days on the road were anything but pleasant. Here I was welcomed right away by one letter after another from you to make it all worthwhile. Some from before my leave, April 22 and May 5 and 6, some from afterward, June 6 and 8. This last one with very, very good, detailed theological definitions of your thoughts on “religionlessness.” I’ll try now to respond at least to some of it, to show you how pleased and excited I felt! But first I must say again, about my leave, that for me it was really a great success overall and is still a source of joy and “consolation”: the days with Renate, who really understood excellently how not to spoil even one hour that we had by tormenting herself and so on ahead of time; the hours with you, which we also enjoyed without wasting any of the time. You both really teach me how to “enjoy” everything; that’s probably part of the wisdom of your family. And there were your kind letters, which helped straighten me out (the restlessness and apprehension that, after my experiences, wouldn’t go away during the first days are really *only* a memory now and have no more power); and there was the baptism, and my boy. I feel—forgive me—as if I’d just had a very, very fine and choice meal, but without the feeling of being full and not wanting any more.

In your letter of the sixth you referred to the matter of Renate and my mother. You are surely right that it is important there to support Renate completely. We didn’t talk about it during my leave,

but I'm considering writing a letter to Mother about it sometime. And I thank you for speaking clearly to me and making me so certain about it. I agree with you completely; perhaps I just didn't dare be clear that this was really the only correct view.

You were speaking in the previous letter about the continuity with one's own past, and that we hadn't experienced a break with it. But to the members of my extended family, it must obviously seem that my life has two halves, and what looks to me like development, they see as a change. For me personally there are many matters of taste, of opinions, of the conduct of my life, which have changed very much, of which Renate, for example, couldn't have the least idea; I'd say she doesn't quite believe me. What happened was this: out of the numerous opportunities immediately before me that at first, in the absence of any strong outside guidance I unthinkingly tried here and there and then dropped again, one day the choice settled on some of them. Why? I can hardly claim to have consciously made good decisions by calculating the advantages or disadvantages, or morality or immorality, of any path. It's almost as though, to put it rather frivolously, you got lucky; it just turned out all right that time.

I'm sorry I completely missed asking you about your novel and the short piece you were writing for me. And I'd so much like to see them!

The letter with your exposition of Bultmann that you mentioned is surely the one of May 5, which I found waiting here, so it isn't lost. Would you be willing for me to pass along these paragraphs of this letter, and especially the longer one, to people like Albrecht Sch[önherr], W[infried] Maechler, [Wolf-]Dieter Zimmermann? Let me know. I find everything much more clearly expressed here that you have said to me previously, and the way you have placed it within the history of dogma is highly interesting. I find this sentence on existential philosophy wonderful: "Where there is health, strength,

security, and simplicity, these experts scent sweet fruit on which they can gnaw or lay their corrupting eggs.” I must read the letter again, several more times, and am looking forward very much to the continuation you have promised, on the nonreligious interpretation of the great Christian concepts.

Now the great events are going forward from day to day, and one enjoys every day that is spent more or less quietly, looking forward to news from home.

I’ve been disturbed quite a bit while writing this letter but want to send it off anyway, so you won’t have to wait so long for news.

Keep up your spirits, and my very best to you—

Yours, Eberhard

169. To Eberhard Bethge

June 27, 1944

Dear Eberhard,

Maria has just been here; I heard from her that the last news of you came from Verona, and there has been nothing more from you since then. So, since I don’t know whether and when any mail is reaching you, I’m writing to you at the old postal address. But I would rather wait, before going on with the theological topic, until I have news of you. The same goes for the poems, especially the latest, a fairly long poem about my impressions here; they’re really more suited to an evening together than to a long journey through the post. What you must have been going through in the past week, on your journey. Don’t imagine for a moment that one gets used to your absence, with all that it implies; one puts up with it but doesn’t get used to it. By the way, as soon as she was back from Pätzig, Mama got in touch with Döhring. They seem quite optimistic about it. I know D[öhring]

as a very active man who doesn't let himself be put off with mere words. In earlier days I didn't like him at all—I only knew him from his sermons—but when I visited him once in 1937—he too was a university lecturer [Privatdozent]—I had quite a good impression, and we got on very well. So I think he will really make every effort in this matter.

In the last two weeks I've received many fine things from Margret, including a case of cigars. I was very touched and have no idea why I'm entitled to all this. She and her children also need to keep in good health, and Fritz surely hasn't become an ascetic with regard to smoking! Every such sign of being remembered feels especially good to us in prison here.

At present I'm writing an exposition of the first three commandments.

I'm finding the first one especially difficult. The usual interpretation of idolatry as "wealth, lust, and pride" doesn't seem at all biblical to me. That is moralizing. Idols are to be *worshipped*, and idolatry presupposes that people still worship something. But we don't worship anything anymore, not even idols. In that respect we're really nihilists.

A bit more on what we were thinking about the Old Testament. OT faith differs from other oriental religions in not being a religion of redemption. But Christianity is always characterized as a religion of redemption. Isn't there a cardinal error here, through which Christ is separated from the OT and interpreted in the sense of redemption myths? To the objection that redemption has a crucial importance in the OT as well (out of Egypt and later out of Babylon, cf. Deutero-Isaiah), the reply is that this is redemption *within history*, that is, *this side* of the bounds of death, whereas everywhere else the aim of all the other myths of redemption is precisely to overcome death's boundary. Israel is redeemed out of Egypt so that it may live before

God, as God's people on earth. The redemption myths look for eternity outside of history beyond death. Sheol and Hades are not metaphysical constructs but rather images that present "what has been" on earth as still existing, but perceived in the present only in shadowy form. It is said to be decisive that in Christianity the hope of the resurrection is proclaimed, and that in this way a genuine religion of redemption has come into being. Now the emphasis is on that which is beyond death's boundary. And precisely here is where I see the error and the danger. Redemption now means being redeemed out of sorrows, hardships, anxieties, and longings, out of sin and death, in a better life beyond. But should this really be the essence of the proclamation of Christ in the Gospels and Paul? I dispute this. The Christian hope of resurrection is different from the mythological in that it refers people to their life on earth in a wholly new way, and more sharply than the OT. Unlike believers in the redemption myths, Christians do not have an ultimate escape route out of their earthly tasks and difficulties into eternity. Like Christ ("My God . . . why have you forsaken me?"), they have to drink the cup of earthly life to the last drop, and only when they do this is the Crucified and Risen One with them, and they are crucified and resurrected with Christ.

This-worldliness must not be abolished ahead of its time; on this, NT and OT are united. Redemption myths arise from the human experience of boundaries. But Christ takes hold of human beings in the midst of their lives.

You see, I always come round to the same sort of thoughts. Now I have to substantiate them in detail out of the NT. That will follow somewhat later. This is enough for today! Farewell, Eberhard, God keep you every day!

In faithfulness and gratitude as always,

Your Dietrich

I'm reading in the newspaper about tropical heat in Italy. You poor fellow! Makes me think of August 1936. Ps. 121:6!

170. To Eberhard Bethge

June 30, 1944

Dear Eberhard,

Today was a hot summer day here, and I could only in part enjoy the sun because I could imagine how miserable it must be making you. Most likely you're stuck somewhere in dust and sweat, tired and perhaps with no chance of washing or cooling off. I can imagine that sometimes you begin to hate the sun. And yet, you know, I should really like to feel the full force of it again, burning on one's skin and gradually making one's whole body glow, so that one knows again that one is a corporeal being. I'd like to get tired by the sun instead of by books and thinking. I'd like to have it awaken my animal existence, in the sense not that debases one's humanity but that delivers one from the peevishness and artificiality of a merely intellectual [geistig] existence and makes a person purer and happier. I'd like, just for once, not just to see the sun and sip at it a little, but to experience it bodily. The romantic enthusiasm for the sun, which only gets intoxicated over sunrises and sunsets, has no idea of the power and reality of the sun but knows it only as a picture. It can never grasp why the sun was worshipped as a god; for that you need to experience not only its light and colors, but also its heat. The hot countries, from the Mediterranean to India to Central America, have really been essentially the intellectually creative countries. The colder countries have lived and been nourished by the intellectual [geistig] creativity of others, and their own original contribution, technology, basically serves the material needs of life and not the life of the spirit.

Could this be the reason why we keep being drawn to the hot countries? And could such a thought perhaps reconcile one to the discomforts of the heat? But probably all that makes no difference to you right now, and you just long to get out of that hell to Grunewald and a Berliner Weiße. I remember very well how, in June 1923, I longed to be away from Italy and could only breathe freely again on a hike in the Black Forest when it rained all day. And I wasn't fighting a war then—there was nothing to do but enjoy. I also remember how, in August 1936, you were horrified at the very idea of going on to Naples. How are you holding up now, just physically? In those days one simply couldn't do without an “espresso,” and Klaus, to my youthful annoyance, threw away a lot of money on this. We also took a coach even for the shortest distances and ate countless *granitas* and *cassatas* during the day.

I've just had the most welcome news, that you have written from the old address, from which I conclude that you got back to your former unit. You can't imagine how relieved I am—relatively relieved, at any rate—and I'm also very glad for Renate's sake. You know, back when your first son was expected, people here were looking a bit concerned at times—I noticed it in my parent's faces when they first told me about it in July—but how good this is now for Renate, and for you too.

A few hours ago Uncle Paul announced that he was coming here to inquire personally about my welfare. It is extremely funny to see everyone flapping around and—with a few notable exceptions—outdoing one another in undignified behavior. It's embarrassing, but some of them just have to; that's the way they are.

Now I'll try to continue with the theological topics from where I stopped recently. My starting point was that God is being increasingly pushed out of a world come of age, from the realm of our knowledge and life and, since Kant, has only occupied the

ground beyond the world of experience. On the one hand, theology has resisted this development with apologetics and taken up arms—in vain—against Darwinism and so on; on the other hand, it has resigned itself to the way things have gone and allowed God to function only as *deus ex machina* in the so-called ultimate questions, that is, God becomes the answer to life's questions, a solution to life's needs and conflicts. So if anyone gives no evidence of such problems or refuses to lose self-control or be pitied over these things, then this person is really closed to talking about God; or else the man without such questions and so forth must have it proven to him that in truth he is up to his neck in such questions, needs, or conflicts, without admitting it or knowing it. If we succeed here—and existential philosophy and psychotherapy have worked out some very ingenious methods in this respect—then this man is open for God, and methodism can celebrate its triumphs. But if people cannot successfully be made to regard their happiness as disastrous, their health as sickness, and their vitality as an object of despair, then the theologians are at their wits' end. The person being dealt with either is a stubborn sinner of the most malignant kind or is living an existence of "bourgeois self-satisfaction," and the one is as far from salvation as the other. You see, this is the attitude that I am contending against. When Jesus made sinners whole, they were real sinners, but Jesus didn't begin by making every person into a sinner. He called people from their sin, not into it. Certainly the encounter with Jesus turned all human values upside down. This is what happened at Paul's conversion, but his encounter with Jesus preceded the recognition of his sins. Certainly Jesus accepted people living on the margins of human society, prostitutes, and tax collectors, but certainly not only them, because he wanted to accept all humankind. Never did Jesus question anyone's health and strength or good fortune as such or regard it as rotten fruit; otherwise why would he

have made sick people well or given strength back to the weak? Jesus claims all of human life, in all its manifestations, for himself and for the kingdom of God.

Of course, I have to be interrupted right at this point! Let me just quickly state, once again, the issue that concerns me: the claim [Inanspruchnahme] of Jesus Christ on the world that has come of age.

I can't write any more today; otherwise the letter will be left here another week, which I don't want. So, to be continued!

Uncle Paul was here, had me brought downstairs immediately, and stayed—Maetz and Maaß were there—more than five hours! He had four bottles of sparkling wine served up, probably the only time in the annals of this place, and behaved in a way more generous and kind than I would ever have expected of him. He no doubt wanted to make it ostentatiously clear what his attitude is toward me and what he expects of that timid pedant Maetz. I was impressed with this independence, which would probably be unthinkable in civilian life. He also left us with a delightful story: At St. Privat, a wounded sergeant called out loudly: "I am wounded; long live the king!" To which General von Löwenfeld, also wounded, retorted: "Quiet, Sergeant, no noise here while dying!"—I'm curious to see what effect this entire visit will have here, that is, on people's judgments.

Well, good-bye for now and forgive me for breaking off this letter, but I think you'd rather have it than none at all. I hope we shall be together again in early autumn!

Thinking of you with gratitude and praying for you faithfully every day

Yours, with all my heart, Dietrich

July 1

Seven years ago today we were at Martin's together!

171. Notes, Tegel, July 1944

1. Truth and interpretation of Scripture. testim[onium] spiritus sancti? Principle [Pp]? sui ipsius interpres? External authority?
2. Conscience, the voice of the general and the necessary. But consent, commission, recognition by another person is more convincing than a good conscience.
3. To what extent can Christ have a claim on human decision making?
4. A confession of faith expresses not what someone else “*must*” believe but what one *believes* oneself.

(Episcopius at the Synod of Dort for the Arminians) Dilthey 102

5. Concept of tolerance.
6. People go to God in their distress
People go to God in God’s distress
7. In a conversation something new can always happen.
Why so stupid? I don’t know anything. I wait and always
disappointment

I’m waiting for God.

8. When I read poems by poets

172. To Eberhard Bethge

July 8

Dear Eberhard,

If I could assume that you are still in such a cheerful and contented

frame of mind as it seemed from your most recent greeting, then I would truly be very happy. Many thanks for it. That you're managing not to be disturbed by memories, but rather to enjoy them, is a great thing, and I'd be happy if I could always succeed in that. What strange and unexpectedly good things have been happening to you again in the last few weeks; first Munich, then Verona, then that rainy day, and finally the recognition of your good luck as especially merited. You're moving up fearfully fast; I'll surely never catch up; I wouldn't even have been able to keep in step with you. Seriously, it's clear that you have a particular gift of making yourself useful and agreeable to people. I congratulate you on that! You say that your family would consider something like this as a break in your life. I don't believe that any more than you do. When I first came to know you, there were at most a few eggshells to brush off; otherwise everything was already in place and complete. That was my impression even the first time we met, when you were telling me about Wittenberg. Besides, I have learned from you to see so many things in a new way that I think I have hardly changed any less than you have. There was a "preestablished harmony" in our meeting!

I wrote you a letter recently with a highly theoretical philosophy about the heat. In the last few days I've been having a concrete bodily experience of it. I'm sitting here as if baking in an oven, wearing only a shirt that I once brought you from Sweden and a pair of gym shorts (—did somebody make off with some shirts of yours somehow? you'll surely get them back!), and the only reason I don't presume to suffer is that I can imagine how awful this heat must be for you now, and how frivolous my last letter must have seemed to you. So now I'll try and wring a few ideas out of my sweating brain and write them to you. Who knows, perhaps it won't have to be very many more times, and we'll see each other again sooner than we suspect. I recently read

Euripides' fine and notable words, in a scene of reunion after a long separation: "Ye gods, to meet again, then, is a god!"

Now a few more thoughts on our topic. To present the biblical side of the matter needs more lucid thinking and concentration than I have today. Wait a few more days until it's cooler. I haven't forgotten either that I owe you something about interpreting biblical concepts nonreligiously. But for today, here are some preliminary remarks.

God's being pushed out of the world, away from public human existence, has led to an attempt to hang on to God at least in the realm of the "personal," the "inner life," the "private" sphere. And since each person has a "private" sphere somewhere, this became the easiest point of attack. What used to be the servants' secrets—to put it crudely—that is, the intimate areas of life (from prayer to sexuality)—became the hunting ground of modern pastors. In this way they resemble (even though their intentions are entirely different) the most evil of the tabloid journalists—remember the *Wahrheit* and the *Glocke*?—who made public the intimate lives of prominent people. The intention of such journalism was societal, financial, and political blackmail; in the other case it's religious blackmail. Sorry, but I can't put it more sparingly. From a sociological viewpoint this is a revolution from below, a rebellion of the inferior. Just as the mean-spirited can only deal with eminent people when they can imagine them "in the bathtub" or in other embarrassing situations, it's the same here. There is a sort of evil satisfaction in knowing that every person has failings and weak spots. In my contact with the "outcasts" of society, the "pariahs," I have noticed repeatedly that the dominant motive in their judgment of other people is mistrust. Everything a person of high repute does, even the most selfless deed, is suspect from the outset. Such "outcasts," by the way, are found at all levels of society. In a flower garden they are only grubbing around for the dung on which the flowers

grow. The less a person is connected to others, the more likely he will fall prey to this attitude. Among the clergy there is also a disconnectedness that we call being “holier-than-thou” [pfäffisch], that sort of prying into the sins of others in order to catch them out. It’s as if you wouldn’t know a fine house until you have found cobwebs in the remotest cellar, or you could appreciate a good play only after you saw how the actors behave behind the scenes. The same trend is found in novels of the last fifty years, which only think they have portrayed their characters honestly if they depict them in the marriage bed, and in movies, which have to have scenes of people undressing. To be clothed, veiled, pure, and chaste is considered a lie, a disguise, impure from the outset, which only gives proof of one’s own impurity. This mistrust and suspicion as the basic attitude toward other people is the rebellion of the inferior. From a theological viewpoint the error is twofold: first, thinking one can only address people as sinners after having spied out their weaknesses and meanness; second, thinking that the essential nature of a person consists of his innermost, intimate depths and background, and calling this the person’s “inner life.” And precisely these most secret human places are to be the domain of God!

To the first assumption one must say that human beings are sinners, but that is a long way from saying they are mean. To put it tritely, does it make Goethe or Napoleon a sinner to say that they weren’t always faithful husbands? It is not the sins of weakness but rather the sins of strength that matter. There is no need to go spying around. Nowhere does the Bible do this. (Strong sins: with a genius, hubris; for peasants, breaking the natural order (is the Decalogue perhaps a peasant ethic?); the bourgeoisie [Bürger], steering shy of free responsibility. Is that right?)

To the second assumption: the Bible does not know the distinction that we make between the outward and the inward life. How could

it, actually? It is always concerned with the ἄνθρωπινος τέλειος, the *whole* human being, even in the Sermon on the Mount, where the Decalogue is extended into the “innermost” interior. The notion that a good “character” could take the place of all human goodness is completely unbiblical. The discovery of the so-called inner life dates from the Renaissance (probably from Petrarch).

The “heart” in the biblical sense is not the inner life but rather the whole person before God. Since human beings live as much from their “outer” to their “inner” selves as from their “inner” to their “outer” selves, the assumption that one can only understand the essence of a human being by knowing his most intimate psychological depths and background is completely erroneous.

What I am driving at is that God should not be smuggled in somewhere, in the very last, secret place that is left. Instead, one must simply recognize that the world and humankind have come of age. One must not find fault with people in their worldliness but rather confront them with God where they are strongest. One must give up the “holier-than-thou” ploys and not regard psychotherapy or existential philosophy as scouts preparing the way for God. The intrusive manner of all these methods is far too unaristocratic for the Word of God to be allied with them. The Word of God does not ally itself with this rebellion of mistrust, this rebellion from below. Instead, it reigns.

So, now would be the time to speak concretely about the worldly interpretation of biblical concepts. But it’s just *too* hot today!

If you want to decide on your own to send excerpts from my letters to Albrecht and the others, of course you can do so. *I* myself would not do so yet, because you are the only one with whom I venture to think aloud like this, hoping it will clarify my thoughts. But do as you like.

The novel is bogged down, and the little piece intended for you

isn't completely finished either—January to March was such an unproductive time for me. I'm enclosing two poems. I have a long one about this place that I'd rather show you when you're here; I think it's not too bad. Perhaps I'll send it by itself sometime.

I'm so glad you're stationed far away from the highway and that you've got a north-facing room and the countryside is so beautiful where you are. Soon we shall be thinking a great deal about our trip together in the summer of '40, my last sermons!

Farewell for now, and many thanks for every thought and greeting that comes my way. Don't give yourself too much trouble over them! I know how hard it is for you at present. But it does make me very happy to hear from you. God keep you, dear Eberhard, and bring you back to us safe and sound, and soon!

Affectionately yours,

Dietrich

By the way, it would be very nice if you didn't throw away my theological letters but, since they are surely a burden for you to keep there, send them off to Renate from time to time. I might perhaps like to read them again later for my work. One writes some things in a more uninhibited and lively way in a letter than in a book, and in a conversation through letters I often have better ideas than when I'm writing for myself. But it's not important!—Incidentally, Mr. H. Linke, Berlin-Friedrichshagen, Wilhelmstr. 58 would be glad of a greeting from you from time to time.

July 9

That's all for now. I think we'll be seeing each other again soon! All the very, very best until then!

Yours, Dietrich

173. Poem "Who Am I?"

Who Am I?

Who am I? They often tell me
I step out from my cell
calm and cheerful and poised,
like a squire from his manor.

Who am I? They often tell me
I speak with my guards
freely, friendly and clear,
as though I were the one in charge.

Who am I? They also tell me
I bear days of calamity
serenely, smiling and proud,
like one accustomed to victory.

Am I really what others say of me?
Or am I only what I know of myself?
Restless, yearning, sick, like a caged bird,
struggling for life breath, as if I were being strangled,
starving for colors, for flowers, for birdsong,
thirsting for kind words, human closeness,
shaking with rage at power lust and pettiest insult,
tossed about, waiting for great things to happen,
helplessly fearing for friends so far away,
too tired and empty to pray, to think, to work,
weary and ready to take my leave of it all?

Who am I? This one or the other?
Am I this one today and tomorrow another?
Am I both at once? Before others a hypocrite
and in my own eyes a pitiful, whimpering weakling?
Or is what remains in me like a defeated army,
Fleeing in disarray from victory already won?

Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine.
Whoever I am, thou knowest me; O God, I am thine!

174. Poem "Christians and Heathens"

Christians and Heathens

1. People go to God when they're in need,
plead for help, pray for blessing and bread,
for rescue from their sickness, guilt, and death.
So do they all, all of them, Christians and heathens.

2. People go to God when God's in need,
find God poor, reviled, without shelter or bread,
see God devoured by sin, weakness, and death.
Christians stand by God in God's own pain.

3. God goes to all people in their need,
fills body and soul with God's own bread,
goes for Christians and heathens to Calvary's death
and forgives them both.

175. Poem "Night Voices"

Night Voices

Stretched out on my cot
I stare at the gray wall.
Outside, a summer evening
that knows me not
sings and descends over the land.
Quietly the day's tide ebbs
on an eternal shore.
Sleep a while!
Gather strength in body and soul, head and hand!
Outside, nations, houses, spirits, and hearts are in flames.
Until the blood red night is past
and your day breaks,
stand fast!

Night and silence.
I listen.
Only steps and shouts of the guards,
muffled laughter of lovers across distant yards.
Is that all you hear, lazy sleeper?
I hear the shivering and wavering of my own soul.
Nothing more?
I hear, I hear,
like voices, like cries,
like screams for planks to hold on to
of companions in suffering
lying awake, dreaming,
voiceless thoughts in the night.

I hear restless creaking of cots,
I hear chains.

I hear sleepless men tossing and turning,
for freedom and deeds of outrage they're yearning.
When sleep then visits them toward morning,
it's of children and wives they're dreamily murmuring.

I hear half-grown lads' happy whispering
as in their innocent dreams they feast.
I hear them tugging at their covers
hiding from hideous nightmare's beast.

I hear old men sighing and faintly breathing,
quietly for their great journey preparing.
Justice and injustice they've seen come and go;
now it's the immortal, eternal they long to know.

Night and silence.
Only the guards' steps and shouts.
Do you hear
the quaking, bursting, crashing
in the silent building
when hundreds stir and fan their hearts' embers into flames?

Mute is their chorus,
wide open my ear:
"We the old, we the young,

we the sons of every tongue,
we the strong, we the weak,
we the watchful, we who sleep,
we the rich and we the poor,
all alike in calamity's hour,
we the bad, we the good,
wheresoever we have stood,
we whose blood was often shed,
we witnesses of the dead,
we the defiant and we the resigned,
we the innocent and we the maligned,
tormented by long loneliness in heart and mind,
Brother, searching and calling are we!
Brother, can you hear me?"

Twelve cold, thin clangs from the clock tower
awaken me.

No resonance or warmth in them
to shelter or cover me.

Vicious barking dogs at midnight
terrify me.

Pathetic pealing of bells
separates a poor Yesterday
from poor Today.

Whether one day turns to another,
bringing nothing new, no reason to bother
hoping for better, but that it, too, will end—
What is it to me?

I want to see the turning of the times,
when the night sky is bright with signs,

new bells among the nations chime
and ring on and on.

I am waiting for that midnight
In whose terrible splendor and light
the wicked dissolve in fear
and the good remain, rejoicing.

Villain, spite,
step into light,
be judged aright.

Betrayal, deceit,
wicked deed,
atone with speed.

People, don't cower,
for sacred power
works judgment this hour.

Rejoice and declare
to a new race everywhere
justice shall be fair!

Heaven, restore
earth's children once more
to beauty, peace as before.

Earth, thrive with glee,

humankind, become free,
be free!

Suddenly I sat up
as if from sinking ship I'd sighted land,
as if there were something to grasp with my hand,
as if I saw golden fruit ripening.
But wherever I look, touch, or grasp
there is only darkness's impenetrable mass.

I sink into musing.
I sink into the depths of darkness.
You, Night, full of wanton abusing,
make yourself known!
Why do you gnaw at our patience, our own?
Deep, long silence—not a word;
then I hear Night bending toward me to be heard:
I am not dark, dark is guilt alone!

Guilt! I hear shuddering and shaking,
a murmur, a lament arising,
I hear men in spirit raging.
In a wild din of countless voices,
a voiceless chorus
reaches the ear of God:

“Harassed and hunted by humans,
rendered defenseless and accused;

bearers of unbearable burdens,
it is we who now accuse.

“We accuse those who thrust us into sin,
who made us share their guilt,
who made us witnesses to injustice—
so they could despise the partners in their crime.

“They made us look on heinous acts
to entangle us in the snarl of guilt,
then we were muzzled
and became the silent dog.

“We learned to tell cheap lies,
to go along with obvious wrongdoing.
When violence was heaped on the defenseless,
we looked away.

“And what set our hearts aflame
we kept silent and unnamed.
We quenched our burning blood
and stamped out our sense of shame.

“What once joined humankind in sacred bonds
was shredded and defaced.
Betrayed were friendship and faithfulness,
rueful tears the target of scorn.

“We the offspring of devout generations,
once the defenders of justice and truth,
became despisers of God and humanity,
as Hell looked on, laughing.

“Yet, though now robbed of freedom and honor,
before humankind proudly we raise our heads.
And when we are slandered maliciously,
before humankind we acquit ourselves: ‘Free!’

“Calm and firm we stand man against man,
as the accused, we now accuse.

“Only before thee, Fathomer of all Being,
before thee we are sinners.

“Afraid of suffering and lacking good deeds,
we have betrayed you before humankind.

“We saw the Lie raise its head
and failed to pay homage to Truth.

“We saw others in direst need
and our own death was all we feared.

“We come before you in manliness
to you our sin we will confess.

“When these times’ turmoil, Lord, is past,
grant that we may prove steadfast.

“After going far astray
may we see the break of day!

“Grant that we may ever strive
to forge ways where your Word may thrive.

“Until you wipe away our guilt,
keep us patient, keep us stilled.

“Silently we’ll prepare our way
until you summon a new day.

“Till you calm the storm and flood
and your will works wondrous deed.

“Brother, until the night will flee,
pray for me!”

First morning light creeps through my window,
pale and gray
Gentle breeze blows across my brow,
mild summer day.
Summer day! is all I say, Beautiful summer day!
What might come to me this day?
Now I hear hasty, hesitant steps outside.
Near me they suddenly stop.
I turn cold and hot.
I know, oh, I know!

A low voice reads something, brusque and cold.
Compose yourself, Brother, soon it will be finished,
soon! soon!
Courageous and proud are your steps I now hear.

No longer mindful of the moment that's near,
you see future times coming clear.
I go with you, Brother, to that place
and I hear your last word:
"Brother, when the sunlight I no longer see,
do live for me!"

Stretched out on my cot
I stare at the gray wall.
Outside, a summer morning
that is not yet mine
rises rejoicing
over the land.
Brothers, until our day breaks
after the long night,
we will stand fast!

176. From Eberhard Bethge

July 8, 1944

Dear Dietrich,
I received your letter of June 27 yesterday, and from it I assume that another, previous one must still be on its way to me. Perhaps you already have mine (about the poem) written on the train? You should also have one sent from our location further south. But I'll wait until the postal services get sorted out a bit more. In any case, this is the first letter I've received apart from the ones that were already waiting when I arrived. Our move up here to the northern slope of the Apennines went well. It was quite an adventure for me, as I had to transport an old 1921 Fiat car; after many tire-patchings, in the

end I simply drove it on the two back rims, which caused merriment all along the way. At any rate, I crossed over the dreaded pass all right. That was important. We only travel at night in such cases. But they like to illuminate such bottlenecks completely and bomb us. And then in the Apennines the partisans are now tremendously active. A few days ago, ten kilometers from here, near where the events of 1077 took place, they killed a war court judge. They occupy entire villages, set up headquarters, requisition, take over fortified positions (which are intended for our troops later), and up to now have been hard to catch. With regard to planes it's better now, since there is no main road nearby. A few days ago, however, they did destroy a small bridge over our dried-up river valley here. But we constantly see mushrooms of smoke over the Po floodplain, showing that there's rather heavy action there.

The seizure of the very well-kept and cultured home that we are now occupying (in the breezy mountain heights, with a bathroom!), the people being thrown out and our men prowling through all their chests, larders, and cupboards, was the most revolting thing I've experienced lately. I had never before been part of things when our troops went to new depths, behaving like the lowest of soldiers [Soldateska]. Greed for anticipated pleasures makes them nervous; they're only waiting for those poor people to give them the slightest excuse for righteous anger and self-justification, and then there's no holding them back. The officers sniff around for "intelligence reasons," the sergeants, to provide the troops with everything "necessary," and the enlisted men themselves beat all. Together they swarm and sprawl around the carved tables and in the cushions and drink the cellar dry. And there you stand.

Two days ago we had a glorious experience early in the morning. After a rainstorm overnight, the range of the Alps suddenly stood out completely clearly before us, 100–150 km away. To the left, in the

northwest, we could make out quite clearly the Monte Rosa group, and beyond it the Finsterhorn cluster; in all we could see 200–250 km as the crow flies, in the red morning sun. I never would have thought it possible.

But now I must thank you, first of all, very much for your good letter. I was almost expecting some news, but nothing has been working right anymore. I hope you won't keep the poems for that long evening together, although in another sense you may be right. I really think it is very kind that your parents immediately got in touch again with Döhring. I'm anxiously waiting to see how that will work out. People here are rather shocked and troubled by the way things are developing, but overall remain optimistic. As soon as one hole in the front has been plugged, other holes open up.

What does "worshipping" idols mean? That something is still sacrosanct to many people and can't be discussed, is that something other than "worshipping" it? Otherwise, what you're describing is probably true for a great many people as well as for our families.

Are you now coming to new insights about the absence of an afterlife in the Old Testament; the fourth commandment; the way to describe our future condition; further, more about our difficulty in relating to everything eschatological? It makes great sense to me that it is unbiblical to regard eschatology as a means of evasion. What about the hymns and attitude of Paul Gerhardt, the Thirty Years' War?

Please don't be put off from writing your thoughts to me, even when you don't get very long replies back. I await each letter more eagerly.

All the best to you, especially courage not to give in to sadness and hopelessness.

Yours as ever,

Eberhard

(I keep having lots of technical stuff to do nowadays.) What's the latest about Albertz? Inge Zippel mentioned that he had disappeared again. She wrote that Gottfried Beckmann was spared meeting his fate in the Crimea because he was on leave. Fleischhack has also written; he and Gollwitzer are together.

What about the "apolitical character" of the NT?

Staemmler got three years.

Sunday morning: because of your letter, I'm reading today's Epistle and Gospel with my senses more awake.

177. To Eberhard Bethge

July 16

Dear Eberhard,

I heard from my parents yesterday that you have moved again. I hope to get word soon as to what kind of quarters you now have. The historical atmosphere sounds attractive, anyhow. Even ten years ago we would hardly have understood that the symbols of the bishop's crosier and ring, as claimed by both the emperor and the pope, could lead to conflicts in world politics. Weren't they really *adiaphora*? We have had to learn again through our own experience that they were not! Whether Henry IV's going to Canossa should be understood as sincere or as diplomatic, the mental image that Europeans have of Henry in January 1077 is indelible and unforgettable. It has more effect than the Concordat of Worms in 1122, which formally concluded the matter in the same sense. We learned in school to see all these great disputes as a misfortune for Europe. The truth is that they were the source of the intellectual [geistige] freedom that has made Europe great.

I don't have much to report. I heard on the radio recently, as I

had several times already, scenes from operas by Carl Orff (*Carmina Burana* among others), which I found delightfully fresh, clear, and cheerful. He also made orchestral versions of Monteverdi. Have you listened to any of his work? I also heard a Handel *concerto grosso* and was astonished once again, in the slow movement (like the *largo*), by his ability to offer comfort so broadly and directly, in a way we would never dare to do anymore. I think Handel is much more concerned about his listeners and the effect of his music on them than Bach. That must be why he sometimes comes across as something of a façade. Handel intends something with his music; Bach doesn't. Do you find that so?

I'm reading the *Totenhaus* with great interest and am impressed by the sympathy, devoid of any moralizing, that people outside show toward the inmates. Would this lack of moralizing, which comes from religiousness, perhaps be an essential characteristic of this people, and would it help explain more recent events? Otherwise, I'm writing, including poetry, as much as I have the strength for it. I've probably told you that I'm now often able to work in the evenings, as we used to do. Of course, this is very important and agreeable to me. But that's about all I have to tell about myself. Everything appears to be going normally at home; that is, Hans is not well at all; I'm really very sorry about that. Sometimes I think if he had had a good pastor visit him at the right time, perhaps things wouldn't have gone so dreadfully for him, also physically. I am very glad that Klaus is in such good spirits! He was so depressed for quite some time. Well, I think that all his worries will soon be over; I very much hope so, for his own and the whole family's sake. H[ans] Walter has been promoted to sergeant! I am now having my books sent from Pätzig to Friedrichsbrunn. I often think of Grandmother Kleist these days; she has so much trouble getting around. Maybe we'll celebrate our wedding in Friedrichsbrunn! Under the new restrictions Maria

can no longer travel either. Perhaps it's a good thing for her, but for me it's a pity. The last time I saw her, she was unfortunately rather depressed; I can understand that, but I think she shouldn't be. She has a tendency anyway to get cocooned in herself, and as a result she expects too much from being on her own. It's time we were able to be together.

If you should be approached about preaching in the foreseeable future, I should take first such texts as Pss. 62:2; 119:94a; 42:6; Jer. 31:3; Isa. 41:10; 43:1; Matt. 28:20b and confine myself to a few fundamental and simple thoughts. One has to live in a congregation for a while to understand how "Christ is formed" in it (Gal. 4:19), and that would be especially true for a congregation such as you would have. If I can be of any help to you, I'd be very glad to do so.

Now for a few more thoughts on our topic. I'm just working gradually toward the nonreligious interpretation of biblical concepts. I am more able to see what needs to be done than how I can actually do it. Historically there is just *one* major development leading to the world's autonomy. In theology it was Lord Herbert of Cherbury who first asserted that reason is sufficient for religious understanding. In moral philosophy Montaigne and Bodin substitute rules for life for the commandments. In political philosophy Macchiavelli separates politics from general morality and founds the doctrine of reason of state. Later H. Grotius, very different from Macchiavelli in content, but following the same trend toward the autonomy of human society, sets up his natural law as an international law, which is valid *etsi deus non daretur*, "as if there were no God." Finally, the philosophical closing line: on one hand, the deism of Descartes: the world is a mechanism that keeps running by itself without God's intervention; on the other hand, Spinoza's pantheism: God is nature.

Kant is basically a deist; Fichte and Hegel are pantheists. In every case the autonomy of human beings and the world is the goal of

thought. (In the natural sciences this obviously begins with Nicholas of Cusa and Giordano Bruno and their—“heretical”—doctrine of the infinity of the universe [der Welt]. The cosmos of antiquity is finite, as is the created world of medieval thought. An infinite universe—however it is conceived—is self-subsisting, “*etsi deus non daretur.*” However, modern physics now doubts that the universe is infinite, yet without falling back to the earlier notions of its finitude.) As a working hypothesis for morality, politics, and the natural sciences, God has been overcome and done away with, but also as a working hypothesis for philosophy and religion (Feuerbach!). It is a matter of intellectual integrity to drop this working hypothesis, or eliminate it as far as possible. An edifying scientist, physician, and so forth is a hybrid. So where is any room left for God? Ask those who are anxious, and since they don’t have an answer, they condemn the entire development that has brought them to this impasse. I have already written to you about the various escape routes out of this space that has become too narrow. What could be added to that is the *salto mortale* back to the Middle Ages. But the medieval principle is heteronomy, in the form of clericalism. The return to that is only a counsel of despair, a sacrifice made only at the cost of intellectual integrity. It’s a dream, to the tune of “Oh, if only I knew the road back, the long road to childhood’s land!” There is no such way—at least not by willfully throwing away one’s inner integrity, but only in the sense of Matt. 18:3, that is, through repentance, through *ultimate* honesty! And we cannot be honest unless we recognize that we have to live in the world—“*etsi deus non daretur.*” And this is precisely what we do recognize—before God! God himself compels us to recognize it. Thus our coming of age leads us to a truer recognition of our situation before God. God would have us know that we must live as those who manage their lives without God. The same God who is with us is the God who forsakes us (Mark 15:34!). The same God

who makes us to live in the world without the working hypothesis of God is the God before whom we stand continually. Before God, and with God, we live without God. God consents to be pushed out of the world and onto the cross; God is weak and powerless in the world and in precisely this way, and only so, is at our side and helps us. Matt. 8:17 makes it quite clear that Christ helps us not by virtue of his omnipotence but rather by virtue of his weakness and suffering! This is the crucial distinction between Christianity and all religions. Human religiosity directs people in need to the power of God in the world, God as *deus ex machina*. The Bible directs people toward the powerlessness and the suffering of God; only the suffering God can help. To this extent, one may say that the previously described development toward the world's coming of age, which has cleared the way by eliminating a false notion of God, frees us to see the God of the Bible, who gains ground and power in the world by being powerless. This will probably be the starting point for our "worldly interpretation."

July 18

Do you suppose that some letters have been lost due to the raids on Munich? Did you get the one with the two poems? It was sent right at that time and contained some more preliminary discussion on the theological topic. The poem "Christians and Heathens" includes a thought that you will recognize here. "Christians stand by God in God's own pain"—that distinguishes Christians from heathens. "Could you not stay awake with me one hour?" Jesus asks in Gethsemane. That is the opposite of everything a religious person expects from God. The human being is called upon to share in God's suffering at the hands of a godless world. Thus we must really live in that godless world and not try to cover up or transfigure its

godlessness somehow with religion. Our lives must be “worldly,” so that we can share precisely so in God’s suffering; our lives are *allowed* to be “worldly,” that is, we are delivered from false religious obligations and inhibitions. Being a Christian does not mean being religious in a certain way, making oneself into something or other (a sinner, penitent, or saint) according to some method or other. Instead it means being human, not a certain type of human being, but the human being Christ creates in us. It is not a religious act that makes someone a Christian, but rather sharing in God’s suffering in the worldly life. That is μετάνοια, not thinking first of one’s own needs, questions, sins, and fears but allowing oneself to be pulled into walking the path that Jesus walks, into the messianic event, in which Isa. 53 is now being fulfilled! Hence “believe in the good news” and, in John, the reference to the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (by the way, A. Jeremias asserted recently that “lamb” in Aramaic can also be translated as “servant.” That’s really fine, in view of Isa. 53!). This being pulled along into the—messianic—suffering of God in Jesus Christ happens in the NT in various ways: when the disciples are called to follow him, in table fellowship with sinners, through “conversions” in the narrower sense of the word (Zacchaeus), through the action of the woman “who was a sinner” (done without any confession of sin taking place) in Luke 7, through the healing of the sick (see above Matt. 8:17), through receiving the children. The shepherds stand [at] the manger just as do the wise men from the East, not as “converted sinners,” but simply because they are drawn to the manger (by the star) just as they are. The centurion at Capernaum, who makes no confession of sin at all, is held up as an example of faith (cf. Jairus). The rich young man is “loved” by Jesus. The courtier in Acts 8, Cornelius (Acts 10), are anything but persons in desperate straits. Nathanael is “an Israelite in whom there is no deceit” (John 1:47), and finally there are Joseph of

Arimathea and the women at the tomb. The one thing they all have in common is their sharing in the suffering of God in Christ. That is their “faith.” There is nothing about a religious method; the “religious act” is always something partial, whereas “faith” is something whole and involves one’s whole life. Jesus calls not to a new religion but to life. But what is this life like? this life of participating in God’s powerlessness in the world? I’ll write about this next time, I hope. For today I’ll just say this: if one wants to speak of God “nonreligiously,” then one must speak in such a way that the godlessness of the world is not covered up in any way, but rather precisely to uncover it and surprise the world by letting light shine on it. The world come of age is more god-less and perhaps just because of that closer to God than the world not yet come of age. Forgive me, this is all still put terribly clumsily and badly; I’m very aware of this. But perhaps you are just the one to help me again to clarify and simplify it, if only by my being able to tell you about it, and to hear you, as it were, keep asking and answering me!

The address now is H. Linke, Berlin-Friedrichshagen, Wilhelmstraße 58. I’m very glad you have already got over the mountain passes. We’re getting up at 1:30 a.m. almost every night here. This is a bad time and rather hinders intellectual work.

I hope to hear from you soon, and send you all my good wishes, thinking of you always with gratitude.

Yours as ever,

Dietrich

Part 4:

After the Failure: July 1944–February 1945

Part 4

After the Failure: July 1944–February 1945

178. To Eberhard Bethge

July 21

Dear Eberhard,

This short greeting is all I want to send you today. I think you must be so often present in spirit with us here that you will be glad for every sign of life, even if our theological discussion takes a breather for a while. To be sure, theological thoughts do preoccupy me incessantly, but then there are hours, too, when one is content with the ongoing processes of life and faith without reflecting on them. Then the *Daily Texts* simply make you happy, as I found especially to be the case with yesterday's and today's, for example. And then returning to the beautiful Paul Gerhardt hymns makes one glad to have them in the repertoire.

In the last few years I have come to know and understand more and more the profound this-worldliness of Christianity. The Christian is not a *homo religiosus* but simply a human being, in the same way that Jesus was a human being—in contrast, perhaps, to John the Baptist. I do not mean the shallow and banal this-worldliness of the enlightened, the bustling, the comfortable, or the lascivious, but

the profound this-worldliness that shows discipline and includes the ever-present knowledge of death and resurrection. I think Luther lived in this kind of this-worldliness. I remember a conversation I had thirteen years ago in America with a young French pastor.

We had simply asked ourselves what we really wanted to do with our lives. And he said, I want to become a saint (—and I think it's possible that he did become one). This impressed me very much at the time. Nevertheless, I disagreed with him, saying something like: I want to learn to have faith. For a long time I did not understand the depth of this antithesis. I thought I myself could learn to have faith by trying to live something like a saintly life. I suppose I wrote *Discipleship* at the end of this path. Today I clearly see the dangers of that book, though I still stand by it. Later on I discovered, and am still discovering to this day, that one only learns to have faith by living in the full this-worldliness of life. If one has completely renounced making something of oneself—whether it be a saint or a converted sinner or a church leader (a so-called priestly figure!), a just or an unjust person, a sick or a healthy person—then one throws oneself completely into the arms of God, and this is what I call this-worldliness: living fully in the midst of life's tasks, questions, successes and failures, experiences, and perplexities—then one takes seriously no longer one's own sufferings but rather the suffering of God in the world. Then one stays awake with Christ in Gethsemane. And I think this is faith; this is metanoia. And this is how one becomes a human being, a Christian. (Cf. Jer. 45!) How should one become arrogant over successes or shaken by one's failures when one shares in God's suffering in the life of this world? You understand what I mean even when I put it so briefly. I am grateful that I have been allowed this insight, and I know that it is only on the path that I have finally taken that I was able to learn this. So I am thinking gratefully and with peace of mind about past as well as present things.

Perhaps you are surprised at such a personal letter. But when I feel like saying such things sometimes, who else should I say them to? Perhaps the time will come when I can speak to Maria this way, too; I do very much hope so. But I cannot put that burden on her yet.

May God lead us kindly through these times, but above all, may God lead us to himself.

Your greeting made me especially happy, and I am glad that it isn't too hot for all of you there. Many more letters from me must still be on their way to you. Didn't we travel just about the same route together in 1936 as you're traveling now?

Be well, stay healthy, and don't let go of your hope that we will all see one another again soon. In faithfulness and gratitude, thinking always of you,

Yours,

Dietrich

179. To Eberhard Bethge

July 25, 1944

Dear Eberhard,

I like to write to you as often as possible now because I think you, too, are always glad to have some news. There's nothing particular to report about me personally, and the same for the family, as far as I know. I had a letter from Maria yesterday in which she writes that she is now going to Oberbehme in Westphalia to her father's sister, Frau von Laer, since her mother is sending her little brother and sister there from Pätzig. I find that very sensible, especially since Maria was no doubt somewhat overstressed in Bavaria. I have thought, too, whether that might be something for Renate. Though I don't know how she gets along with Maria, perhaps she could make herself very useful by giving piano lessons. On the other hand, staying close to

her parents and her whole circle of acquaintances in Berlin means a lot to her too. But if you do feel like it, please simply write to Maria. Surely there will be so many children there that little Dietrich would certainly be well taken care of there. Aunt Elisabeth will probably visit my parents soon.

It was our area's turn again the last few nights. When the bombs are howling, I always think how trifling this is compared to what you are experiencing out there. It really sends me into a rage the way some people here make a pathetic fuss in such situations and how little they consider how others are faring. Here it is always a matter of just a few minutes of danger, after all. I wonder how Jochen Kanitz is doing now. I recall he was stationed on the central front [Mittelfront]. I have now finished reading *Memoiren aus dem Totenhaus*. It is so full of good and wise things. I am still preoccupied with the claim—which with him is certainly no cliché—that no person can live without hope, and that people who have really lost all hope often become wild and evil. This leaves open the question whether hope in this case equals illusion. Certainly the significance of illusion for life is not to be underestimated, but for the Christian I think the only important thing is to have well-founded hope. And if even illusion has sufficient power in people's lives to make life go on, how great, then, is the power that an absolutely grounded hope has for life, and how invincible such a life is. "Christ, our Hope"—this formula of Paul's is the strength of our life.

They have just come to take me out to walk. No matter—I will finish this letter so it will go out today. Farewell! I think of you every day with gratitude and in faithfulness! God keep you and Renate and your boy and all of us!

As ever, Yours,

Dietrich

180. To Eberhard Bethge

Dear Eberhard,

Just a brief greeting and thanks for yours of the sixteenth. I'm glad that you don't have to suffer too much from the heat. It has turned almost cool here. I'm sure it is also an emotional relief to have a lot to do; at least it would seem so to me.

Your formulation of our theological theme is very clear and simple. The question how there can be a "natural" piety is at the same time the question about "unconscious Christianity" that preoccupies me more and more. The Lutheran dogmatists distinguished a *fides directa* from a *fides reflexa*. They related that to the so-called faith of the infant at baptism. I wonder if we are not here addressing a very wide-reaching problem. More about that, hopefully, soon.

Things are unchanged with the family. By the way, you can safely go on writing as before. Everyone is happy to receive greetings. Did you get the poems (3)? Enough for today. Accept my many faithful greetings and stay well. Take care that you don't get malaria with all the mosquitoes!

Wishing you all the best, as always,
Yours faithfully,
Dietrich

181. Notes I, Tegel, July–August 1944

The expulsion of God from the world is the discrediting of religion
Living without God

But what if Christianity were not a religion at all? Worldly
nonreligious interpretation of Christian concepts.

Christianity arises out of the encounter with a concrete human being:

Jesus. Experience of transcendence
educated people? Breakdown of Christian ethics.

No social ethics.
Confessional matters.

“I believe only what I see.”
God—not a relig. . . .

Return to M.A.

182. Notes II, Tegel, July–August 1944

Unconscious Christianity:

Left hand doesn't know
what the right hand is doing.
Matt. 25.

Not knowing what to pray.

Motto: Jesus said to him: “What do you want me to do for you?”

183. To Eberhard Bethge

July 28

Dear Eberhard,

I have not yet thanked you for the nice little photo, which was quite amusing for me with its Italian arrangement. Funny—so is there an Italian and also a German way even for taking photos? And the

strangest thing of all is that this can be the case with such an ordinary picture. But do have one of your comrades take a picture of you sometime that shows all of you, and in a nature setting. Of course, it makes sense that you fellows work wearing shirts only.

You think that the Bible does not say much about health, happiness [Glück], strength [Kraft], and so on. I have thought that over again very carefully. I'm sure it is not true of the OT in any case. The mediating theological concept in the OT between God and the happiness [Glück], and so forth, of human beings is that of blessing, as far as I can see. Certainly in the OT, for instance among the patriarchs, the focus is not on happiness but on God's blessing, which itself encompasses all earthly good. This blessing is the addressing and claiming of earthly life for God, and it contains all [God's] promises. To regard the OT blessing as superseded by the NT would once again resemble the customary, overspiritualized view of the NT. But do you think it is an accident that the subject of sickness and death comes up in the context of the misuse of the Lord's Supper ("the cup of *blessing* . . ." 1 Cor. 10:16! 1 Cor. 11:30), or that Jesus restores people's health, or that when Jesus's disciples are with him they "lack nothing"? Now, should one oppose the cross with the OT blessing? That is what Kierkegaard did. This turns the cross and/or suffering into a principle, and this is precisely what gives rise to an unhealthy methodism that denies suffering its quality of contingency within divine providence. Incidentally, the person who receives blessing in the OT must also suffer much (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph), but this never (as little as in the NT) leads to making happiness and suffering, blessing and the cross, mutually exclusive. In this respect the difference between OT and NT may consist solely in the fact that in the OT the blessing also includes the cross and in the NT the cross also includes the blessing.

To change the subject completely: not only action but suffering,

too, is a way to freedom. In suffering, liberation consists in being allowed to let the matter out of one's own hands into the hands of God. In this sense death is the epitome of human freedom. Whether the human deed is a matter of faith depends on whether people understand their own suffering as a continuation of their action, as a consummation of freedom. I find this very important and very comforting.

I am well. There is also nothing new to report from the family. Hans is completely laid up with the paralysis from his diphtheria. But people seem to be confident. Farewell, keep up your good spirits, as we are doing, and join us in looking forward already to a fine reunion!

Warmest greetings.

Yours faithfully,

Dietrich

Neues Lied, no. 370, v. 3.4.

184. Miscellaneous Notes

A Few Thoughts on Miscellaneous Topics

Giordano Bruno: "The sight of a friend can cause a strange shudder, since no enemy can have such terrifying qualities as a friend"—Do you understand this? I am trying to but really do not understand it after all. Does the "terrifying" refer to the danger of betrayal that is simultaneously inherent in every intimate human relationship (Judas?)?

Spinoza: Affects are never overcome by reason but only by stronger affects.

It is the advantage and the essence of the strong that they are able

to pose the great decisive questions and take clear positions on them. The weak must always decide between alternatives that are not their own.

Presumably we are made in such a way that perfection is boring to us; I do not know whether that was always the case. But I have no other way to explain the fact that Raphael remains as distant and indifferent to me as Dante's paradise. Likewise, neither eternal ice nor eternal blue sky appeals to me. I seek "perfection" in what is human, living, earthly, that is, neither in the Apollonian nor in the Dionysian or Faustian. It seems I am for the more moderate climate in every direction.

August 3

That which is beyond [das Jenseitige] consists not of things infinitely distant but of things closest at hand.

Ultimate seriousness is never without a dose of humor.

The essential thing about chastity is not a renunciation of pleasure but an all-encompassing orientation of life toward a goal. Where there is no such orientation, chastity inevitably deteriorates into the ridiculous. Chaste living is the prerequisite for clear and superior thoughts.

On the way to freedom death is the greatest of feasts.

Please forgive these demanding pearls of wisdom! They are fragments

of conversations that never took place and as such they belong to you. When one is forced to exist only in one's own thoughts, as I am, one gets the most stupid thoughts, such as committing one's miscellaneous thoughts to writing!

**185. From Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer
to Eberhard Bethge**

July 30, 1944

Dear Eberhard,

On this quiet, early Sunday morning that we have here on the veranda in Sakrow, where our great-grandson is pleasantly wriggling and babbling in his playpen, happy and rosy cheeked, we want to send you warm greetings and tell you that your offspring is developing very nicely and is a delight to us with his engaging temperament, and that Renate is also well. You are no doubt getting regular reports about how the rest of the family is doing. I was able to see Hans last week. He is in a pitiful state as a result of the dreadful paralysis from his diphtheria. It has improved somewhat in his face and the roof of his mouth, but it has progressed further to his arms, legs, and torso, making him almost immobile. To be sure, one can expect everything to turn out all right, but it is nevertheless a terrible burden and a test of patience for him and for Christel. Dietrich is in good health; we hope to speak with him in the next few days. No doubt he suffers greatly from his seclusion in these times when so much is happening and finds it hard to concentrate on Dilthey, whom he is now studying for his *Ethics*.

Of course, our thoughts are often with you and your comrades in Italy, and in other ways as well, we feel strongly connected with you because of the movement of the fronts in the east and the west. I

hope the V-1 will soon bring us peace before winter arrives. As for me, I do think there will be a cease-fire before this year is out, but I can't say that my prophecies have always turned out to be correct. I hope this year will bring us together again. How things will turn out exactly is something we cannot imagine today. Will we have such lovely family celebrations as we did in recent years? But perhaps you will surprise us even before that with an unexpected leave, and we will then celebrate that, insofar as the times still permit.

Great-Grandma wants to write something, too. So I will close and save everything else for the time when we can speak in person. Stay well, and may God protect you.

Great-Grandfather

Dear Eberhard,

I must thank you for a very affectionate letter, which made me very happy. I have been dearly wanting to reply for quite a while already, but since the day is always over too quickly, half the things one wants to do remain undone, and with you at least I tell myself that you surely hear lots of news from Renate and are kept up to date. Everything was moving along quite well, but now Perels thinks it has become much more difficult, in fact, probably hopeless. In any case, it would have been a great exception. But you never know what good something may do. We have seen that, haven't we, with our two. Humankind proposes, and God disposes. One sees this more and more clearly now, and yet we go on thinking and thinking how to do everything in the best and most intelligent way. The same with the various young families and their children. The women don't know how they should divide themselves between their children and their husbands. Is it right to leave the children in Friedrichsbrunn or Stawedder, or is it better now for the families to stay together again

in Berlin or Leipzig? These are the kinds of questions that are very much on our minds. We recently brought Dietrich patience cards! It is a hard time for the two of them.

I hope everything will not last that much longer now and God grants that we keep our chins up. When you come home, you will be thrilled with your splendid boy. My thoughts are often with you. God be with you.

Your Grandma

186. To Eberhard Bethge

August 3

Dear Eberhard,

Today your and Renate's child turns six months old! By the time he begins to talk, you will be home. How good that you know where you will belong when you return. It is certainly better to wait for something definite than for something indefinite. Maria will go back to the Red Cross again, I think, when her foot is healed. Who knows where we will see each other again. Sometimes I think I have put too much of a burden on her. But who could have known? And if I had had my way, my situation would long since be otherwise. But you mustn't think that I feel any bitterness about this. I myself am sometimes surprised how "collected" (or should I rather say "apathetic"?) I am. I wonder if you all are going to be moving soon again, and if so, where? I would love to know whether you've read my poems. The very long poem (in rhyme), "Night Voices in T[egel]," you must read sometime later. I've enclosed here an outline for a book. I don't know if you can get anything out of it, but I do think you will understand roughly what I mean. I hope that I can maintain the calm and strength it will take to write this

work. The church must get out of its stagnation. We must also get back out into the fresh air of intellectual discourse with the world. We also have to risk saying controversial things, if that will stir up discussion of the important issues in life. As a “modern” theologian who has nevertheless inherited the legacy of liberal theology, I feel responsible to address these questions. There are probably not many among the younger generation who combine these two elements. How I need your help! But if we do have to be deprived of clarifying conversation, at least we are not deprived of prayer, which alone allows us to begin and do this kind of work.

I read about “tropical heat” in Italy. Is it really horrible? How will you celebrate your birthday? Do you still remember our evening of ice cream in Florence on August 28, 1936? You got no present at all from me at the time, as far as I recall, because we didn’t have any money. By the way, did you get to see San Gimignano this time? And do you remember that you refused to take that detour back then, also because of the heat? Or don’t you want to admit that even today? Or do you think my memory deceives me that badly?

Nothing new in my family. I am always happy when I can report that. Farewell! When you have finished *Cicerone*, you will then be a fabulous tour guide through Italy. I’m already looking forward to that!

All the very best, every day and always! God keep you!
 Faithfully yours,
 Dietrich

My work on the first three commandments seems to have proved acceptable, which pleases me. Please do write to Friedrichshagen, Wilhelmstraße 58, Herr Linke.

187. Outline for a Book

I would like to write an essay—not more than one hundred pages in length—with three chapters: 1. Taking Stock of Christianity; 2. What is Christian faith, really? 3. Conclusions.

In the first chapter I would describe

(a) The coming of age of the human being (as indicated earlier). Safeguarding human life against “accidents,” “blows of fate”; if it is impossible to eliminate them, then at least the reduction of danger. The “insurance industry” as a Western phenomenon (to be sure, it depends on accidents, but its purpose is to make them less painful); its goal is to be independent of nature. Nature used to be conquered by the soul; with us it is conquered through technological organization of all kinds. What is unmediated for us, what is given, is no longer nature but organization. But with this protection from the menace of nature, a new threat to life is created in turn, namely, through organization itself. Now the power of the soul is lacking! The question is: What will protect us from the menace of organization? The human being is thrown back on his own resources. He has learned to cope with everything except himself. He can insure himself against everything but other human beings. In the end it all comes down to the human being.

(b) The religionlessness of the human being come of age. “God” as working hypothesis, as stopgap for our embarrassments, has become superfluous (as indicated previously).

(c) The Protestant church: pietism as a final attempt to preserve Protestant Christianity as religion; Lutheran orthodoxy, the attempt to save the church as an institution of salvation; Confessing Church: revelation theology; a δός μοι ποῦ στῶ standing against the world; with regard to it, an “objective” interest in Christianity. The arts, the sciences in search of their origin. Generally in the Confessing

Church: Standing up for the “cause” of the church, and so on, but little personal faith in Christ. “Jesus” disappears from view. Sociologically: no impact on the broader masses; a matter for the lower and upper-middle classes. Heavily burdened by difficult, traditional ideas. Decisive: Church defending itself. No risk taking for others.

(d) Morals of the people. Sexual morality as example.

Chapter 2:

(a) Worldliness and God.

(b) Who is God? Not primarily a general belief in God’s omnipotence, and so on. That is not a genuine experience of God but just a prolongation of a piece of the world. Encounter with Jesus Christ. Experience that here there is a reversal of all human existence, in the very fact that Jesus only “is there for others.” Jesus’s “being-for-others” is the experience of transcendence! Only through this liberation from self, through this “being-for-others” unto death, do omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence come into being. Faith is participating in this being of Jesus. (Becoming human [Menschwerdung], cross, resurrection.) Our relationship to God is no “religious” relationship to some highest, most powerful, and best being imaginable—that is no genuine transcendence. Instead, our relationship to God is a new life in “being there for others,” through participation in the being of Jesus. The transcendent is not the infinite, unattainable tasks, but the neighbor within reach in any given situation. God in human form! Not as in oriental religions in animal forms as the monstrous, the chaotic, the remote, the terrifying, but also not in the conceptual forms of the absolute, the metaphysical, the infinite, and so on, either, nor again the Greek god—human form of the “God-human form [Gott-Menschgestalt] of the human being in itself.” But rather “the human being for others”! therefore the Crucified One. The human being living out of the transcendent.

(c) Hence the interpretation of biblical concepts on this principle. (Creation, fall, reconciliation, repentance, faith, *vita nova*, last things.)

(d) Cultus. (Details to follow later, in particular on *cultus* and “religion”!))

(e) What do we really believe? I mean, believe in such a way that our lives depend on it? The problem of the Apostles’ Creed [Apostolikum]? What *must* I believe? wrong question. Outdated controversies, especially the interconfessional ones; the differences between Lutheran and Reformed (and to some extent Roman Catholic) are no longer real. Of course, they can be revived with passion at any time, but they are no longer convincing. There is no proof for this. One must simply be bold enough to start from this. The only thing we can prove is that the Christian-biblical faith does not live or depend on such differences. Barth and the Confessing Church have encouraged people to entrench themselves again and again behind the notion of the “faith of the Church” rather than asking and stating honestly what they really believe. This is why even in the Confessing Church the breezes are blowing less than freely. Saying that it depends not on me but on the church can be a cheap clerical [pfäffisch] excuse and is always perceived that way outside the church. It is the same with the dialectical claim that I do not have my faith at my disposal and therefore cannot simply state what I believe. All these thoughts, justifiable though they might be in their place, do not absolve us from being honest with ourselves. We cannot, like the Roman Catholics, simply identify ourselves with the church. (Incidentally, this is probably the source of the common opinion that Catholics are insincere.) Well, then, what do we really believe? Answer: see (b), (c), and (d).

Chapter 3:

Conclusions: The church is church only when it is there for others. As a first step it must give away all its property to those in need. The

clergy must live solely on the freewill offerings of the congregations and perhaps be engaged in some secular vocation [Beruf]. The church must participate in the worldly tasks of life in the community—not dominating but helping and serving. It must tell people in every calling [Beruf] what a life with Christ is, what it means “to be there for others.” In particular, *our* church will have to confront the vices of hubris, the worship of power, envy, and illusionism as the roots of all evil. It will have to speak of moderation, authenticity, trust, faithfulness, steadfastness, patience, discipline, humility, modesty, contentment. It will have to see that it does not underestimate the significance of the human “example” (which has its origin in the humanity of Jesus and is so important in Paul’s writings!); the church’s word gains weight and power not through concepts but by example, (I will write in more detail later about “example” in the NT—we have almost entirely lost track of this thought). Further: revision of the question of “confession” (Apostolikum); revision of apologetics; revision of the preparation for and practice of ministry.

All this is put very roughly and only outlined. But I am eager to attempt for once to express certain things simply and clearly that we otherwise like to avoid dealing with. Whether I shall succeed is another matter, especially without the benefit of our conversations. I hope that in doing so I can be of some service for the future of the church.

188. To Eberhard Bethge

August 10

Dear Eberhard,

That was really quite an incomparable surprise—your first attempt at

creative writing and so well done; indeed, well done doesn't even begin to say it. It is simply quite outstanding. And this skill at telling a story simply obliges you from now on to continue in the same direction. I really do not mean this as cheap encouragement but simply because I find the thing so *good*. I must admit that I was reminded of Stifter, and you know what that means in my case! I am really very happy, and I think you should send it to Renate on your own birthday. Every day's delay in her receiving it would be a pity. So I am sending it to you by return mail even though I would prefer to hold on to it, but just now I do not keep anything here. You know I always had the feeling you could pull off something like this, but *this* I didn't expect. By comparison my own literary attempts are silly bungling. When one's heart, head, and language become one as they do with you, then something good comes of it. You really should publish it. But you can do this later along with other things. Thank you so much; it was a real joy!

By the way, you can do whatever you think best with my things (poems, etc.). Of course, the only thing one has to keep in mind is that they mustn't get into the wrong hands. I think your corrections are good ("contemptible" can be omitted; "*stand* by God" probably came from thinking of the cross).

I can understand that you no longer find your memories "nourishing."

But the power of memories returns again and again through the power of gratitude. It is in just such times as these that one should strive for sufficient calm to be thankful in prayer. Above all, one must not let oneself be consumed by matters of the moment, but must nurture within oneself the calmness that comes from great thoughts and measure all things by them. The fact that few people can do this is the hardest thing to live with in dealing with others. What so deeply perverts and degrades human dignity is not wickedness but human

weakness. It is only out of very profound compassion that one can bear this. Yet all the while, God is in charge.

I'm now working on the three chapters I wrote you about. It is just as you say, that "the recognition" of something is the most exciting thing in the world, and this is why I am quite riveted by my work now.

I often think of you in your "loneliness" and am so glad that you have now found a sideline that claims your full attention. Couldn't you add a few words about the death of your father? It is certainly difficult, but surely it should be done. And then just keep on writing, about Gerhard, about Magdeburg, about your student years, music, travels! Until that point you can remain more or less objective and impersonal. What came later must be kept for another time? Farewell for today. I feel sorry for Grandmother. But I hope it isn't bad. Maria is coming to stay with my parents indefinitely and to work as receptionist. I'm very happy about this!—Now let's continue to be of good cheer and persevere patiently; I hope we will be together again to celebrate Renate's birthday. God keep you and all of us every day and give us strong faith!

As ever,

Yours faithfully,

Dietrich

189. To Eberhard Bethge

August 11

Dear Eberhard,

I am so unable to get over my excitement about your short literary piece that I have to write again right away. Amazingly, you have managed to wrest this work from your solitude in the past few

weeks. Reading these few pages so packed with content was the most joyous surprise I have had in a long time. I had always felt that something would happen with you someday with respect to productive work, and now I am experiencing the joy that you also may have perhaps already experienced, the joy of seeing a friend succeed at a piece of work. Perhaps you'll say that this is just a little piece of occasional writing. That may be true, but I am quite certain that it is very much more, that it is a beginning, a breakthrough, that will be and must be followed now by many good things. This is exactly the kind of writing and narrative that I long for and that I consider promising for the future. There are many writers today writing about rural village life, but they tend to lay it on too thick, or they are pseudoromantic or self-consciously austere (as in *Die Fischer von Lissau*). But who describes it with such simplicity, authenticity, modesty—and I might even say piety—as you have done in these few pages? And what strength is communicated, precisely because it is all so unpretentious. Only in Gotthelf, Keller, and Stifter have I seen anything like this. You say that you had to wrestle hard over simplicity; I can believe that. Simplicity is an achievement of the human spirit, one of the greatest. I think you have found the form most suited to you—narrative, first person—and the right subject matter—what you yourself have experienced, seen, observed, been through, felt, thought. Your gift of *seeing* seems to me the most important thing, yet it is precisely *how* and *what* you see. It [is] not that intrusive, curious sort of seeing that analyzes and forces itself upon everything, but a clear, open, and yet reverent seeing. *This* kind of seeing, which—from a *theoretical* point of view—I myself am striving for in theological questions, is now leading you to artistic representation, and I think that perhaps here lies our strongest intellectual-spiritual kinship. With me it is a seeing with the intellect; you see with your eyes and all your senses. But our ways of seeing are

clearly connected—or perhaps it is the most important fruit of long spiritual companionship. In short—keep writing, much and often! I never would have thought that you could produce something so stylistically polished in one fell swoop! You will bring great joy to Renate and the entire family. But you mustn't wait so long now before sending it to her. Incidentally, there is a good bit of meditative work hiding in these few pages.

You may get a letter in the near future from one or two Italian officers who are friends of mine. Professor Latmiral in particular is a very fine, cultured man; if it happened to work out for the two of you to meet, it would be a great joy for you and for him; he speaks good German. But Gilli, too, is a very nice fellow. In any case, you can call on them anytime.

All is well with the family. When do I get the photos from the baptism? And a recent picture of little Dietrich? It is really incomprehensible that Oster acted according to 1 Sam. 31:4. I still remember how it was *he* who was interested in your mission work one summer evening at our house and wouldn't stop asking about it although you really didn't feel much like it at all. You do know G[isevius] too, don't you?

Because of the new travel restrictions, my parents will probably not be traveling after all, which I am very sorry about. Mama is not at all well; she has fainting spells. I promise you really will get the shirts back later. But for the time being I am in fact glad to have them. What should I give you for your birthday? I've been thinking about that a great deal already. Till then, all the best, and above all, keep your spirits up! As ever,
Faithfully yours,
Dietrich

190. To Eberhard Bethge

August 14

Dear Eberhard,

This birthday will be the first that you will celebrate entirely by mail; I imagine letters are en route to you by various means in these days and will hopefully reach you close to the right time. And perhaps you will write letters home during a quiet hour on your birthday. *Epistula non erubescit*—and then sometimes more is learned from letters than from what people say to each other at an ordinary birthday gathering. So you will see from the letters you receive how many people are fond of you and share in your life and feel connected to you. There is hardly anything that can make one feel happier than to sense that one can be something for other people. And it's a matter not of numbers at all, but of the intensity. Indeed, the most important things in life are human relationships; even the modern “high achiever” [Leistungsmensch] cannot change that; but neither can the “demigods” or the lunatics, who know nothing about human relationships. God allows himself to be served by us in all that is human. Everything else comes very close to hubris. To be sure, an excessive cultivation of human relationships and of meaning something to one another, such as I have now occasionally sensed in the letters of Gabriele von Bülow-Humboldt, can also lead to a cult of the human that is disproportionate to reality. In contrast to that, what I mean here is simply that people are more important to us in life than everything else. That certainly does not mean that the world of material things and practical achievements is of less value. But what is the most beautiful book or picture or house or estate compared to my wife, my parents, my friend? Yet the only person who can speak this way is one who has really found human companionship in life. For many today, people are nothing more than part of the world of

things. The reason for this is that they simply lack the experience of the human. We must be very glad that we have been given the gift of this experience in rich measure. And a birthday is just the right day to rejoice about this together and to become aware of it with gratitude. You are turning thirty-five now. When I met you, you were twenty-five. During these ten years your "apprenticeship years" [Lehrjahre] have gradually come to a conclusion, and now you are beginning your creative activity. I anticipate much from this, and I mean not quantitatively but qualitatively. Your short narrative about "the father" makes it quite clear that you do not settle for anything less than setting the highest standards for yourself and then doing justice to them. The heading should read simply "The Grandfather"; I find the other not entirely clear. It sounds as if he were the grandfather "in name only." Or what do you think?

I have often observed that much depends on the demands one makes of oneself. Some people spoil their own chances in life by settling for mediocrity and thus perhaps achieving things more quickly simply by having fewer obstacles to overcome. I felt one of the strongest educational values [Erziehungsfaktoren] used in our family to train the spirit was that we were given so many obstacles to overcome (in relation to objectivity, clarity, naturalness, tact, simplicity, etc.), before we could express ourselves. I think you sensed that at our house, too, at first. Sometimes it takes a long time to clear such a hurdle, and I suppose we may occasionally think that success would have come more easily and much cheaper by evading these obstacles. However, it is clear from this latest work of yours that you did not avoid the obstacles but waited until you had really overcome them. Once we have worked something out for ourselves, we can never go back beyond that point again. That might be uncomfortable for others and also for ourselves sometimes, but, well, such are the discomforts of character formation [Bildung]. I am happy to have

experienced with you the last phase of your “apprenticeship years” just up to the threshold, which, in your case, coincides so strangely with your physically becoming a father, and I know that I have been quite incredibly enriched by that experience. Now, for your new year of life I wish you—once you have returned to your family and to your calling—a really great task and responsibility and at the same time sufficient calm to be able to write something very good from time to time. My wish for myself is that our intellectual [geistig] exchange continue to enable us to let our thoughts develop, find expression and clarification. And even more importantly, I wish that we might continue to have in each other the person we can trust unreservedly, without limit.

The *Daily Texts* for the twenty-eighth are beautiful. When I think of you the morning of that day, I will hold fast to them. The question “Is the Lord’s hand . . .?” Num. 11:23 might bring to mind some unfulfilled wishes and hopes. But on the other hand, 2 Cor. 1:20 holds true: God does not fulfill all our wishes but does keep all his promises. This means God remains Lord of the earth, preserves the church, renews our faith again and again, never gives us more than we can bear to endure, makes us rejoice in his presence and help, hears our prayers and leads us on the best and straightest path to God. By doing all these things unfailingly, God elicits our praise. My wish for you is that you and Renate—I hope to write to her for the twenty-eighth—might see these things more and more as one.

Unfortunately, I’ve been interrupted so often in writing this letter that it isn’t as calm or detailed as I intended. But you know how much I am thinking of you and that I am with you with nothing but the best wishes. What shall I give you for your birthday? Would you like the icon that I once brought back from Sofia? Or is there something else you might like?

Incidentally, the interpretation of 1 Sam. 31 doesn’t seem right

after all. Perhaps you can keep my letters somewhere out of the way.
Nothing new from the family. Now let us go forward into the future
in patience and confidence. God bless and keep you and all of us!
Your faithful and grateful friend,
Dietrich

191. Poem “Stations on the Way to Freedom”

Stations on the Way to Freedom

Discipline

If you set out to seek freedom, then you must learn above all things
discipline of your soul and your senses, lest your desires
and then your limbs perchance should lead you now hither, now yon.
Chaste be your spirit and body, subject to yourself completely,
in obedience seeking the goal that is set for your spirit.
Only through discipline does one learn the secret of freedom.

Action

Not always doing and daring what's random, but seeking the right
thing,
Hover not over the possible, but boldly reach for the real.
Not in escaping to thought, in action alone is found freedom.
Dare to quit anxious faltering and enter the storm of events,
carried alone by your faith and by God's good commandments,
then true freedom will come and embrace your spirit, rejoicing.

Suffering

Wondrous transformation. Your hands, strong and active, are fettered.

Powerless, alone, you see that an end is put to your action.

Yet now you breathe a sigh of relief and lay what is righteous calmly and fearlessly into a mightier hand, contented.

Just for one blissful moment you could feel the sweet touch of freedom,

Then you gave it to God, that God might perfect it in glory.

Death

Come now, highest of feasts on the way to freedom eternal,

Death, lay down your ponderous chains and earthen enclosures walls that deceive our souls and fetter our mortal bodies,

that we might at last behold what here we are hindered from seeing.

Freedom, long have we sought you through discipline, action, and suffering.

Dying, now we discern in the countenance of God your own face.

Dear Eberhard! I wrote these lines in a few hours tonight. They are quite rough, yet they will perhaps give you some pleasure, being something of my own as a birthday gift!

Warmest wishes!

Yours, Dietrich

This morning I see that I must completely restructure the stanzas again. Still, may they be on their way to you in this rough form. After all, I'm no poet!

192. To Eberhard Bethge

Dear Eberhard,

A week from today is your birthday. I looked at the *Daily Texts* again and meditated for a while on them. I think everything depends on the words “in Him.” Everything we may with some good reason expect or beg of God is to be found in Jesus Christ. What we imagine a God could and should do—the God of Jesus Christ has nothing to do with all that. We must immerse ourselves again and again, for a long time and quite calmly, in Jesus’s life, his sayings, actions, suffering, and dying in order to recognize what God promises and fulfills. What is certain is that we may always live aware that God is near and present with us and that this life is an utterly new life for us; that there is nothing that is impossible for us anymore because there is nothing that is impossible for God; that no earthly power can touch us without God’s will, and that danger and urgent need can only drive us closer to God. What is certain is that we have no claim on anything but may ask for everything; what is certain is that in suffering lies hidden the source of our joy, in dying the source of our life; what is certain is that in all this we stand within a community that carries us. To all this, God has said Yes and Amen in Jesus. This Yes and Amen is the solid ground upon which we stand. Again and again in these turbulent times, we lose sight of why life is really worth living. We think that our own life has meaning because this or that other person exists. In truth, however, it is like this: If the earth was deemed worthy to bear the human being Jesus Christ, if a human being like Jesus lived, then and only then does our life as human beings have meaning. Had Jesus not lived, then our life would be meaningless, despite all the other people we know, respect, and love. Perhaps we sometimes lose sight of the meaning and purpose of our calling. But can’t one express that in the simplest form? The

unbiblical concept of “meaning,” after all, is only one translation of what the Bible calls “promise.”

I sense how inadequate these words are to accomplish what they would like, namely, to reassure you and make you happy and secure in your loneliness. Surely this lonely birthday does not have to be a lost day if it becomes an occasion once again for you to lay the clear foundation you want for the rest of your life. It’s often been a great help to me in the evening to think of all the people whose prayers I can count on, from the children to the grown-ups. I think I owe a debt of gratitude for God’s protection in my life to the prayers of others known and unknown.

Something else: often the NT says, “be strong” (1 Cor. 16:13; Eph. 6:10; 2 Tim. 2:1; 1 John 2:14). Isn’t human weakness (stupidity, immaturity, forgetfulness, cowardice, vanity, corruptibility, vulnerability to temptations, etc.) a greater danger than wickedness? Christ makes human beings not only “good” but also strong. Sins of weakness are truly human sins; willful sins are diabolical (and thus also “strong”!). I must think about this some more.

Farewell; stay healthy and confident. I hope we will be together again to celebrate Renate’s birthday. I thank you for everything and am thinking of you.

Faithfully yours,

Dietrich

193. To Eberhard Bethge

the 23rd

Dear Eberhard,

It always gives me indescribably great joy to receive your greetings. It was especially wonderful to sense the calm that your last note

conveyed. The thought that you are creating illustrations for the memoir of your childhood is such good news that I'm really sorry that Renate can't share in it. I think you should at least grant her the pleasure of anticipating it! It's also very good to know that it is relatively quiet where you are now. The quotation about 1077 is really nice.

So you are going to the trouble of collecting excerpts from my very tentative thoughts. I think that if and when you pass them along, you will think about everything that needs attention, won't you? This seems especially necessary now in the case of Aunt Ruth. She doesn't always notice what is going on clearly. These thoughts all date back about three to four years ago! Otherwise you can imagine how happy I am that you are preoccupying yourself with them. How indispensable an objective exchange about all these problems would be now, to clarify things. If and when it comes to that, it will be one of the great days of my life.

I, too, think the poem about "Fortune and Calamity" isn't bad. But isn't it a little too contemplative and too literary?

I hope you've received my enthusiastic affirmation of your story about the father in the meantime? My impression remains unchanged, by the way.

As far as I'm concerned, you can go ahead and show Rainalter the other products as well if you want to talk about them. Of course, he doesn't know me. It would be best of all if he held on to all these things. Renate will have written you that in the meantime Hans has been put up in the infirmary in Brother Scharf's congregation. I am very sorry, for his and for Christel's sakes, but perhaps it has the advantage that he will receive treatment sooner.

Please do not trouble yourself with anxious thoughts or worries about me, but don't forget to pray for me, which I'm certain you do not forget! I am so certain of God's hand and guidance that I hope

I may be kept in such certainty always. You must never doubt that I am thankfully and cheerfully going along the path on which I am being led. My past life is filled to the brim with God's goodness, and the forgiving love of the Crucified One covers my guilt. I am most thankful for the people I have come to know well, and I only wish that they may never have to grieve over me, but that they, too, may only be thankful for the certainty of God's goodness and forgiveness. Forgive me for writing this for once. Please don't let it grieve or upset you for a moment, but really only let it make you glad. But I did want to have said it sometime, and I wouldn't know whom I could really trust to hear such words with nothing but joy except for you.

Did you get the poem about freedom? It's very unfinished, but the subject moves me deeply.

I'm now working on the chapter called "A Stock-Taking of Christianity"; unfortunately I sense that my productivity has gradually grown dependent on smoking; luckily enough in this regard I'm well supplied from an amazing array of sources, so that work is coming along, more or less. Sometimes I am horrified by my sentences, especially in the first, critical part. So I'm looking forward to writing positive things. But it has all been so little discussed that it often comes out too clumsily. Oh, well, it can't be printed now anyway. And later on it will have to go through the "treatment facility" for purification [die Kläranlage]! Sending it is difficult since in my opinion it is hardly legible (strangely, when I am first producing a draft I have to write German script, and then there are the editorial corrections!). We'll see, maybe I'll copy it over again.

Maria was here today, so fresh and at the same time as steadfast and calm as seldom before. I am so fortunate to hope that she will be my wife someday. I spoke about Renate, too, and think it's important if she can move now. She will take care of everything else.

You ask how the shorter and the large work fit together. I guess

the best way to describe them is that the shorter piece is in a certain sense a prologue to the larger work and, in part, anticipates it.

Incidentally, H[ans v. Dohnanyi] and O[ster] are interested in your mission work; I had nothing to do with this. This has never been spoken about before. Essentially our relationship concerns church music and theological reflection; otherwise Renate was the great source of attraction. Feel free to write to Fehrbellin.

Now I wish from all my heart that you may continue to have plenty of external as well as inner tranquility. May God keep you and all of us and grant us a speedy and joyous reunion! In gratitude and loyalty and thinking of you with daily prayers,

Yours,

D

194. From Eberhard Bethge

August 24, 1944

Dear Dietrich,

Actually I do write to you much more often than I manage to get words down on paper. I tell you so much and discuss many things with you in my mind. So it will, for instance, amuse you to hear that I've now gotten around to playing chess in earnest, that is, I am beginning to like playing on my own initiative because it fascinates me. Last year Renate managed to begin playing with me, and now there are a few comrades who enjoy it, but who beat you mercilessly without even letting you notice what's happening, which is, perhaps, also a form of education. I thought this would amuse you. So you see, I've even managed to accomplish *this* in my life.

Then I thought again about what Mother may regard as a break in my life.

The fact is that she made the great mistake of suppressing or remaining unconscious of any recognition or support of my sometimes playful, sometimes serious attempts at music and other things (for whatever stupid moralistic reasons of upbringing). That automatically drove me to look beyond the family for the forum of understanding and praise and so on that I needed. The growing shrub (or tree) seeks its clump of earth in order to keep growing. So after Zitz disappeared, the experience of the Vibrans family was decisive at first. Their home was always alive with drawing, music, piety, and such. That nourished me for years. Besides this, there was B. Riemer and his home. Later, there was the Confessing Church with all the friendships and human connections that came with it. And then finally, you provided the liberating, fresh air that was needed for many things to continue to grow and mature. I now regard it as a decisive mistake of Mother, or rather as a very important factor in family leadership, to find the right forum *within* the family to create and maintain all the activities of the children. On a different level, this was most likely the mistake Mother Dohnanyi made by pushing all her son's positive activities before other forums, making false claims under the pretense of supposedly strict standards of child raising. Then it was too late for complaints. I guess this is what I have always said jokingly to Mother—that she is not proud enough of her children. She is sad about something that should make her happy. The incredible work and worry involved in bringing us up made her blind to all the things she thought were unnecessary in the lives of her children. Of course, all this does not amount to a profound conflict; it just pokes its head out now and then.

Yes, and then I have both your reflections on my “Poem” and already your birthday greeting. But I will save that till the actual day. Of course, I was very happy that you liked my poem. I had been longing for some comment from you. Now it's here and almost more

extensive than the thing itself. I have no doubt that you are quite capable of pointing out errors to me if you think it necessary. But I also trust you to know when an encouraging word of criticism is appropriate and useful and thus to be somewhat magnanimously generous. But I don't want to make you angry, because it really did make me enormously happy, and for me you are *the* forum that makes all other judgments insignificant. That is, Renate agrees very much with you, since I've noticed great similarity in matters of taste between the two of you. So now I have sent it off today. It's handwritten in quarto format with a few little corrections added; at the end I also added four sentences about Father's death, and to conclude the whole piece, I put the verse from Sir. 40:28. Here and there you can see nine little drawings in color of Zitz and Kade, and on the front cover a map of Zitz and Kade, sort of in the style of Rudolph Koch's maps of Germany or Palestine. I had great, great fun drawing (in pencil, somewhat colored); then wrapped it in nice brown paper, which I decorated a bit myself, and sent it off today, and I am eager to hear what Renate will say. The reason and driving force behind finishing this project was the fact that, when I wondered what to give her for her birthday, I felt the need to tell her this story and to share this part of my life. You must be cautious with your expectations and judgments so as not to inhibit me with what is "expected." But you are right; I mustn't fall back into old youthful errors but must be self-reliant and even a bit self-confident. Well, well! I have not yet had any response from my mother, to whom I also sent it. It must affect her strangely, after all. My brothers and sister will be happy when they see it.

Now back to your letters. By the way, I'm now especially enjoying reading Proverbs, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, and, thanks to your thoughts about happiness [Glück] and blessing [Segen], reading them with newly awakened senses. And this makes the whole composite

seem more comprehensible. Prov. 25:2 is strange indeed, and in fact quite comforting. Job has been difficult for me again on the whole. But isn't Eccl. 5:1–2 wonderful, correctly translated?

Your joy at finding “a friend succeed at a piece of work” truly warms me. But this shows how important it is for people like us to be very much at one with our material so that there is little consciousness of other intentions as we work. Perhaps it is a good thing that I wasn't able to tell you about this or show it to you while I was working on it. But then again, I could hardly do otherwise than to present it to you as soon as I could. (As I write, I'm smoking your pipe with pleasure; it's got a crack already, but that doesn't matter.) What surprises me the most is that you have so little criticism of my style. I do try very hard, but I simply cannot get any distance to judge the outcome. It's different with the harmless drawings, which are, after all, nothing special as far as talent goes; above all, they lack practice, which is undoubtedly very important. But I have fun doing them and put much less effort into them. After all, the word is much closer to the person and more painfully revealing than, say, a few lines drawn in a certain perspective. I'm actually quite insecure in my sense of *color*. Another factor in the background of this whole project was the thought that, given the uncertain state of things, there is the need to tell the story to my loved ones while I can still do so.

You write about the great thoughts that one must not allow oneself to be robbed of by matters of the moment. That is exactly what torments me once one is over the shock, wondering who at home will keep it up and talk about it. It's also a matter of justified pride. The letters you mentioned aren't here yet. I'm also still waiting anxiously for the photos from the baptism. I haven't seen a single one yet. Apparently it's all very difficult now. I well remember the evening conversations we used to have in the garden at your house and how I used to resist. The concerns about your mother are really

very worrisome. How can she ever get relief? By now Maria should be there. A very nice letter from your father to me recently closed with the greeting “God protect you.”

I wonder what more you have been thinking about “*unconscious Christianity*”? That is so very important.

Please do give L[inke] warm greetings and thanks from me as well. So much for today. Many fond greetings to you.

Yours,

Eberhard

195. From Eberhard Bethge

August 26, 1944

Dear Dietrich,

I'd like to begin already today to answer your birthday greetings, to thank you very much for your thoughts and for making the event a fine one for me. I'll have plenty more to write afterward. You can't give anything more personal as a gift than a poem, and you could hardly give me greater joy. I think there can scarcely be a greater form of baring one's soul, opening oneself up, revealing one's true self, in an intimacy unattainable in any other way than in a *poem*. And I think it is *the* form, because the inner life, tamed and bound within this form, becomes visible. Unbound baring of the soul is unchaste and arouses fear or even disgust in the recipient. But in this bound form, the baring of the soul seems to me to represent the height of friendship and understanding. So to be the recipient of it gives great pleasure and excitement. It is longer lasting, more resonant, and even farther reaching in effect, it seems to me, than a letter. Many thanks!

I have no idea yet what you think you need to rearrange or change about the structure. I find the language very polished. It's splendid

how, in such verses, you awaken whole complexes of common insights, experiences, and convictions. Behind each one I sense how completely we understand each other. I would like to know how “exciting” and stimulating it is for a reader who doesn’t have a cupboard full of the same well-known complexes of ideas at their disposal as we do. In any case, for me your lines are real “fruits” that are now ready to drop after growing for a long time. They are that to such a large degree because the human relationship you write about preceded them and now exists, irreplaceable, and can be surpassed by few earthly goods. Because you have all this intimate knowledge of my person and are interested in my well-being, my outspoken views about my father probably stirred you up a bit and provoked you to strong words about it. You will see and feel more in all this than anyone else!

The ideas of your first three verses ring utterly true to me in every word and every phrase. The thought of the last verse, one that you expressed already the other day, came as a surprise and is still hard for me to follow. In any case, it’s not as familiar to me as the preceding ones. Many, many thanks.

Your letter is a real birthday letter—detailed, calm, with words of friendship, and therefore a true joy. Last year it was different. Now here we sit, each having our thoughts, and it’s not in vain. It’s a rather peculiar thing to accept your gifts. You know that I love your fine possessions and also this icon dearly; they make me feel at home, and they are part of my everyday surroundings (even now), especially the pictures. But every time you, in your present situation, give even more generously than before, in striving to give great joy despite the limitations, something in me protests that perhaps too much is being taken apart, and I would like to postpone it until the time of our new freedom and reunion. Perhaps it’s stupid, but I feel a tug of resistance every time you think of us so generously. Of course, it’s certain that

it would look *very* beautiful hanging on my wall, and you would love seeing it when you come to visit, being reminded of the rooms in Finkenwalde, Schlönwitz, Sigurdshof, and Berlin. So you see, I've already half accepted it after all and proudly see myself getting richer and richer.

Getting the letters is really nice. Father. . . [writes]: "Keep your glorious, cheerful good courage and good sense and your faith in the good in the world, which ultimately, of course, must win the upper hand again and keep hold of it." I think you really sum up the essence of my situation: In my vocation my achievements have, so to speak, "nourished" me thus far. There are a few things I am happy about, but nothing really important yet, nothing complete. But one thing I have really gained, and that is intensive human relationships—not in the "cult of the human" but in mutual understanding and parallel reactions, activities, tasks, and longings. And these are strangely indestructible; on the contrary, they are the only things that have increased and "improved" through these last few years. I hope very much that a time will still come to accomplish the things you are wishing for.

Please keep writing me such nice, interesting, and warm letters. I thank you very, very much.

Yours,
Eberhard

August 29

Yesterday I had leisure to read through all the mail, and it was a fine day with much time to write to Renate. But then last night until early this morning there was street fighting between partisans and fascists in the town below here. We take all kinds of security measures. They're getting busier now. But we are fine. Warm greetings and

many thanks,
Yours,
Eberhard

Winfried Maechler writes me for my birthday. He's been in a military hospital with an infected right hand since July and through this [has] so far been saved from the worst action in France. And just now the beautiful meditation on the *Daily Texts* has arrived. Thank you so much for that. I guess it is necessary for you to serve me in this essential way on such a day by trying to express what we so seldom speak about these days. It has become tangibly necessary again for one person to hold devotions for the other. Thank you so much.

Margret asks you to send her a word of greeting, in order to pass it along to donors as the occasion arises. Margret writes: "Aunt Ruth is fit as a fiddle again in her mind, like two years ago. Fritz visited her recently."

196. Poem "The Friend"

The Friend

Not from heavy soil,
where blood and race and oath
reign in hallowed might,
where earth itself
avenges, protects, and guards
the primal, sacred orders,
against madness and hubris—
not from the heavy soil of earth,
but from the heart's free choosing
and from the spirit's free longing,

needing no oath nor legal sanction,
is the friend given to the friend.

Beside the field of nourishing grain,
reverently plowed and tilled by human hands,
where people sacrifice the sweat of their labor
and, if need be, their bodies' blood,
beside the field of daily bread,
people, also, after all,
do let the lovely cornflower bloom.

No one planted it, no one watered it.
Vulnerable, it grows freely
and in cheerful confidence
that it will be allowed
to live its life
under the wide sky.

Beside what's necessary,
things formed from weighty, earthy stuff,
beside marriage, labor, and the sword,
what's free, too, strives
to live
and grow sunward.

Beauty is not in ripe fruit alone,
but in blossoms, too.
Whether the blossom only serves the fruit,
or the fruit the blossom—
who can say?

Yet both are given to us.
Rarest, most precious blossom—
springing from the freedom
of the daring, trusting spirit at play

in a blessed moment—

This is what the friend is to the friend.

Playmates at first
on the spirit's long journeys
into wondrous,
faraway realms,
which, veiled in the morning sun,
gleam like gold,
toward which in noonday heat
the wispy clouds
drift along in the blue sky,
which, in the excitement of night,
by lamplight
beckon the seeker
like hidden, secret treasures.

Then, when the spirit moves the human heart and mind
with lofty, bold, and cheerful thoughts,
when made to face the world,
vision unclouded and hands unbound—
when the spirit then brings forth action,
—by which each person stands or falls alone—
when, from action,
strong and sound
the work grows
that gives a man's life
substance and meaning,
then the active, productive, lonely human being
longs for friendship's understanding spirit.
Like a clear, fresh wellspring
where the spirit cleanses itself from the day's dust,

where it cools itself after blazing heat
and steels itself in the hour of fatigue—
Like a fortress, where the spirit returns
after confusion and danger,
finding refuge, comfort, and strength,
such is the friend to the friend.

And the spirit wants to trust,
to confide without condition.
Sickened by the worms
that feed in the shadow of goodness
on envy, suspicion, and spying
sickened by the hissing
of poisoned serpents' tongues,
that fear, hate, and scorn
the secret of free thought,
and heart's integrity—
the spirit longs
to cast off all pretending
and reveal itself fully
to a close and trusted spirit
and freely forge a faithful bond of friendship.

The spirit wants to affirm
without envy,
wants to acknowledge,
to thank,
to rejoice and find strength
in the other.

Yet to rigorous standard
and stern judgment, too,

it willingly submits.

Neither commands nor compelling alien laws nor doctrines,
but counsel, the good and earnest kind
that sets one free,
does the mature man seek
from the faithfulness of a friend.

Far or near
in fortune or calamity—
each knows in the other
the faithful helper
toward freedom
and humanity.

August 28, in the morning

When the sirens howled their midnight cue,
Long and silent were my thoughts of you,
how you might be, old times when you were here,
and wishing you homecoming this new year.

After a long silence, at half past one
comes the signal that the danger is done.
I took this as a friendly sign from on high
that all dangers are quietly passing you by.

197. Poem “The Death of Moses”

The Death of Moses

Deut. 34:1: “And the Lord showed him the whole land.”

I

[1] On the mountain peak where few have trod
stands the prophet Moses, man of God

[2] Steady is his gaze and tired his hand;
he surveys the sacred promised land.

[3] That he might for Moses’s death provide,
God appears now by his servant’s side,

[4] shows, from heights where humankind is dumb,
what is promised for the years to come;

[5] spreads before the tired wanderer’s feet
homeland, which he may yet mutely greet,

[6] offer blessing with his dying breath,
and, in peace, may then encounter death.

[7] “You shall glimpse salvation from afar,
but your foot shall not itself cross o’er!”

[8] And the old man’s eyes survey—survey
distant things, as at the break of day,

[9] shaped to cup of sacrifice from clay
by God’s hand, now Moses bows to pray:

II

[10] “Thus you keep your promise that I heard;
never have you broken, Lord, your word.

[11] Whether you sent grace or godly wrath—
they have ever met us on our path.

[12] You did rescue us from slavery’s chains,
in your gentle arms did soothe our pains,

[13] through the desert and the deep sea’s tide
wondrously before us you did stride;

[14] you did bear with patience never failing
people’s cries and muttering and wailing.

[15] Not by kindness could they be inclined
to be led, faith’s glorious way to find,

[16] tolerated greed, idolatry,
though the bread of grace their food could be.

[17] So your wrath wrought in your people hence
deepest wounds through snakes and pestilence.

[18] Those who were to be the promised heirs
rose in mutiny, and ruin was theirs.

[19] In the midst of their long pilgrimage,
they were snatched away by you in rage.

[20] One thing only did you want to see:
confidence and trust to set them free.

[21] But all those who gave to you their pledge
saw your hand at work at Red Sea's edge,

[22] all of them have turned their hearts away;
on their bodies desert sand must stay.

[23] Those whom you had led to their salvation
stoked rebellion, to your consternation.

[24] Of the once so blessed generation,
not one was left of just and faithful station.

[25] After all the elders passed away,
once their sons and daughters saw the day,

[26] then, when young ones, just as had the old,
scorned your word and even did you scold,

[27] Lord, you know, a sudden word of rage
did escape my mouth in my old age.

[28] Doubting thoughts, impatience I did feel,
certainty of faith began to reel.

[29] You forgave me. Still, I burn with shame,
faithless, facing you, the faithful flame.

[30] Your own countenance, so near and bright,
to the rueful one is painful light.

[31] Your great anger, your grief as you mourn
dig into my flesh, a deadly thorn.

[32] I am damned before your holy Word,
though to preach it I by you was stirred.

[33] Those who ate the tasteless fruits of doubt,
from God's table they shall be left out.

[34] Only faith untainted drinks the wine
grown upon the holy land's full vine.

III

[35] O Lord, your chastening I cannot flee,
yet death on lofty peak you grant to me.

[36] O you, who once was seen on quaking mount,
who made me then your chosen confidant,

[37] your mouthpiece, source of every holiness,
your eye to see the poor in their distress;

[38] your ear to hear your people's sighs and woes,
your arm that brought defeat to mighty foes,

[39] the back that carried young and old grown weary
and that by friend and foe was met with fury,

[40] Your people's mediator, Lord, in prayer,
Your instrument, friend, prophet, messenger.

[41] For this you grant me death on mountainside
and not on plains where human dwarfs abide;

[42] a death with vision free and clear ahead
of the commander who in combat led;

[43] a death whose somber portals are ablaze
with beacon lights of coming times and ways.

[44] Though death's shroud begins to settle o'er me,
your salvation is fulfilled before me.

IV

[45] Holy land, I've seen you in your pride,
gloriously adorned, a radiant bride,

[46] wedding garb becomes your virgin face;
festive bridal crown is costly grace.

[47] May these old, oft disenchanted eyes
savor you, their sweet and lovely prize.

[48] May this life, before its powers sink,
ah, once more from streams of joy now drink.

[49] God's own land, below your gateway beams
blissfully we stand, as if lost in dreams.

[50] Now we feel the faithful fathers' blessing,
strong and promising, as wind caressing.

[51] God's own vineyard, fresh dew on the ground,
heavy grapes, sun's radiance all around,

[52] God's own garden, how your fruits are swelling,
clear, fresh waters from your springs are welling.

[53] God's abundant grace above free earth,
may a holy people here find birth.

[54] God's own justice guards both weak and strong
from the whim of tyranny and wrong.

[55] God's truth brings back to faith a flock misled
by the human doctrines they were fed.

[56] God's own peace, a tower of strength, will cover
hearts, homes, cities like a faithful lover.

[57] God's own rest will come to them like balm
as they celebrate day's end with calm.

[58] And quiet folk will plant contentedly
the grapevine, plow the field, and prune the tree,

[59] and one will simply call the other Brother
no pride nor jealousy their hearts will smother;

[60] and sons, by fathers taught, learn deference
to age, to all things sacred reverence.

[61] And maidens in their innocence and grace,
the people's honor, will have pride and place.

[62] Who once themselves ate bread of foreign lands
will not ignore the alien's empty hands.

[63] The righteous shall in charity provide
for widows, orphans, paupers at their side.

[64] O God, among our fathers ever near,
now may our offspring pray and find you here.

[65] To sacred shrine your people shall ascend
and to your glory high feast days shall spend.

[66] To you they'll bring themselves as offering
to you songs of deliverance they'll sing.

[67] In thanks and praise your people raise one voice
to shout your name, that all the world rejoice.

[68] Great is the world; the heavens open wide,
to look at all the busy human tide.

[69] The way to life, for all the nations food,
you showed us, God, when you gave us your word.

[70] When times are hard the world will ever turn
your sacred Ten Commandments to relearn.

[71] And when a people's guilt demands great toll,
your sanctuary alone will make them whole.

[72] Move on, my people, follow now the call,
free earth, free air do beckon to you all.

[73] So take the mountains, meadows, all the places
where blessing comes from faithful fathers' traces.

[74] From foreheads wipe the burning desert sand
and breathe the freedom of the promised land.

[75] Wake up, take hold, your eyes do not deceive you,
your hearts were weary, but God did relieve you.

[76] Glorious and splendid the promised land you see,
all things are yours, and you've been set free!"

V

[77] On the mountain peak where few have trod
stands the prophet Moses, man of God.

[78] Steady is his gaze and tired his hand;
he surveys the sacred promised land.

[79] “Thus you keep your promise that I heard;
never have you broken, Lord, your word.

[80] Your grace redeems and saves us from our pride,
your wrath chastises sin and casts aside.

[81] Faithful Lord, your faithless servant’s sure
that your righteousness shall e’er endure.

[82] Carry out your sentence, once decreed,
death’s long sleep now to my soul concede.

[83] Only faith untainted drinks the wine
grown upon the holy land’s full vine.

[84] To the doubter, hand the bitter potion;
faith shall give you praise and true devotion.

[85] Wondrous deeds with me you have arranged,
bitterness to sweetness you have changed.

[86] Through death’s veil you let me see at least
this, my people, go to highest feast.

[87] They stride into freedom, God, I see,
as I sink to your eternity.

[88] To punish sin, to forgive you are moved;
O God, this people have I truly loved.

[89] That I bore its shame and sacrifices
and saw its salvation—that suffices.

[90] Hold me fast!—for sinking is my stave,
faithful God, make ready now my grave.”

198. From Eberhard Bethge

September 21

Dear Dietrich,

What will you think of me! I don't quite know what I should do, since I've been given such passionate, conflicting advice. But perhaps it's unnecessary. This is why I haven't mentioned the poem about freedom, about friendship (which moved me especially). But now I do want to write about the *Missa Solemnis*, the questions of the family, and the worries about Renate. When my thoughts have crystallized too rigidly, you come along and stir them up each time so that they appear in a new constellation and once again offer the observant eye new, pleasant, or exciting aspects for some time to come. Getting your letters has this effect on me. Above all, I've been careful every time to get rid of the instigator of this process quickly. Sometimes this is a real shame and limits my response. But they do have their profound effect on me. The poem on friendship makes me very proud. You have the capacity, so to speak, to span colossally broad arcs, and to sustain them in complete strength and beauty. The whole poem, with the prologue for me on the twenty-eighth, is charged with meaning, and I read page by page with heightened expectation. At this point I think I am incapable of any criticism; I want to know whether it can grab a stranger the way it does me. For me it is a surprising, rich expression of experiences shared by me and in which I have participated. But there doesn't *have* to be any criticism. It could be that the poem was written as if only for me, and since it makes me very happy, perhaps it is something grand

and complete. I wonder if you could omit the word “lovely” in the line “do let the lovely cornflower bloom,” since with that word you perhaps unnecessarily move from continuous contemplation into a position of judgment? All that follows about the flower says more about it and better, do you agree? After that it’s different with “but in blossoms, too.” Perhaps the superlative “Rarest, most precious blossom” is also unnecessary? The occasionally longer and shorter lines serve well to check the flow of the very dense thought content. In any case, this was a unique way to celebrate my birthday, and all I can give back to you is to say that it is a great source of strength for the other person to see that the threatening situation in which his friend finds himself leads to such a concentration of energy and to such beautiful fruits. Many, many thanks for this.

I also got the letter with the very personal lines about H[ans]’s transfer. I did not hear the *Missa Solemnis*; I unfortunately came in so late that night that I only heard the final chord and the announcer. I probably couldn’t have heard much at all anyway here in this horde. But now I do have a radio in my new room; to ensure the safety of things, I’ve moved into a terrific upstairs room. I now have a (bad) radio up in my room most of the time for taking notes on the army reports. That’s useful. Unfortunately, I don’t know the *Missa Solemnis* well at all. But recently I heard Vivaldi and Bach concertos with R[ainalter], and I must say, too, that this is like a liberation, or like being transposed into the real world, or from the lie into truth, or as if the heart that has been raped senses freedom. I am delighted that you are able to do these things. You took the death of Moses as an accusation [Vorwurf]? I find it very interesting that you say it in verse, because it would have become too *explosive* otherwise! This clarifies something that strikes the reader so forcefully about your unrhymed verses—a strong forward movement, being swept along. By the way, I think Renate has a pronounced gift for poetry and

composition, too. Once she handed me a few verses she'd written as a joke. So far—and I guess it's just as well—her sense of decency and her great sense of quality have prevented her from using the gift. I think there are two different skills that must be acquired through hard work and must be harmonized: mastering the forms, and also having something to say. By the way, it's not yet clear to me what R[enate] is going to do now; because of a reorganization of the postal service, we now have a terrible gap in receiving mail. Thanks very much for your concern. I was very happy and deeply touched by the musical score with its neat notation and even within carefully drawn straight lines(!). It is particularly meaningful to me that you took a ruler or a long pencil in hand to remind me of essential passages. I always so enjoyed singing that high part; it rang out so beautifully in church. How different the two petitions are—one rejoicing and one humble. Many thanks.

Renate received my essay and was very pleased. She apparently liked the style very much.

Of course, praise was rare in your family, as Renate's mother also always says. Nevertheless, nothing but the family has ever provided a forum for your activities. From the time you were little, you were expected to recite things for your parents, and so forth. Surely we should not remember our youth with sadness or reproach. The tacit reproach I occasionally sense from my mother's side about my development made me mention this. "The late recovery of technique": I was amazed while on leave how *very* much of my technical skill at the flute had been lost again. That has never been true with what miserable skill I have at the piano, and that's because playing started early enough. It needs constant, continued practice. Over a longer period of time, I even forget more or less correct intonation and lose confidence in sight-reading. It made me happier than ever when you wrote that your father likes me very much. He

really is always very nice to me, and I think I have shed my insecurity somewhat. It's only embarrassing sometimes when he doesn't understand what I'm saying, acoustically speaking. But that is improving as well, in spite of his increasing hearing loss. I wonder if your mother has quite forgiven me my bold move with Renate by now?

Horst Th[urmann]'s wife wrote me a nice note and said he sends you his warm regards. According to a long birthday letter from Fritz, Albrecht Schönherr must be somewhere in my area, likewise Otto Kunze. When I poked fun at his ministry being "l'église, c'est moi," he replied by writing about all kinds of work being done by Gehlhoff, Lutschewitz, Knorr, de Boor, Block, Kehrl, Strecker, Rendtorff (who, by the way, writes me a brief note from time to time in his function as leader of the V[olks]-M[ission] bible weeks!), Frau Ohnesorge, and Sup[erintendent] Krause. On the whole, the reports all sound very optimistic. I hear Aug[ust] Tetsch is a lieutenant, has a second child, and is in Russia; Jensen (again a second child) near Lyon (at that time); Otto Range likewise; Gerh[ard] Krause (little daughter) at Pleskau Lake; Eugen Rose (of whom Rainalter here always tells *very* nice stories about their time together at interpreters' school in B[er]l[in] last year) is an Indian interpreter in France. Voelz (little son) heading back to the front after a long time in the barracks; likewise Wolfg[ang] Schmidt after being together often with Walter Schmidt in the province of Saxony. Wapler, now missing in Russia, wrote him in mid-June. Karl-Ferdinand has another son, "Sebastian" (of course!); Willi R[ott] still in Athens, recently on special leave in Naseband. W. Kärigel still a home guard in Prenzlau. Derschau and K. H. Reimer are located where Bojack is from. Bernh[ard] Onnasch wounded in Weimar. Fritz's father here, very fit and robust. St. Jakobi Church in Stettin is in ruins. Fritz wears a helmet as an air-raid warden in Stettin, and his flat is still intact but filled

with casualties from the bombing. He enclosed in his letter to me a sermon by Marahrens's former adjutant that seemed very cheap and muddleheaded. The poor guy has disappeared, likewise the two in the Church Foreign Office. Only Pompe is still around. I heard that from Lokies. But perhaps you are already much better informed than I.

We are still doing amazingly well here, that is, there was partisan shooting here and there at rather close range, and the lieutenant is driving us crazy with stupid reconnaissance missions and the like (the major has unfortunately—unfortunately in several respects—been transferred). Disgusting guy. Sir. 13:14. A few days ago our little train station was fired on from the air. The lieutenant is a rather insufferable Prussian and is all too fond of involving me in long conversations. He eats with us and lectures us constantly, so that the atmosphere has lost much of the freedom we enjoyed before. There's sure to be some blow-up or other (not with me). Recently he forced me to give a lecture—I gather he was thinking of something sermonlike, but I rejected that and told stories from India, whatever I could still remember. He's a senior state prosecutor [Oberlandesgerichtsrat], my age, with a disgusting devotion to the whole business. Now we are very eager to hear when we'll be moving and how we will manage to cross the Po.

Well, this brings my fondest greetings and thanks. You will understand my silence. It is quite unbearable to me as well.

Thinking of you,

Faithfully yours,

Eberhard

September 30

By now ten more days have passed, and I have still been waiting for any news. Then yesterday "Moses" arrived and today the piece with

the abstract concept of the future. These, along with fifteen letters from Renate that had been missing for so long. I am really *very* sorry I did not write for so long, but it was because of the most urgent pleading. But now I will break out of that. Did you get my letter of the twenty-eighth? It seems as though you did not get that one. In it were some pictures in the shorts for you (to L[inke]), and a rather longer—I think—reflection about your poetry. Many thanks for the Moses poem.

I received it last night before my guard duty and read it afterward. It moved me greatly but made me unsure how to judge it. The language is beautiful; it seems to me not *quite* as powerful as others of yours, shackled as it is by the rhymes. And I thought, now I'll have to have a look at what kind of impression and relationship there is with Hölderlin, in his rhymed verse and his other free verse. But Rainalter, who has a *first-rate* feel for language, finds this the best and most powerful of your poems I've read to him. And it was in reading it aloud that several new things struck me. Now I want to say that it is really very accomplished. Some things are wonderfully expressed. I think this preoccupied you for a long time.

The other day I decided to try my hand for the first time at writing a "poem" for Renate's birthday (for her eyes only). My lack of success robbed me of many an hour of sleep. But, [as] you yourself now write, how differently I now read, or rather observed, things in the little Insel volume of German poetry I have here! I must say your poetry is an incredible achievement. The very fact of line after line of rhymed verse creates a certain epic effect. Until now I have seen no need for any changes. It feels very complete to me.

Renate wrote about your *nice* letter, which pleased her greatly, but she's only sad that you have apparently not received a longer letter from her, which I gather included her thanks for all your thoughtfulness of her during my leave. How come? She has

apparently spent some time with Maria, about which I'm very happy. M[aria] mustn't be offended at her way of not communicating for long stretches at a time. Christoph has also written you a letter, sent to your parents. He has all kinds of plans involving reading and other work. He always writes nice letters.

Still no change at all with us here. I guess we are experiencing another major break in the action. Your thoughts on the future strike me as courageous and perhaps even comforting. Now I should send this off so that you'll finally have word from me.

My very best to you,
Yours, Eberhard

If I could only tell you about my latest spiritual and worldly experiences!

199. Poem "Jonah"

Jonah

They screamed in the face of death, their frightened bodies clawing
at sodden rigging, tattered by the storm,
and horror-stricken gazes saw with dread
the sea now raging with abruptly unleashed powers.

"Ye gods, immortal, gracious, now severely angered,
help us, or give a sign, to mark for us
the one whose secret sin has roused your wrath,
the murderer, the perjurer, or vile blasphemer,

who's bringing doom on us by hiding his misdeed
to save some paltry morsel of his pride!"

This was their plea. And Jonah spoke: "'Tis I!"
In God's eyes I have sinned. Forfeited is my life.

“Away with me! The guilt is mine. God’s wrath’s for me.
The pious shall not perish with the sinner!”
They trembled much. But then, with their strong hands,
they cast the guilty one away. The sea stood still.

200. Poem “By Powers of Good”

1. By faithful, quiet powers of good surrounded
so wondrously consoled and sheltered here—
I wish to live these days with you in spirit
and with you enter into a new year.

2. The old year still would try our hearts to torment,
of evil times we still do bear the weight;
O Lord, do grant our souls, now terror-stricken,
salvation for which you did us create.

3. And should you offer us the cup of suffering,
though heavy, brimming full and bitter brand,
we’ll thankfully accept it, never flinching,
from your good heart and your beloved hand.

4. But should you wish now once again to give us
the joys of this world and its glorious sun,
then we’ll recall anew what past times brought us
and then our life belongs to you alone.

5. The candles you have brought into our darkness,
let them today be burning warm and bright,
and if it's possible, do reunite us!
We know your light is shining through the night.

6. When now the quiet deepens all around us,
O, let our ears that fullest sound amaze
of this, your world, invisibly expanding
as all your children sing high hymns of praise.

7. By powers of good so wondrously protected,
we wait with confidence, befall what may.
God is with us at night and in the morning
and oh, most certainly on each new day.

201. To Paula Bonhoeffer

December 28, 1944

Dear Mama,

To my very great joy I have just been given permission to write you for your birthday. I must do so in some haste since they want to post the letter right away. I really only have a single wish, and that is to give you some little pleasure in these days that are so bleak for you. Dear Mama, you must know that I think of you and Papa countless times each day, and that I thank God that you are there for me and for the whole family. I know that you have always lived only for us, and that there has never been a life you could call your own. This is why everything that I experience, I can only experience as if together with you. It is a very great comfort to me that Maria is with you. I

thank you, Mama, for all the love that has come from you to me in my cell in the past year and made every day easier for me. I believe that these difficult years have forged an even closer bond between us than ever before. I wish for you and Papa and Maria and for all of us that the new year might bring us a glimmer of light, at least here and there, and that we may yet have the joy of being together again. May God keep you both in good health!

With my most heartfelt wishes, dear, dear Mama, as I think of you on your birthday,
Yours gratefully,
Dietrich

202. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

January 17, 1945

My dear Parents,

I am writing you today because of the People's Offering [Volksopfer], and I'd like to ask you to take complete charge of my things and dispose of them as you see fit. They said they would even accept a dinner jacket; please give mine away; I have an extra felt hat and a salt-and-pepper suit that's too small, and a pair of brown loafers. You, dear Mama, have a better idea by now than I do of what I still have. In short, give away whatever anyone might need, without giving it a second thought. If there's a question about anything, perhaps you can call Commissioner Sonderegger! After all, in the past two years I've learned how little a person needs to get by. Especially here, with the inactivity of a long imprisonment, one feels the urgent need to do everything possible for the general good within the strict limits imposed on one. You will be able to appreciate this. When you think about how many people are now losing everything every day,

one really has no claim on any kind of possessions. I know you think this way too, and I just wish I could contribute to this myself!—Is Hans Walter really flying in the east now? And Renate's husband? Many thanks for your letter, and thank Maria *very* much for her Christmas letter. Here you read letters till you know them by heart!

I have a few more favors to ask: Unfortunately no books were handed in for me today. Commissioner Sonderegger would accept them on another day if Maria brings them. I would be very grateful if she did. Matches, facecloths, and towel were also missing this time. Forgive me for saying this; everything else was really splendid! Thank you very much! Could I please get toothpaste and a few coffee beans? and a laxative? Could you, dear Papa, order from the library H. Pestalozzi, *Lienhard* and *Abendstunden eines Einsiedlers*; P. Natorp, *Sozialpädagogik*; and Plutarch, *Große Männer: Biographien*?

I'm doing well. You two just see that you stay healthy. I thank you for everything. Give Maria my fond greetings and thanks. Also all my brothers and sisters and mother-in-law.

Yours ever gratefully,

Dietrich

Please drop off some stationery with the commissar, too!

203. From Karl Bonhoeffer

February 2, 1945

Dear Dietrich,

To make things easier for the censors I'm writing this birthday letter on the typewriter. I hope you are able to get it. Of course, it would be nicer if we were allowed to visit you. What we wish for you and for ourselves in this new year of your life needs no words. Our thoughts, which are with you daily in any case, will be with you especially the

day after tomorrow. Maria will send her thoughts this way especially. She is taking her little brother and sisters to relatives, so she is not here just now. Aunt Elisabeth has gone to Warmbrunn. Suse is here with her children and wants to remain here if possible. Hans Walter is in the west.

Unfortunately I had no luck at the library. Pestalozzi is only given out for the reading room; why, I don't know, but I will inquire about it with a senior librarian I know. Natorp is checked out. Karl-Friedrich had thought of getting you the Plutarch for your birthday. Only the cake comes from us. Maria will surely feel the pain of not being able to bring something herself. In any case, we old folks want to stay here. As a doctor, perhaps I can still help out somewhat, and Mama will have to be my assistant. I do hope for permission to speak with you soon. At my age one has the obligation to put one's affairs in order, to the extent that is possible. Mama had a bothersome boil in her ear, but it's a bit better today.

We send you fond greetings. The memory of many beautiful experiences and the hope that your time of testing might soon be over will make your birthday a tolerable one.

Your Father

204. From Karl Bonhoeffer

February 7, 1945

Dear Dietrich,

Our birthday letter for the fourth that we wanted to bring on Saturday did not reach you because of the bombing raid. During the raid we were sitting in the S-Bahn [railway car] in the Anhalter train station; it wasn't a very pretty sight. Apart from the fact that we looked like chimney sweeps afterward, we came away unscathed. But

afterward, when we tried to get to you, we were very worried, since they wouldn't let us anywhere near you because of the unexploded bombs. The next day we heard that the prisoners were unharmed; I hope it's true.

As for the family, Maria is accompanying her Pätzig siblings as they head westward. Aunt Elisabeth is in Warmbrunn. Suse is here with her children and wants to remain here. Hans Walter is in the west.

Unfortunately I had no luck at the library. Pestalozzi is only given out for the reading room. Natorp is out. Karl Friedrich had decided to give you the Plutarch for your birthday. I hope this letter reaches you. We hope for permission to visit you soon. At our age there are some things to take care of that one needs to discuss with one's children. I am typing this for the sake of legibility.

Warmest greetings

[Your Father]

205. Maria von Wedemeyer to Ruth von Wedemeyer

Flossenbürg

February 19, 1945

Dear Mother,

Unfortunately my whole journey to Bundorf and Flossenbürg was completely in vain. Dietrich isn't here at all. Who knows where he is. In Berlin they won't tell me and in Flossenbürg they don't know. A pretty hopeless situation. But what am I supposed to do now? If I stay in Berlin, our Pätzig friends will show up, and that won't help Dietrich. If I get there too soon, I'll be conscripted into the Flak or who knows what. If I stay in Bundorf, then I'll be so awfully far away from you all and won't know how I'll ever get back to you.

I really think it makes relatively little sense to return to Berlin now. Especially if I can't even take care of Dietrich!!! Of course, this is a reason, but that does go on without me, too.

I think I'll stay here for a while. Please do send me a telegram to Bundorf when you start out for Behme, so I'll know where you are and I won't head off in the completely wrong direction. It's terrible that I still have no news of you or of the family at all. But how lovely Ruth-Alice's letter was. I'm still enjoying it to this day. If I only knew what is happening with Doris. Apparently she didn't get out in time.

I'm feeling utterly miserable, but that's only because I've been on the train for two days now, had to walk seven kilometers to get there, and then, without any prospect of hearing anything, had to trudge the same seven kilometers back again. Now I guess it will take another two days to get back to Bundorf. I took charge of Christoph right away again, but he is terribly spoiled and I am just always so tired.

But I love you very much and long for you so terribly and wish I'd hear from you. I'm sure you must have written, though. What news from Hans-Werner? Fondest love and kisses to everyone, and especially my refugees.

Lovingly yours,

Maria

206. From Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer

February 28, 1945

Dear Dietrich,

We have heard nothing from you since your departure from Berlin, and presumably you have not heard from us either. The frequent raids of late have done us no harm apart from a few broken

windowpanes, so you need not be anxious. And the rest of the family remain in good health. Maria is traveling to help her refugee siblings from the east settle with their relatives, so Mama, in addition to taking care of the household, is working as my receptionist, rather too much for her along with everything else that comes with caring for the extended family.

We are worried about your health. We would like to send you the laundry and the little things we were able to send before, but we haven't yet found a way to do so. I hope Christel will find out something today at Prinz-Albrecht-Straße.

If you are able, let us hear something from you soon. They should give more frequent permission to write to folks as old as we are.

Your Father

My dear Dietrich!

My thoughts are with you day and night, worrying how you might be faring. I hope you can work and read a bit and that things are not getting you down! May God help you and us through this difficult time.

Your old Mother

We are staying in Berlin, come what may.

Epilogue:

The Survivor Looks Back

Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer to His Children, Leipzig, June 1945

Epilogue

The Survivor Looks Back:

*Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer to His Children, Leipzig,
June 1945*

I want to tell you about all those things. Why? Because my thoughts are there now, there in the rubble from where no news gets through to us, where just three months ago I visited Uncle Klaus, the death-row inmate, in prison.

Those Berlin prisons! What did I know about them just a few years ago, and with what different eyes have I looked at them since. The Charlottenburg interrogation prison, where Aunt Christel was held for a while; the Tegel military interrogation prison, where Uncle Dietrich was interned for a year and a half; the Moabit military prison with Uncle Hans; the SS prison on Prinz-Albrecht-Straße, where Uncle Dietrich was kept behind bars in the cellar for six months; and the Lehrter Straße prison, where they tortured Uncle Klaus and tormented Uncle Rüdiger, and where they remained two more months after their death sentences. I waited in front of the heavy iron gates of all these prisons when I was in Berlin “on business” in the last few years. I accompanied Aunt Ursel and Aunt Christel, Aunt Emmi and Maria there; they often went there daily to deliver or pick up things. They often made the trip in vain, they often had to listen

to insults from contemptible officials, but sometimes, too, they found a friendly guard who thought like a human being and delivered a greeting, accepted a parcel outside the prescribed hours, or gave food to the prisoners in spite of the rules.

Ah, bringing food to the prison! It wasn't all that easy in those last years, and Aunt Ursel in particular was never content with what she was able to do. In the process she became skinny as a rail. There were tragic scenes when Uncle Rüdiger sent the food back out and had the guard tell Aunt Ursel he had enough. Who was to believe that of him? Aunt Ursel would send it back in, and out it would come again. Now, Uncle Klaus was different! He always ate everything sent to him. Uncle Dietrich didn't have it quite as bad as long as he was held at Tegel. He was on good terms there with the prison staff, and the prison commandant was humane. Uncle Hans, too, wasn't too bad off at first. His prison commandant treated him almost like a friend. But then Hans fell ill and was taken to Professor Sauerbruch's surgical clinic at Charité hospital, where I saw him for the last time. After he was returned to the prison, he got scarlet fever and diphtheria and was in bed for nearly six months with a serious case of post-diphtheria paralysis, then ended up in the concentration camp at Oranienburg and in the state hospital in Berlin.

And now! The last time I was in Berlin was in late March. I had to return shortly before Grandfather's seventy-seventh birthday. Uncle Klaus and Uncle Rüdiger were still alive. Through his doctor, Uncle Hans sent news that was not entirely hopeless. There was not a trace of Uncle Dietrich, whom the SS had removed from Berlin in early February. The last time I spoke on the phone with your grandparents was, I think, about April 8, when I called them from Leipzig shortly before leaving there for Friedrichsbrunn to join you there. At that time everything was still unchanged. It's been more than two months since then. I wonder what all might have happened from that time

on before the Russians took over Berlin? A man who came from there told me that four thousand political prisoners were killed shortly before the Russians got there. And I wonder what happened during the capture and in its aftermath? Is everyone still alive? Did your grandparents manage all right through those difficult days? Both were already on the verge of exhaustion even before this. Grandma had suffered frequent bouts of weakness and loss of memory in recent years as a result of overwork, anxiety, and malnutrition. They have no proper household help. Uncle Dietrich spoke to someone at some length somewhere near Passau as late as April 5. From there he was supposed to be taken to the Flossenbürg concentration camp, near Weiden. Why isn't he here yet?

Study Questions

1. Why do you think that Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers from Prison* has become a twentieth-century Christian classic? Do you agree with this verdict?
2. How would you respond to the sermon that Bonhoeffer wrote for the marriage of Eberhard and Renate Bethge? (pp. 50–57)
3. What were some of the existential struggles that Bonhoeffer had to deal with in prison, and how did he do so?
4. What did Bonhoeffer mean by the “world come of age” and “the nonreligious interpretation of the Christian faith”? Do you think his theological reflections are still helpful today?
5. What does it mean for the church to exist for others?
6. Which of Bonhoeffer's poems speaks the most to you, and why does it do so?
7. How does Bonhoeffer's relationship with Eberhard Bethge, as reflected in his poem “The Friend,” relate to our own understandings of friendship?
8. In what ways has reading *Letters and Papers from Prison*

influenced your understanding of Bonhoeffer as a human being?

9. In what ways has reading *Letters and Papers from Prison* challenged and shaped your understanding of Christian faith and being a Christian and human being today?
10. If you were asked to review *Letters and Papers from Prison*, what would be the main points you would highlight?

The Reader's Guide to *Letters and Papers
from Prison* in the Dietrich Bonhoeffer
Works: A Guide to Related Texts and
Resources

Victoria J. Barnett, General Editor

The seventeen volumes of the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, English Edition are a translation of the German *Bonhoeffer Werke*, and fall into two groups. The first group, volumes 1–8, consist of Bonhoeffer's theological writings (*Sanctorum Communio*, *Act and Being*, *Creation and Fall*, *Discipleship*, *Life Together*, *Ethics*) plus two volumes of prison writings, *Fiction from Tegel Prison* and *Letters and Papers from Prison*. The second group, volumes 9–16, are important companions to the theological works; they consist of correspondence, lectures, sermons, and other texts that give broader insight into Bonhoeffer's life and historical context during the periods in which he wrote his theological works. These are organized chronologically, beginning

with Bonhoeffer's youth and education and concluding with the period of his imprisonment and death.

All the volumes in the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, which is available in both hardcover and paperback, contain a number of helpful biographical, historical, and theological resources. Each volume is extensively annotated and includes an introduction written by the editor of the English volume and an afterword written by the editor of the corresponding German volume. In addition, each volume includes a detailed chronology for the period it covers, a bibliography, and scriptural, biographical, and subject indexes. There are also page references to the German original throughout, allowing readers to compare the translation with the original.

The two volumes of Bonhoeffer's prison writings, *Fiction from Tegel Prison* (which includes the drafts of a drama, novel, and short story that Bonhoeffer began writing while in prison) and *Letters and Papers from Prison* (which includes correspondence as well as the final theological texts we have from Bonhoeffer's hand), offer deeper insights into how his period in the resistance and prison shaped him, personally and theologically.

As mentioned in John W. de Gruchy's introduction to this edition, *Letters and Papers from Prison* has long been considered a theological classic. Written between April 1943 and January 1945, Bonhoeffer's prison letters included theological reflections that in many ways represented the deepening and culmination of his earlier theological works. These texts also introduced some new ideas and concepts that revealed some intriguing new paths in his thinking toward the end of his life. Consisting primarily of the correspondence with his family and with his close friend and colleague Eberhard Bethge, the prison letters provide most of the personal documentation that exists for the final two years of Bonhoeffer's life. The theological material in *Letters*

and Papers, then, is in quite different form than his finished early works, and most of it is in the form of Bonhoeffer's reflections as articulated in his letters to Bethge.

Chronologically and thematically, *Letters and Papers* has two companion volumes in the series: *Conspiracy and Imprisonment: 1940-1945* (volume 16) and *Ethics* (volume 6, also available in the Reader's Edition series). *Conspiracy and Imprisonment* primarily covers the period during which Bonhoeffer was involved in the resistance conspiracy up to his arrest in 1943. In addition to Bonhoeffer's correspondence during that period with family, friends, and particularly his former students, this volume also includes the official records made by Nazi authorities during his imprisonment up to 1945, including the records of the interrogations of Bonhoeffer and his brother-in-law Hans von Dohnanyi, and several theological fragments that Bonhoeffer wrote while he was still imprisoned in Tegel prison in Berlin.

Ethics can be considered the primary theological companion volume for *Letters and Papers from Prison*. Compiled from several different manuscripts that Bonhoeffer wrote during the early period of the war, *Ethics* explores the ethical consequences for Christians and their church of the new realities confronting them, which in 1940 and 1941, in addition to the broader changes for Christian faith and the church in the modern age, appeared to be the triumph of National Socialism and the failure of Germany's churches to offer any meaningful political or theological opposition, let alone resistance. Many of the ideas Bonhoeffer explored in *Ethics*, particularly in his chapters on "Ethics as Formation" and "Heritage and Decay," are also expressed in his December 1942 letter "After Ten Years," which is the first document in *Letters and Papers*. In fact, some of the central theological themes that emerge in *Letters and Papers* are

more fully articulated in *Ethics*; for example, Bonhoeffer's notion of the importance of responsible action and the place of personal responsibility in human life (a recurring theme in "After Ten Years") is explicated in the *Ethics* chapter on "History and Good." Bonhoeffer's broader reflections on the developments in human history that had led to very new understandings of God and the role of Christians and their church in the world can be found in the *Ethics* chapters on "Heritage and Decay" and "Church and World." In turn, these reflections in *Ethics* become part of theological foundation for what he called the "nonreligious interpretation of Christianity" in his prison letters.

Readers of this edition who want to learn more about the theological, biographical, and historical background of the writings in this edition should turn first to volume 8 of the Bonhoeffer Works from which the translation in this Reader's Edition is taken. The Bonhoeffer Works volume includes the complete annotations, chronology, scriptural indexes, and other resources.

For many readers, the historical drama that unfolds in *Letters and Papers from Prison* is of equal interest and, of course, the historical backdrop of the war and German resistance is indispensable for understanding the final period of Bonhoeffer's life. Those interested in learning more about the resistance groups that conspired against the Nazi regime and the circles in which Bonhoeffer moved can turn to a number of related works in English that offer a broader glimpse of these different circles and Bonhoeffer's role. The definitive study of the German resistance remains Peter Hoffmann's *The History of the German Resistance, 1933-1945* (McGill Queens University Press, 1996). Klemens von Klemperer's *German Resistance against Hitler: The Search for Allies Abroad* (Oxford University Press, 1992) is an account of the various international networks, including ecumenical contacts,

who worked with the different resistance groups. Von Klemperer's *German Incertitudes, 1914-1945: The Stones and the Cathedral* (Praeger, 2001) is a historian's reflection on the moral questions that arise in this history and includes a chapter on Bonhoeffer. Andrew Chandler's *Brethren in Adversity: Bishop George Bell, the Church of England and the Crisis of German Protestantism* (Boydell, 2005) offers greater background on the British circles with which Bonhoeffer had contact, notably Bishop George Bell, and Keith Clements's *Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Ecumenical Quest* (World Council of Churches, 2015) is a well-documented study of how Bonhoeffer's role in the ecumenical world served the resistance as well as ecumenical agendas of that era. Sabine Damm's *Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Resistance* provides an excellent overview and summary of Bonhoeffer's role in the resistance (Fortress Press, 2009). *No Ordinary Men: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Hans von Dohnanyi: Resisters against Hitler in Church and State* (New York Review of Books, 2013), by Elizabeth Sifton and Fritz Stern, examines Bonhoeffer's role in conjunction with that of his brother-in-law Hans von Dohnanyi, who was one of the most steadfast opponents of the Nazi regime from the onset.

For readers interested in more biographical information about Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Eberhard Bethge's *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, revised edition (Fortress Press, 2000) remains the definitive biography. A shorter reliable biography is Ferdinand Schlingensiefen's *Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 1906-1945: Martyr, Thinker, Man of Resistance* (T. & T. Clark, 2010). Christiane Tietz's *Theologian of Resistance: The Life and Thought of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Fortress Press, 2016) is a theological biography. A more personal side of Bonhoeffer is evident in his correspondence with his fiancée Maria von Wedemeyer, in *Love Letters from Cell 92: The Correspondence between Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Maria von Wedemeyer 1943-45*

(Abingdon, 1995). The centrality of the friendship to Eberhard Bethge is the subject of John W. de Gruchy's *Daring Trusting Spirit: Bonhoeffer's Friend Eberhard Bethge* (Fortress Press, 2005).

In addition, the following works may be helpful for further study of *Letters and Papers from Prison*:

Bethge, Eberhard. *Friendship and Resistance: Essays on Dietrich Bonhoeffer*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

Green, Clifford J. *Bonhoeffer: A Theology of Sociality*. Revised edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

Marty, Marty E. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Letters and Papers from Prison: A Biography*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

Pugh, Jeffrey C. *Religionless Christianity: Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Troubled Times*. London and New York: T. & T. Clark, 2008.

Wannenwetsch, Bernd, ed. *Who Am I? Bonhoeffer's Theology through His Poetry*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2009.

Wüstenberg, Ralf K. *A Theology of Life: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Religionless Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

Index of Names

- Abraham (biblical character), 479
Albertz, Martin, 463
Alcibiades, 429
Altdorfer, Albrecht, 179, 184
Althaus, Paul, 408, 421
Aphrodite (Greek goddess), 428
Apollo (Greek god), 429, 481
Aristotle, 305
Asmussen, Hans Christian, 135
August, Reinhold Wilhelm, 162
Augustine, Saint, 44

Bach, Johann Sebastian, 153, 464,
524
Bamm, Peter, 81
Barth, Karl, 212, 308, 356–57,
365, 406, 408, 421–22, 488
Bastian, Max, 130–31
Bäumer, Gertrud, 152
Bayer, Barbara Dohnanyi, (Bärbel)
(daughter of Christine
Bonhoeffer Dohnanyi), *See*
Dohnanyi, Barbara (Bärbel)
(Bayer) (daughter of Christine
Bonhoeffer Dohnanyi)
Beckman, Gottfried, 463
Beethoven, Ludwig van, 259, 321
Bell, George Kennedy Allen, 134,
171, 198, 393
Benz, Richard, 129
Berns in Sakrow (not otherwise
identified), 236
Bethge, Christoph (youngest
brother of Eberhard Bethge),
164, 171
Bethge, Dietrich Wilhelm
Rüdiger (son of Eberhard and
Renate Bethge, godson of
Dietrich Bonhoeffer), 275,
278–79, 289, 299, 305, 306,
313, 315, 331, 347–48, 355,
365, 369–70, 372, 374, 375,

LETTERS AND PAPERS FROM PRISON

- 387, 391, 394, 435, 441, 476,
482, 484, 493
- Bethge, Eberhard (best friend of
Dietrich Bonhoeffer), 50–57,
58, 100, 126, 127, 132–33,
134–35, 142, 154, 155–61,
162–65, 165–66, 166–67,
167–68, 170–71, 175–77,
177–78, 178–80, 182, 186–89,
191–95, 197–203, 206–9,
209–14, 214–16, 216–19,
219–20, 224–25, 227, 228–30,
230–31, 232–39, 240, 243–45,
246–49, 249–56, 258–59,
260–64, 264–68, 268–70,
270–72, 274–76, 276–78,
279–82, 282–83, 283–87,
289–91, 291–94, 294–98,
298–301, 301–4, 305, 307–12,
312–15, 317–19, 319–21,
321–23, 326–27, 327–30,
343–46, 348–50, 354–59,
359–62, 362–63, 363–66,
365–67, 367–69, 369–71,
372–74, 375, 376–78, 384–86,
386–88, 388–93, 393–95,
395–96, 396–97, 397–99,
400–401, 403–4, 405–8, 408–9,
409–10, 415–17, 417–23,
423–24, 424–26, 427–28,
430–31, 433–37, 437–40,
440–43, 444–49, 460–63,
463–67, 467–69, 473–75,
475–76, 477, 478–80, 482–84,
484–85, 489–91, 491–93,
494–97, 498–500, 500–503,
503–7, 507–9, 509–10, 523–27,
527–29, 533
- Bethge, Elisabeth (Aunt Else)
(mother of Eberhard Bethge),
100, 127, 137, 146, 219,
366–67, 435–36, 504
- Bethge, Hans (older brother of
Eberhard Bethge), 59–60
- Bethge, Renate (daughter of
Ursula Bonhoeffer Schleicher
and wife of Eberhard Bethge),
23, 25, 30–31, 32, 33, 36–37,
44, 46, 47, 50–57, 58–59, 66,
77–78, 86, 91, 92, 100, 101,
117, 125, 126–28, 132–33, 135,
136, 142, 144, 154, 155,
159–61, 162, 163, 164, 166,
178, 180, 182, 185, 186, 187,
188–89, 191, 198, 199, 202,
203, 210, 212, 213, 214–15,
216–19, 224–25, 227, 228,
229–30, 231, 232–36, 237,
239–42, 245, 246, 249–56,
258–60, 263–64, 264–65, 267,
270, 275, 277, 278–79, 280,
283, 284, 285–86, 289, 290,

- 293, 298, 303–4, 306, 310, 313,
314, 315, 320, 327, 329, 331,
347, 348, 349–50, 354, 355,
360, 361, 362, 363, 365,
366–68, 369–71, 372, 373, 374,
375, 377–78, 384–86, 386–87,
390, 391, 393–95, 402, 403,
405, 409, 415, 426, 427, 430,
435–36, 441, 445, 449, 475–76,
482, 483, 490, 491, 493, 496,
500, 501, 502, 503, 505, 509,
523, 524–26, 528
- Bethge, Wilhelm (father of
Eberhard Bethge), 126, 127,
276, 376–77, 491, 505, 508
- Binding, Rudolf G., 180
- Bismarck, Herbert von, 242
- Bismarck, Jürgen von (Bismarck-
Lasbeck), 283
- Bismarck, Karl Ernst Günther
(Bismarck-Kniephof), 283
- Bismarck, Ruth-Alice von (sister
of Maria von Wedemeyer), 70,
85, 147, 536
- Block, Eduard, 526
- Bodin, Jean, 465
- Böhm, Hans Adolf August Hugo,
135
- Bojack, Konrad, 526
- Bonaparte, Napoleon, 447
- Bonhoeffer, Christine (Christel)
(Dohnanyi) (sister of Dietrich
Bonhoeffer), *See* Dohnanyi,
Christine (Christel) von (sister
of Dietrich Bonhoeffer)
- Bonhoeffer, Cornelia (daughter of
Klaus Bonhoeffer), 58–59, 61
- Bonhoeffer, Emilie (Emmi) (wife
of Klaus Bonhoeffer), 61, 84,
93, 110, 541
- Bonhoeffer, Friedrich (grandfather
of Dietrich Bonhoeffer), 418
- Bonhoeffer, Johann Friedrich (son
of Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer),
87–88, 104, 113, 120, 121, 168,
196, 273, 324
- Bonhoeffer, Karl Friedrich
(brother of Dietrich
Bonhoeffer), 26, 46–47, 62,
64–65, 68, 70, 73–75, 76, 80,
84, 87, 88, 93, 104–5, 109, 112,
113–14, 120, 121–22, 129–30,
134, 136, 143, 146, 151,
168–70, 189, 190, 191, 196,
229, 243, 268, 273–74, 288,
305, 306, 323–24, 325, 354,
405, 417, 534, 535
- Bonhoeffer, Karl Ludwig (father
of Dietrich Bonhoeffer), 23,
24, 29, 32–37, 43–45, 59, 66,
67–70, 70–71, 75–78, 79,
80–82, 83, 84–87, 90–93,

- 94–95, 99–102, 102–4, 107–9,
110–11, 111–13, 116, 117–19,
122, 123–25, 126, 127, 128–30,
132–33, 134, 135–36, 138–40,
140–42, 142–44, 144–45,
145–47, 147–48, 148–50,
150–51, 151–53, 153–55, 168,
175, 184–86, 189, 190–91, 195,
204–6, 214, 219, 223–25,
225–27, 236, 242–43, 245–46,
247, 252, 254, 255, 256–57,
258, 280, 287–89, 303, 304–6,
306–7, 312, 315–16, 319, 323,
324–26, 333, 346, 349, 350–51,
353–54, 362, 365, 368, 373,
374, 376, 377, 385, 392, 405,
418, 430, 462, 463, 482–84,
491, 493, 507, 525–26, 529,
531, 532–33, 533–34, 534–35,
536–37, 542–43
- Bonhoeffer, Karl Walter (son of
Karl Friedrich Bonhoeffer), 74,
87–88, 104, 113, 120, 121, 168,
196, 273, 324
- Bonhoeffer, Katharina (daughter
of Karl Friedrich Bonhoeffer),
87–88, 104, 113, 120, 121, 168,
196, 273, 324
- Bonhoeffer, Klaus (brother of
Dietrich Bonhoeffer), 120, 122,
126, 129–30, 134, 218, 221,
227, 240–41, 269, 277, 278,
290, 291, 297, 302, 320, 392,
417–18, 441, 464, 541, 542
- Bonhoeffer, Margarete (Grete)
Dohnanyi (wife of Karl
Friedrich Bonhoeffer), 25, 27,
65, 74, 87–88, 93, 104, 113,
120, 121, 168–69, 196, 273,
324
- Bonhoeffer, Martin (son of Karl
Friedrich Bonhoeffer), 74,
87–88, 104, 113, 120, 121, 134,
168, 171, 196, 273, 324
- Bonhoeffer, Otto (brother of Karl
Ludwig Bonhoeffer), 111, 396
- Bonhoeffer, Pauline (Paula)
(mother of Dietrich
Bonhoeffer), 23, 24, 29, 32,
34–37, 43–45, 61, 65–67,
67–70, 70–71, 72–73, 75–78,
78–79, 80–82, 83–84, 84–87,
89–90, 90–93, 94–95, 99–102,
102–4, 105–7, 107–9, 110–11,
111–13, 115, 117–19, 119–20,
122, 123–25, 126, 127, 128–30,
132–33, 134, 135–36, 138–40,
140–42, 142–44, 145–47,
147–48, 148–50, 151–53,
153–55, 168, 175, 184–86, 189,
195, 204–6, 214, 219, 223–25,
225–27, 236, 242–43, 252, 255,

- 257–58, 275, 277, 279, 280,
285, 287–89, 303, 306–7, 312,
316, 319, 323, 325, 331, 333,
346, 350, 362, 365, 368, 372,
374, 377, 385, 392, 405, 418,
430, 437, 462, 463, 482–84,
491, 493, 507, 526, 529,
531–32, 532–33, 534, 536–37,
542–43
- Bonhoeffer, Sabine (Leibholz)
(sister of Dietrich Bonhoeffer),
See Leibholz, Sabine
- Bonhoeffer (sister of Dietrich
Bonhoeffer)
- Bonhoeffer, Susanne (Dress) (sister
of Dietrich Bonhoeffer), *See*
Dress, Susanne (sister of
Dietrich Bonhoeffer)
- Bonhoeffer, Thomas (son of Klaus
Bonhoeffer), 59, 61, 134
- Bonhoeffer, Ursula (Schleicher)
(sister of Dietrich Bonhoeffer),
See Schleicher, Ursula
- Bonhoeffer (sister of Dietrich
Bonhoeffer)
- Bonhoeffer, Walter (son of Klaus
Bonhoeffer), 61, 110
- Boor, Werner de, 526
- Bormann, Eugenie, 150
- Bracher, Dorothee Schleicher
(daughter of Ursula Bonhoeffer
Schleicher), *See* Schleicher,
Dorothee (Bracher) (daughter
of Ursula Bonhoeffer
Schleicher)
- Bruckner, Anton, 331
- Brueghel, Pieter, 320
- Bruno, Giordano, 466, 480
- Bülow, Gabriele von, 494
- Bultmann, Rudolf, 364, 403, 405,
406, 408, 416, 422, 423, 426,
436–37
- Bunke, Adolf, 386, 397, 406,
415–16, 423
- Bunke, Hermann, 386
- Burckhardt, Jacob, 266, 267, 307,
308, 320, 348, 361
- Burlage, Wilhelm, 190
- Busch, Wilhelm, 230
- Busse, Margarete, 127
- Cain (biblical character), 379
- Calvin, John, 103
- Carajan, *See* Karajan, Herbert von
- Cardanus (Cardano), Jerome, 348,
369, 431
- Cauer, Hanna, 66
- Cedegren, Else, 252
- Cedegren, Hugo, 252
- Cherbury, Lord Herbert of, 465
- Claudius, Matthias, 308
- Cornelius (biblical character), 468

- Cyprian, Thascius Caecilius, 166
 Czeppan, Maria (Hörnchen), 305
- Dach, Simon, 44
- Dammeier, Anna (domestic in Schleicher home), 153, 241
- Dante, Alighieri, 481
- Delbrück, Hans, 118, 143, 248, 309
- Derschau, Alexander von, 526
- Descartes, René, 465
- Dibelius, Otto, 135, 239
- Diem, Gudrun, 346
- Diestel, Karl Julius Max, 213
- Dietze, Constantin von, 393
- Dilthey, Wilhelm, 243, 248, 271, 277, 305, 326, 431, 444, 482
- Diogenes of Sinope, 141
- Dionysus (Greek god), 428, 481
- Distler, Hugo, 367
- Dohnanyi, Barbara (Bärbel) (Bayer) (daughter of Christine Bonhoeffer Dohnanyi), 34, 44, 59, 127, 224, 247, 300, 427
- Dohnanyi, Christine (Christel) von (sister of Dietrich Bonhoeffer), 27, 37–38, 113, 120, 127, 134, 144, 186, 224, 258, 275, 277, 279, 285, 301, 306, 363, 368, 482, 501, 537, 541
- Dohnanyi, Christoph von (son of Christine Bonhoeffer Dohnanyi and godson of Dietrich Bonhoeffer), 34, 59, 75, 80, 117–18, 122–23, 125–26, 129, 130, 134, 137–38, 140, 141, 171, 187, 214, 224, 227–28, 247, 300, 315, 328, 348, 352, 529
- Dohnanyi, Elisabeth (Elsa) von, 301, 504
- Dohnanyi, Hans von (husband of Christine Bonhoeffer Dohnanyi), 27, 37–39, 62, 75, 100, 126, 137, 140, 141, 186, 224, 227, 289, 290, 297, 301, 464, 480, 482, 501, 503, 524, 541, 542
- Dohnanyi, Klaus von (son of Christine Bonhoeffer Dohnanyi), 34, 110, 137, 224, 247, 300, 328, 347, 348
- Döhring, Bruno, 405, 437–38, 462
- Dohrmann, Franz, 283, 369, 372, 392, 394, 395, 397, 410, 416, 423
- Don Quixote (fictional character), 8, 290
- Döring (not otherwise identified), 66

- Dostoyevsky, Fyodor
 Mikhaylovich, 415
- Dress, Andreas (son of Susanne
 Bonhoeffer Dress), 58–59, 113,
 123, 196, 246, 306, 534, 535
- Dress, Ilse, 331
- Dress, Michael (son of Susanne
 Bonhoeffer Dress), 58–59, 80,
 113, 123, 134, 145, 171, 196,
 243, 246, 306, 534, 535
- Dress, Susanne (sister of Dietrich
 Bonhoeffer), 32, 49, 57–58, 61,
 71, 81, 91, 93, 108, 111, 113,
 120, 123, 134, 145, 147,
 195–97, 242, 243, 268, 272,
 306, 331, 368, 534, 535
- Dress, Walter (husband of Susanne
 Bonhoeffer Dress), 70, 73, 81,
 91, 122, 132, 134, 195, 306,
 330, 397
- Dudzus, Otto, 134–35, 171
- Dürer, Albrecht, 35, 106, 134, 170
- Ebeling, Gerhard, 128, 134–35,
 171
- Else (domestic for Karl Ludwig
 and Pauline Bonhoeffer), 106
- Erna (domestic in Dress family),
 196
- Euripides, 446
- Ezekiel, (biblical prophet), 187
- Fahle, Doris, 536
- Faust (fictional character), 481
- Feirefiz (fictional character), 308
- Feuerbach, Ludwig, 466
- Fichte, Johann Gottlieb, 466
- Fleischhack, Heinz, 463
- Fontane, Theodor, 92, 101, 118,
 133, 139
- Forlì, Melozzo da, 198
- Fra Angelico (Guido di Pietro),
 170
- Friedchen, Aunt, 66
- Gauguin, Paul, 320
- Gehlhoff, Gerhard, 526
- Gerhardt, Paul, 24, 47, 75, 210,
 222, 462, 473
- Giesecking, Walter, 321
- Gildemeister, Martin, 169
- Gilli, Mario, 493
- Gisevius, Hans Bernd, 493
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von,
 86, 154, 258, 277, 308, 429,
 447
- Gollwitzer, Helmut, 463
- Goltz, Hannah (aunt of Dietrich
 Bonhoeffer), 89
- Goltz, Rüdiger (cousin of Dietrich
 Bonhoeffer), 89, 94, 100, 107
- Goltz, Rüdiger (Uncle Rudi), 89

LETTERS AND PAPERS FROM PRISON

- Gotthelf, Jeremias, 35, 49, 63, 69,
 71, 82, 92, 152, 187, 200, 308,
 492
 Gregory VII, Pope (Hildebrand),
 463
 Grotius, Hugo, 465
 Grude-Onnasch, Margret Bethge
 (sister of Eberhard Bethge),
 128, 438, 510, *See* Onnasch,
 Margret (sister of Eberhard
 Bethge)
 Grünewald, Matthias, 170

 Haeften, Hans Bernd von, 397
 Handel, Georg Friedrich, 464
 Harnack, Adolf von, 149, 153,
 264, 274, 292, 305
 Hartmann, Nicolai, 108, 129, 133
 Hase, Benedikt von, 74, 191
 Hase, Elisabeth von (Aunt of
 Dietrich Bonhoeffer), 36, 50,
 144, 307, 476, 534, 535
 Hase, Frieda von, 66
 Hase, Hans Christoph von (cousin
 of Dietrich Bonhoeffer), 109,
 134, 146, 171, 305, 307
 Hase, Hans Karl Paul Stanislaus
 von (uncle of Dietrich
 Bonhoeffer), 89
 Hase, Johann Georg von, 74
 Hase, Karl August von, 79, 82

 Hase, Margarete von (Deta), 106,
 372
 Hase, Paul von (uncle of Dietrich
 Bonhoeffer), 66, 106, 109, 112,
 132, 441, 443
 Hauff, Wilhelm, 103
 Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich,
 309, 466
 Heidegger, Martin, 87
 Heim, Ernst Ludwig (Old Heim),
 116
 Heim, Karl, 421
 Heinrich IV, King/Holy Roman
 Emperor (Henry IV), 463
 Helen (character in Greek
 mythology), 429
 Henry IV, King/Holy Roman
 Emperor (Heinrich IV), 463
 Herbert, Edward, Lord of
 Chisbury, 465
 Hermes (Greek god), 428
 Herzlieb, Minna, 258, 277, 286
 Hitler, Adolph, 349
 Hölderlin, Friedrich, 429, 528
 Holl, Karl, 69, 149
 Homer, 428
 Horace, 253
 Hörnchen (Czeppan, Maria), 305
 Hoskyns, Edwyn Clement, Sir, 69

 Immerman, Karl Leberecht, 92

- Irenaeus of Lyons, 210
 Isaac (biblical character), 479
- Jacob (biblical character), 479
 Jairus (biblical character), 468
 Jannasch, Wilhelm, 135
 Jean Paul, 35, 130, 152
 Jehle, Herbert, 314
 Jensen, Hans Werner, 526
 Jeremiah (biblical prophet), 17–18,
 48
 Jeremias, Joachim, 468
 Job (biblical character), 399
 John of Patmos (author or
 Revelation), 75, 187
 John the Baptist (biblical
 character), 473
 Joseph (biblical character), 479
 Joseph of Arimathea (biblical
 character), 469
 Jost, Wilhelm, 169
 Judas Iscariot (biblical character),
 13, 480
- Kalckreuth, Christine, Countess
 von (Ninne), 232, 239, 427,
 428
 Kalckreuth, Leopold, Count von,
 170, 302, 320
 Kalckreuth, Stanislaus, Count von,
 171
- Kanitz, Jochen Werner Archibald,
 134–35, 171, 219, 476
 Kant, Emmanuel, 69, 194, 421,
 441, 466
 Karajan, Herbert von, 331
 Kärigel, W. (Kergel, Walter), 526
 Kehrl, Rudolf, 526
 Keimann, Christian, 223
 Keller, Gottfried, 92, 187–88, 492
 Keller, Mrs. (Silesian farmer), 409
 Kergel, Walter (W. Kärigel), 526
 Kierkegaard, Søren, 149, 252, 308,
 479
 Kindt, Karl Friedrich Wilhelm,
 330
 Klages, Ludwig, 329
 Klapproth, Erich, 128
 Kleeberger, Dr., 373
 Kleist-Retzow, Hans Hugo von,
 79
 Kleist-Retzow, Ruth von
 (grandmother of Maria
 Wedemeyer), 30, 50, 58, 78,
 79, 120, 124, 130, 150, 226,
 237, 239, 263, 268, 311, 314,
 328, 346–47, 349, 367, 416,
 464, 501, 510
 Klopstock, Friedrich Gottlieb, 330
 Knopf (assistant to Hermann von
 Soden), 212
 Knorr, August, 526

- Koch, Rudolf, 505
- Kohlhaas, Michael (fictional character), 290
- Korenke, Christine Schleicher (Tine) (daughter of Ursula Bonhoeffer Schleicher), *See* Schleicher, Christine (Tine) (Korenke) (daughter of Ursula Bonhoeffer Schleicher)
- Krause, Bruno, 526
- Krause, Gerhard, 526
- Krause, Winfried, 128, 219
- Kunze, Otto, 526
- Laer, Friederike von, 475
- Lang, Theodor, 134, 170
- Lasker, Eduard, 116
- Lassar, Mrs., 59
- Latmiral, Gaëtano, 493
- Le Blanc, Max, 169
- Lehmann, Paul Louis, 252
- Leibholz, Gerhard (husband of Sabine Bonhoeffer Leibholz), 405, 418
- Leibholz, Marianne (daughter of Sabine Bonhoeffer Leibholz, godchild of Bonhoeffer), 84, 170, 198
- Leibholz, Sabine Bonhoeffer (sister of Dietrich Bonhoeffer), 134, 224, 254, 273, 368, 405, 418
- Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, 76
- Leiper, Henry Smith, 252
- Lempp, Albert, 128
- Lerche, Otto-Karl, 239
- Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim, 250, 286, 308
- Linke, Helmut, 385, 403, 416, 423, 449, 469, 485, 507, 528
- Loewenfeld, Julius Ludwig Wilhelm von, 443
- Lokies, Hans Emanuel Christoph, 135, 230, 255, 527
- Lorrain, Claude, 281–82, 320
- Lotter, Karl, 130–31
- Luther, Martin, 48, 56, 149, 165, 223, 269–70, 308, 474
- Lutschewitz, Gotthold Wilhelm Heinrich, 526
- Maass, Rudolf, 401, 443
- Machiavelli, Niccolo, 302, 465
- Maechler, Winfried Max, 134, 171, 436, 510
- Maetz, Walter, 83, 111, 123, 125, 168, 269, 384, 385, 401, 443
- Marahrens, August, 527
- May, Karl, 74
- Melozzo da Forli, 198
- Menelaus (character in Greek mythology), 429
- Messow, Werner, 73

- Michelangelo Buonarroti, 267,
284, 307, 308
- Montaigne, Michel de, 465
- Monteverdi, Claudio, 464
- Mörike, Eduard, 308, 320
- Moses (biblical character), 524
- Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus, 307
- Müller, Joseph (“Ochsensepp”
(Sepp), 307, 326, 427, 428
- Müller, Karl-Ferdinand, 526
- Müller, Marie, 427, 428
- Müller, Sebastian, 526
- Naomi (biblical character), 368
- Napoleon Bonaparte, 447
- Nathanael (biblical character), 469
- Natorp, Paul, 533, 534, 535
- Nicholas of Cusa, 466
- Niebuhr, Reinhold, 252, 392–93
- Niemöller, Martin, 252, 283, 375,
443
- Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm,
308, 320
- Ohnesorge, Anna, 526
- Onnasch, Bernhard, 526
- Onnasch, Friedrich, 526
- Onnasch, Friedrich (Fritz), 128,
134–35, 171, 176, 239, 438,
526
- Onnasch, Margret (sister of
Eberhard Bethge), 128, 438,
510
- Orff, Carl, 464
- Ortega y Gasset, José, 142, 354
- Oster, Hans, 493, 503
- Ostwald, Carl Wilhelm
Wolfgang, 169
- Otto, Walter Friedrich, 431
- Panza, Sancho (fictional character),
291
- Parsifal (fictional character), 308
- Paton, William, 268
- Paul, Jean, 35
- Paul, Saint, 30, 75, 351, 357, 361,
422, 439, 442, 476, 488
- Perels, Friedrich Justus, 171, 285,
385, 392, 405, 406, 408, 417,
423, 483
- Pestalozzi, Johann Heinrich, 533,
534, 535
- Petrarch (Francesco Petrarca), 448
- Pfeffer, Karl Heinz, 354
- Pietro, Guido di (Fra Angelico),
170
- Pisker, Lotte, 61, 106, 306
- Plutarch, 533, 534, 535
- Pompe, Hans-Dietrich, 527

- Raabe, Wilhelm, 139
- Rainalter, Josef, 326, 361–62, 403, 416, 501, 524, 526, 528
- Range, Otto, 526
- Ranke, Leopold von, 170, 187, 309
- Raphael (Raffaello Santi), 307, 481
- Rasch, Wolfdietrich, 149
- Reck-Malleczewen, Friedrich, 149
- Reger, Max, 367
- Reimer, Karl-Heinrich, 239, 526
- Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, 308
- Rendtorff, Heinrich, 526
- Reuter, Fritz, 72, 77, 92, 101
- Riehl, Wilhelm Heinrich, 180, 185
- Riemer, Bernhard, 162, 165, 504
- Rilke, Rainer Maria, 69, 180
- Ritter, Gerhard, 75
- Roeder, Manfred, 26, 45, 72, 94, 100, 108, 118, 144, 182, 198, 201, 269, 303
- Rose, Eugen, 287, 526
- Rott, Wilhelm (Willy), 134–35, 171, 526
- Rubens, Peter Paul, 308
- Ruth (biblical character), 368
- Ruth, Aunt, *see* Kleist-Retzow, Ruth von
- Sack, Alfons, 95
- Sack, Karl, 423
- Sauerbruch, Ernst Ferdinand, 542
- Scharf, Kurt, 501
- Schiller, Friedrich von, 308
- Schilling, Otto, 31
- Schlatter, Adolph, 86, 103, 408
- Schleicher, Christine (Tine) (Korenke) (daughter of Ursula Bonhoeffer Schleicher), 33, 44, 58–59, 124, 153–55, 241, 243, 300, 306, 346–47
- Schleicher, Dorothee (Bracher) (daughter of Ursula Bonhoeffer Schleicher), 33, 44, 124, 134, 153, 155, 171, 241, 300, 329, 331, 346–47, 354
- Schleicher, Hans-Walter (son of Ursula Bonhoeffer Schleicher), 33, 46, 58, 80, 110, 124, 136, 154, 224, 258, 259, 300, 306, 316, 320, 328, 329, 331, 347, 374, 401–2, 464, 533, 534, 535
- Schleicher, Jörg (brother of Rüdiger Schleicher), 60, 70
- Schleicher, Rüdiger (husband of Ursula Bonhoeffer Schleicher), 33–34, 47, 58, 59, 62, 70, 82, 84, 85, 93, 108, 109, 110, 118, 120, 124, 127, 136, 146, 152, 153, 155, 168, 187–88, 224,

- 227, 229, 236, 237, 241, 243,
 246, 248, 259–60, 265, 268–69,
 278, 291, 330–32, 345, 346,
 348, 363–64, 374, 423, 475,
 509, 541, 542
- Schleicher, Ursula Bonhoeffer
 (sister of Dietrich Bonhoeffer),
 28, 29, 32, 33, 35, 44, 46, 47,
 50, 52, 58, 59, 70, 76, 80, 82,
 84, 93, 108, 109, 110, 117, 120,
 124, 127, 134, 136, 143, 146,
 149, 153–55, 163, 188, 224,
 227, 236, 239, 241, 259–60,
 267, 277, 278, 289, 306, 314,
 320, 329, 331, 346–48, 354,
 373, 374, 403, 423, 476, 525,
 541, 542
- Schmidt, Walter, 526
- Schmidt, Wolfgang, 526
- Schneider, Reinhold, 248
- Scholz, Wilhelm von, 149
- Schöne, Georg, 116
- Schönfeld, Johannes Otto Leopold
 (Hans), 268
- Schönherr, Albrecht, 134–35, 171,
 239, 436, 448, 526
- Schönhoffer, Johannes, 202
- Schröter, Mr. (neighbor of Dress),
 122
- Schubert, Franz Peter, 129, 233
- Schütz, Heinrich, 50, 163, 211,
 232–33, 385, 392
- Schütz, Paul Wilhelm Lukas, 422
- Senftleben, Otto, 397
- Seydel, Gustav Paul Heinrich Karl,
 161
- Socrates, 236, 253, 322, 429
- Soden, Hermann Baron von, 212
- Sonderegger, Franz Xaver, 532,
 533
- Spengler, Oswald, 309
- Spinoza, Baruch, 465, 480
- Staemmler, Wolfgang, 463
- Stifter, Adalbert, 31, 49, 69, 82, 87,
 92, 109, 118, 133, 139, 151,
 158, 194, 200, 237–38, 281,
 308, 347, 490, 492
- Storm, Theodor, 118, 142
- Strecker, Johannes, 526
- Talleyrand, Charles Maurice,
 Duke of Talleyrand-Périgord,
 232
- Tersteegen, Gerhard, 286
- Tertullian, 166
- Tetsch, August, 526
- Thiess, Frank, 235
- Thoma, Hans, 281, 320
- Thomas, Aquinas, Saint, 305
- Thurmann, Horst, 526
- Tillich, Paul, 393, 408, 421

- Tilp, Walter, 527
- Troeltsch, Ernst, 420
- Truchsess, Christoph Baron von, 536
- Truchsess, Dietrich (Ditze) Baron von, 305, 314
- Turner, William, 282
- Uhlhorn, Gerhard, 69
- Velásquez, Diego Rodriguez de Silva y, 320
- Vibrans, Gerhard, 162, 263, 275, 296–97, 491, 504
- Vilmar, August Friedrich Christian, 103
- Vivaldi, Antonio, 524
- Voelz, Helmut, 526
- Volkman, Antonie (Tony), 190
- Wagner, Horst, 385, 394
- Walpole, Hugh, 248
- Walther, von der Vogelweide, 307, 308
- Wapler, Rudolf, 526
- Wedemeyer, Hans von (father of Maria Wedemeyer), 38, 63, 219, 226, 332, 475
- Wedemeyer, Hans Werner (brother of Maria Wedemeyer), 325, 328, 475, 534, 535, 536
- Wedemeyer, Maria von (fiance of Dietrich Bonhoeffer), 24–25, 29, 30–31, 32, 34–35, 48–49, 50, 58, 61, 62–63, 64, 65, 67–68, 70, 73, 77, 79, 80, 82, 83, 85, 89, 91–92, 100, 101, 102, 106, 112–13, 114, 116, 117, 118, 123, 124–25, 130, 132, 134, 136, 140, 141–42, 143, 144, 146–47, 153, 154, 158, 170, 175–76, 180, 185, 189, 197, 201, 204, 205, 214–15, 219, 220, 225–26, 229, 235, 241, 242, 254, 256, 257, 260, 262, 264, 273, 274, 275, 277, 278, 283, 288, 289, 304–5, 312, 314, 315–16, 320, 324–25, 327, 328, 330, 332–33, 343, 345, 348–49, 351, 354, 363, 367, 392, 395, 407, 409–10, 423, 424–26, 437, 465, 475–76, 484, 491, 502, 507, 529, 531, 533, 534, 535–36, 537, 541
- Wedemeyer, Maximilian von (brother of Maria Wedemeyer), 38, 63, 70, 144, 193, 226, 332
- Wedemeyer, Maximilian von

- (grandfather of Maria Wedemeyer), 325
- Wedemeyer, Ruth von (mother of Maria Wedemeyer), 36, 61, 62–63, 64, 65, 67–68, 78, 91, 106, 112, 147, 226, 289, 299, 304, 311, 314, 323, 325, 328, 332–33, 346, 367, 475, 535–36
- Weidemann, Alfred, 416, 423
- Weizsäcker, Carl Friedrich Baron von, 394, 399
- Wergin, Kurt, 107, 131, 248, 267, 312
- Weymarn, Alexander von, 222
- Wiechert, Ernst, 180
- Winckelmann, Johann Joachim, 281, 303
- Witiko (fictional character), 263
- Wolf, Ernst, 423
- Wolf, Hugo, 36, 38, 233, 308, 315
- Wolfram von Eschenbach, 309
- Zacchaeus (biblical character), 468
- Zedlitz-Trutzschler, Robert Count von (grandfather of Maria Wedemeyer), 61
- Zimmerman, Christian-Matthias, 239
- Zimmerman, Maria-Claudia, 239
- Zimmerman, Wolf-Dieter, 231, 254, 437
- Zippel, Hans Henning, 186
- Zippel, Inge, 463
- Zutt, Jürg, 190, 385

Index of Subjects

- ἀνακεφαλαιώσεις, 210
άνηρ δίψυχος, 263, 446
άνθρωπος τέλειος, 263
δεῖ, 355
δός μοι ποῦ στῶ, 486
δός μοι ποῦ στῶ καὶ κινήσω τῆν
 γῆν, 322
ἐκ-κλησία, 357
ἔσχατος ἐχθρὸς, 322
καινη κτισ, 211
μετάνοια, 468, 466, 474
περιτομή, 357, 422
πνεῦμα, 421
πνεῦμα ἅγιον, 211
σάρξ, 211, 297, 429
σύνοδος, 167
τέλειος, 263
χάρις καὶ εἰρήνη, 415
- Abendstunden eines Einsiedlers*, 533
above and below, 20
absence of religion, 355–57
absences, effects of, 373
absolute, symbol of, 429
absolute and divine, 429
abundant life, 314
academics, attitudes towards, 326
acceptance of humankind by Jesus
 Christ, 442
acceptance *vs.* resistance, 290–91
accomplishments in prison, 187
acedia, 156
action: freedom and, 480; of God
 in history, 13–20; historically
 significant, laws and, 12–13;
 necessary, 6; overestimating,
 129; political, 13; responsible,
 6, 11, 13, 16–17; “Stations on
 the Way to Freedom,” 497;
 unintended consequences, 149
adjustment to situations, 24, 34,
 118, 129
Advent: celebration in prison, 178,

- 184; memories, 155, 165;
 prison cell as analogy for, 165;
 wreath, 176, 178, 196
- adversity: faint in the day of, 42;
 spiritual legacy in, 204–5;
 strength and, 75, 184; thinking
 past, 195
- “Aennchen von Tharau,” 44
- aesthetic existence, 252
- afterlife in Old Testament, 462
- age and effects of prison, 353
- aging, 343, 361
- air-raids: alarms, 57, 61, 151;
 attacks, 119–20, 122, 123, 125,
 132, 167–68, 170, 177, 178–79;
 Berlin, 106, 113–14, 119–20,
 133, 169–70, 310, 534;
 damages from, 117, 120, 185,
 190, 224, 302, 536–37;
 damages in Leipzig, 274;
 effects on prisoners, 269;
 forgetfulness during, 269–70;
 frequency of, 319; God’s call
 amid, 389; to homes, 122, 123,
 139, 169–70; intensified, 104,
 292, 430; patterns in, 245;
 prison and, 177, 178–79, 185;
 prisoners and, 337–38, 476,
 535; protection during attacks,
 100, 106; Report on
 Experiences During Alarm,
 178, 183–84; responses to, 323,
 398; rural areas and, 126;
 shelter, 83, 85, 89, 102–3, 125,
 132; trenches, 125, 132,
 183–84
- Alban Hills, 295
- Allied forces, 295
- alone, enduring, 355
- Alps, 461–62
- Altdamm, 134, 170
- Altdorfer nativity scene, 179, 184
- altruism, 199, 365
- America, 474
- ancient, medieval, modern, 309
- angels, longing of the, 355
- Anhalter train station, 534
- Annenkirche, 330
- Anthropologie*, 69, 194
- anthropomorphism, 429
- anti-intellectualism, 310
- antiquity, 281, 308–9
- apathy, notes on, 42
- Apennines, 460
- Apocalypse*, 35
- Apollonian beauty, 320
- apologetics, Christian, 419–20
- apologetics, revision of, 489
- Apostles’ Creed, 488
- apprenticeship years, 248, 495–96
- aristocracy *vs.* uniformity, 382
- aristocratic Christianity, 408

- Aristotelian-Thomistic ethics, 12
- Armed Forces High Command
report, 427–28
- arrest of Bonhoeffer, 24, 32, 76,
78–79, 136, 334
- arrogance, 474
- ars moriendi*, 322
- art and artifacts: copper Spanish
brassaro, 103; Dürer
reproductions, 35, 134, 170,
236; icons, 134, 170, 496, 508;
landscape painting, 281–82;
Last Will and Testament, 134,
158–59, 170–71; Magdeburg
cathedral, 272; Melozzo da
Forli paintings, 198;
Michelangelo's *Pietà*, 284, 319;
nativity scenes, 178, 179, 184;
“Oak Forest,” 302; production
of, 267; Rembrandt
reproductions, 85
- art of dying, 322
- Art of the Fugue*, 293
- Ascension Day, 68, 332–33, 334
- asthma, 49, 79
- Athens, 526
- attitudes on effects of war, 184
- attorneys: authorization for, 136;
hearing of December 17, 206;
request for, 94–95, 100–101,
107; visitation with, 203;
Wergin, 107, 131, 248, 267,
312
- authenticity, 489
- authority, external, 444
- authority, parents and children
and divine, 56
- authority, persons with greater,
318–19
- automobile, 134
- autonomy, 416–18, 463, 466, 484
- B minor Mass, 153
- Baedeker, 292
- Ballade*, 149
- Bamberg, Knight of, 307–8, 309
- baptism: call of God through, 389;
delay of, 317–18; of Dietrich
Wilhelm Rüdiger Bethge, 285,
303–4, 317, 359, 363, 369–70,
371, 373–74, 375, 386, 388–89,
406, 435, 493; infant, 477;
photographs of, 506; purity
through, 281; service of, 389,
392; understanding of, 383
- Barcelona, Bonhoeffer in, 93
- Battle for Rome*, 152
- battles *vs.* small skirmishes, large,
202
- Bavaria, 305, 314, 316, 475
- bearing, 36, 38

- beauty, concepts of, 320
 beauty of the world, 142–43
 behavior in contrast to speech, 372
 behavior in crises, 140, 154
 Behme, 536
 “being-for-others,” 487, 488–89
 bells, church, 27, 75, 84, 90
 below, view from, 20
 Berlin: air-raids, 106, 113–14, 119–20, 133, 169–70, 310, 534; dangers in, 185; Grete and children in, 88; Karl Friedrich in, 26–27, 64, 169; Maria in, 64; memories of rooms in, 509; parents and Karl Friedrich in, 306; Reich War Court, 108; Russian takeover of, 543; search for Bonhoeffer, 535–36; travel to and from, 306; war and, 105, 111, 113–14, 116, 195, 205, 231, 273, 430
Berner Geist und Zeitgeist, 49, 63, 71, 78, 152, 187
 Berneuchen movement, 422
 betrayal, 480
 beyond, that which is, 481
 Bible: cities in, 379; comfort of, 28; health and happiness in, 479; memorization of, 31; nonreligious interpretation of, 465; outward and inward life in, 447; possession of, 24; in prison, 155; reading the, 314, 371; Rembrandt, 134, 170; war and need for, 181
 biographical information, 268–70
 birth of Dietrich Bethge, 275–77, 278–79, 280, 284
 birthdays: Adolph Hitler, 349; Bonhoeffer, 256, 257, 258, 264, 273, 274, 277–78, 286, 533; Dietrich Bethge, 275–77, 278–79; Eberhard Bethge, 494–96, 498, 500, 508, 510, 524; Karl Ludwig Bonhoeffer, 315–16, 328; letter to Bonhoeffer, 243–45; Maria Wedemeyer, 330, 345; Paula Bonhoeffer, 531; Ruth von Wedemeyer, 332; Ursula Bonhoeffer Schleicher, 374
 Black Forest, 441
 blackmail, religious, 261, 446
 blessed, the word, 393
 blessing, cup of, 479
 blessing and the cross, 479, 506
 blessing in Old Testament, 479
 Blümlein variations, 233
 Bologna, 434
 bombings. *See* air-raids
 book, outline for new, 484–85
 books, Bonhoeffer’s library of, 170

- books in last will and testament,
134
- boredom, notes on, 41, 42
- Borghese, 434
- Borkum, 128
- Borsig, 185
- boundaries, defense of human,
14–15, 358
- boundaries, God at the, 358
- boundary situation, 156–57, 289
- bourgeois element and existence,
28, 251
- bourgeoisie from Christian
perspective, 157–58
- brains, effects of imprisonment on,
114
- Brandis, 331
- bread and health, 112, 117
- Briefe der Liebe aus 8 Jahrhunderten*,
149
- Brocken, 280
- brotherhood and friendship, 262
- brotherly instinct, 358
- Bucharest, 305
- Buchenwald, x
- Bundorf, 535–36
- burdens and more than one can
bear, 34
- burdens of marriage, 56
- busyness, urge for, 42
- “By Powers of Good,” 530–31
- Calderon volumes, 66
- call of God and baptism, 389
- call of Jesus Christ, answering,
468–69
- calling, purpose and meaning of
our, 499–500
- calling to be a pastor, 72
- calmness and Christians, 251
- calmness and nurture, 490
- Canosa, meeting in (1077), 461,
463
- Cantate Sunday, 365
- cantus firmus*, 387–88, 390, 397
- Capernaum, centurion at, 468
- capture of Australian soldier, 122
- car, 170
- Carmina Burana*, 464
- Castell di Medici, 434
- cathedrals, 272, 298, 308
- Catholicism: Catholic confessor,
386; celibacy, 296;
contemplative orders, 49;
ethics, 192–93; ground
surrendered by, 407; historical
views on God, 419; Holy
Week, 291–92; identification
with, 488; Protestant
communication and, 166;
Reformation and, 149;
rejecting, 408; rules and

- commandments in, 350; status of, 237, 285
 cause of Christ, 156
 Cecilia Metella, 319
 censorship, 27, 60, 71, 533
 center, God in the, 358, 362, 397
 centurion at Capernaum, 468
 certainty and living in faith, 216, 502
 Chalcedon, 388
 challenges, value of, 495
 change, Christians and effecting, 160
 change and circumstances, 206
 change *vs.* development, 436
 chaplaincy: Bethge's hopes for, 362; contacts regarding, 283, 304, 359–60, 372, 386, 462; in Italy, 416; process to become, 374, 392, 415–16, 417, 438; regulations on, 405–6
 chaplains, 76, 304
 character, good, 448
 character formation, 495
 Charité hospital, 542
 Charlottenburg interrogation prison, 541
 chastity, 481
 chess and Eberhard Bethge, 503
 chess theory, 66, 104, 116, 133, 153, 230
 children: absence from, 267; birth of, 224–25, 280, 441; Christ receiving, 468; desire for, 202; of Eberhard and Renate Bethge, 86, 101, 188, 241, 254, 259, 275–77; as gifts from God, 56, 178; of Karl Friedrich Bonhoeffer, 74–75; names of, 219; parenting of, 504; protecting from air-raids, 104, 106; war and, 141, 145
 choices, making, 436
 Christian life, 234, 253
 Christianity: aristocratic, 408; emotional balance, 81; encounter with concrete human being, 477; essence of, 422; freedom and, 149; Greek mythology *vs.*, 431; powerlessness of God, 467; redemption and, 438–39; religionless, 355–57; religions *vs.*, 467; resurrection, 439; suffering and, 16–17; this-worldliness of, 473–74; unconscious, 477, 507; weaknesses and, 271–72, 358; wholeness of, 398
 Christian(s): anti-, 419; apologetics, 419–20; becoming, 474; being, 468;

- educated people and, 263;
 endurance of detention, 86;
 God's own pain and, 467; *homo
 religiosus vs. human being*, 473;
 hope *vs.* illusion, 476; passion
 and, 387; pride and, 250–51;
 problems, 399; tradition,
 importance of, 407
 “Christians and Heathens,” 451,
 467
 Christmas: celebration by family,
 184, 196, 224, 227, 247;
 celebration in prison, 162, 184,
 199, 204; Day, 219–20; Eve of,
 205, 216–19; frontline, 202;
 letters, 204–6, 209–14;
 meaning of, 205–6; prison and,
 205, 211–12, 214, 225
 church, the: baptism and, 318;
 “being-for-others,” 487,
 488–89; brotherhood and, 252;
 in the center, 358; collapse of,
 149; defending self, not others,
 487; divine mandate and, 252;
 freedom, sphere of, 252–53;
 impact on masses, 487;
 preservation of, 383, 496;
 religion and, 365; stagnation
 of, 485; status of religion, 237;
 tasks for future of, 488–89;
 understanding one another
 and, 76; world and, dispute
 between, 420–21
 church bells, 27, 75, 84, 90
 Church Ministry, 405–6
 Cicerone, 485
 circumstances and changes, 206,
 355
 city life, 378–79
 civil courage, 6–7
 Civitacastellana, 434
 clarification plant, spiritual, 214,
 239, 301, 320, 502
 classicism, 308, 309
 Claudius hymn, 275
 clavichord, 134, 171
 clenching of teeth, 250–51
 clergy, disconnectedness of, 447
 clerical domination, 149
 clericalism, 466
 cognition, degrees of, 365
 comfort, false, 269
 coming of age, the world's,
 419–20, 422–23, 443, 448,
 466–67, 469
 commandments of God,
 suspension on principle of,
 12–13
 communion, authentic, 218
 community, Pentecost and
 celebration of, 75
 community, suffering in, 17, 499

- community and the weak and stupid, 12
- compassion, need for, 407
- compassion, profound, 491
- composure, 250–51
- compromise, fruitful, 6
- concealment, certain matters and evil, 194–95, 208
- concepts: abstract concept of future, 528; of beauty, 320; emperor concept, 308; ethical, 4, 281; friendship and sociological, 252; interpretation of worldly, 365, 463–67, 477; interpretations of Biblical, 488; mediating, 479; mythological, 364; nonreligious interpretation of Christian, 437, 446, 465, 477; of purity, 281, 447; of temperate, 281
- concerto grosso*, 464
- Concordat of Worms, 463
- Confessing Church, the: beliefs and identification with, 406, 488; conservative restoration, 422; errors of, 486–87; members of, 386; message of, 422; support found in, 504
- confession: conversation *vs.* talking *vs.*, 282; of faith, 444; longing for, 156; pastoral care and, 282; revelation of the concealed, 195; revision of question of, 489; “confessional matters,” 478
- confirmation of nephews, 328, 348
- congregations, Christ formed in, 465
- connections, value of, 213–14, 447
- conscience: actions leading up to prison, 216; age of, 355–56; confidence of clear, 61; failure of, 5; false guilty, 238; good, influence of others and, 444; return to Germany, 216; value of, 6; wisdom and stupidity, 12
- consequences, bearing, 216
- conservative restoration, 422
- consideration for others, 296
- consolation, offering, 269
- contemplation, life of, 49
- contemplation, need for, 407
- contempt for humanity, 11–12
- contentment and godliness, 379
- contentment and the church, 489
- continuity with the past, 351, 436
- conversation, meaningless talk *vs.* good, 343
- conversation, new happenings in, 444

- conversation *vs.* talking *vs.*
 confession, 282
 conversion of Saint Paul, 442
 cooking facilities, 415
 coping, 91, 218, 378
 cornflowers, 253, 286, 524
 correspondence, miracle of, 403
 corruption, state of, 194
 costly grace, 517
 counterpoint theme, 387–88
 country life, 378–79
 courage, civil, 6–7
 courage, coming events and need
 for, 354–55
 courage and action, 250
 courtier in Acts, 468
 covering, 194
 cowardice, 75–76, 290
 creativity, intellectual, 440–41
 Crimea, 463
 criminal justice reform, 212
 crisis, 408
 criticism and history, 8
 crosier and ring of Pope/Emperor,
 463
 cross, bless oneself with the, 165
 cross, blessing and the, 479
 cross, gift to Maria of, 225
 cross as principle, the, 479
 crucifixion painting, 134, 171
 cult of the human, 494, 509
 culture: classical antiquity and,
 309; cosmopolitan of old
 middle-class, 377; death,
 danger and, 253; education and
 friendship, 252; formation,
 309; knowledge of other, 310;
 universal human, 300
 cultus, 488
 cup of blessing, 479
 cynicism, 19–20, 177, 194, 202

 D major violin concerto, 274
 Dahlem, 236, 331
Daily Texts, Moravian, 111, 167,
 187, 216, 219, 221, 222, 235,
 249, 267, 279, 314, 332, 346,
 363, 370, 394, 403, 415, 473,
 496, 499, 510
 danger, 16, 486, 499
 Darwinism, 442
Das Britische Empire und die USA,
 354
Das Neue Lied, 321, 361
Das Wesen geschichtlicher Krisen,
 354
Das Zeitalter des Marius und Sulla,
 117, 129
Daumier und die Justiz, 261
 day of judgment, 18
 “Daz,” (*Deutscher Allgemeine*
 Zeitung), 35, 84

- death: acceptance of, 19; boundary of, 438–39; “Death of Moses, The,” 515–23; death row prisoners, 156, 163; dying and, 322; fear of, 358; foreordained, 392; of former students and pastors, 161, 288; freedom and, 480, 481; of friend, 261, 275; Jesus Christ overcame, 322; knowledge of resurrection and, 474; lust for, 429; of Maria’s father, 193; restoration and, 211; saved from power of, 392; sentences, 541; Socrates and, 236, 253; solution to, 358; source of life in, 499; “Stations on the Way to Freedom,” 498
- “Death of Moses, The,” 515–23, 524, 527, 528
- Decalogue. *See* Ten Commandments
- decisions, 9, 270, 418, 444
- deeds, 13, 129, 312, 480
- defeat, heroic, 8–9
- defense and Reich War Court, 94–95
- Definition of Chalcedon, 388
- deism, 465, 466
- demonic beauty, 320
- demythologizing the New Testament, 364
- dependency, acceptance of, 129
- depression, 156
- deprivations: bearing, 215; food, 117, 137–38; of freedom in Old Testament, 164; intensity of, 353; prison and, 200; psychological, 206–8; as trivial, 108; utilities, 121, 228
- desire, 141, 313, 400
- despair, xi, xv, 5, 41, 172, 257, 417–20, 464
- destiny, masters of own, 51
- destruction, understanding, 81
- detachment, 108, 352, 353
- deus ex machina*, 358, 440, 442, 465
- deutsche Musik*, 129
- Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 142, 354
- devotional life, 378, 510
- Dichtung und Musik*, 277
- Dieterich Publishing Co., 117, 129
- Dietrich publishing house, 49
- dignity and weakness, human, 490–91
- Dionysian beauty, 320
- diphtheria, 480, 482, 542
- Discipleship*, 192, 472
- discipline, arcane, 357, 365
- discipline and Christianity, 54, 474, 489, 497
- discontent, 42, 156
- discussion, need for, 220

- discussion *vs.* confession *vs.*
 talking, 282
- distress and false interpretations,
 269
- distress and turning to God, 444
- doctrines: "Doctrine of God,
 The," 212; "Doctrine of
 Predestination," 212; infinity of
 the universe, 466; Lutheran,
 421; philosophy of reason of
 state, 465; positivist revelation,
 365, 421, 422; restoration,
 210–11; salvation,
 individualistic doctrine of,
 364–65
- dogmatic observations, 421, 436
- Dogmatics*, 421
- domain of God, 447
- domination, clerical, 149
- Don Quixote*, 152
- Dort, Synod of, 444
- doubt, 156, 263
- dreams, notes on, 41
- Dresden, 169
- Du und das Wetter*, 117
- dullness, 42, 156
- Dünnhauptverlag, 354
- Dürer Apostles, 35, 134, 170, 236
- duty and response to evil, 5–6
- dying, art of, 322
- Easter, 29, 291–92, 321–22,
 332–34
- education: chief aims of, 281;
 meaning of, 236; problems of
 the uneducated, 270; simplicity
 and, 281; Socrates and, 236,
 253
- egoism, 350, 367
- eighteenth century, study of, 305
- "Eile mich, Gott, zu erretten," 211
- Ein Neues Lied*, 344
- "Eins bitte ich vom Herrn," 211
- emotions, 81, 156, 160, 205
- Emperor, crosier and ring of, 463
- emperor concept, 308
- empire (Reich), 326
- emptiness and authentic
 communion, 218
- endurance: acceptance and, 100;
 aloneness and, 355; boundary
 situation and, 156–57;
 Christians and, 86; patience
 and, 102, 430; in peace, 355;
 response to God, 37; separation
 and, 217–18, 236, 375; tension
 and, 334; test of, 118
- enemies, fighting, 381
- enemies, friends more dangerous
 than, 215
- enemies, love of, 192
- engagement to Maria Von

- Wedemeyer, 36, 38, 46, 65,
161, 201–2, 262–63
- England, 224, 428
- Enlightenment, 308
- envy, illusionism, power, worship
of, 489
- Epistle to the Romans, The*, 421
- epistula non erubescit*, 494
- erotic love, 387
- escapism and piety, 359
- eschatology, 311, 462
- essence of Christianity, 422
- estates and marriage, 52
- etsi deus non daretur*, 463, 464
- Eternal City, 297
- ethics: Aristotelian–Thomistic, 12;
Barth and, 421; breakdown of
Christian, 478; concepts and
confusion, 4; concepts and
simplicity, 281; existences and
friendship, 253; fanaticism,
failure of, 5; learning, 101; of
Saint Paul, 30; social, 478
- Ethics*, 157, 202, 482
- etsi deus non daretur*, 465–67
- Europäischer Hof, 239, 426, 427
- evacuation, 102, 323–24
- evangelia quadraginta dierum*, 253
- events: circumstances changed by,
354; come from God, 37;
detachment from, 108;
expectation of, 371; faith and,
404; meaning and, 370
- evil: good from, 8, 13, 140, 147;
justice and, 12–13; masquerade
of, 4–5; overcoming, 5–6;
stupidity and, 9–10; success
and, 7, 8
- example, significance of, 489
- executions of prisoners, 543
- existential philosophy, 408,
419–20, 436–37, 442, 448
- facts, God in the, 250
- failure of “the reasonable ones,”
4–5
- failures, shaken by, 474
- fairy tails, Hauff’s, 103
- faith: bearing “in faith,” 215;
confession of, 444; deeds and,
480; emotional balance and,
81; enabling, 398; events and,
404; lack of, 290; learning to
have, 474; multidimension of
life and, 408; participation in
Jesus Christ and, 487; purity
given back through, 281;
religion and, 422, 469; renewal
of, 496; resistance and
submission, 291; this-
worldliness of life, 474
- faithfulness, 202, 489

- fall, need for covering after the, 194
- falling away from God, the great, 419
- family: background, 235; care for members of, 181–82; generations of, 376; heritage, 376–77; as image of God’s fatherhood, 56; interconnectedness of, 123–24; story, 108, 133; wartime and managing, 483–84
- fanaticism, ethical, 5
- fantasizing, notes on, 43
- fascists, 509
- fate, 16, 68, 290–91, 310–11
- Faustian art, 321
- fear: air-raids, 167–68, 192; Christ’s, 239, 253; consequences of, 230; faith and, 264, 290; overcoming, 13; psalms and expression of, 253; sin and, 193–94; thoughts on, 177
- feelings, objectifying, 344
- Fehrbellin, 503
- fellowship, table, 165
- Festungstid*, 72
- fides directa vs. fides reflexa*, 477
- “Film of Notable Personalities,” 71, 92, 106
- fingers crossed, 310–11
- Finkenwalde, 134, 170, 178, 244, 293, 392, 507
- Finsterhorn cluster, 462
- fire, protection in, 106
- firm, standing, 4–6
- Fischer von Lissau*, 492
- Flak, conscription into, 535
- Flegeljahre*, 130, 146
- Florence, 213, 485
- Flossenbürg concentration camp, 535–36, 543
- food: availability of, 94, 242; prison and, 24, 304, 336–37; Renate’s need for, 320, 365; sharing, 166, 280, 303, 304, 312, 329; from Silesia, 408–9
- forgetting, 39, 42, 297–98
- forgiveness, 56–57, 157, 192, 281
- Forli, 198
- form, human and animal, 429
- forsaken by God, 467
- “Fortune and Calamity,” 431–33, 501
- fortune telling, 327
- Fra Angelico painting, 170, 254
- fragments and life, 292–93, 380–81, 397–98
- France, 510, 526
- Frau J. Treibel*, 101
- Frauenliebe und Leben*, 59

- freedom: acting on own, 6; action and, 480; Christians and, 149, 160; death and, 480, 481; divine mandates and, 252; friendship and, 253; guilt and, 429; intellectual, Europe and, 463; in life, 51; *necessitas* of, 286; notes on, 40; poem about, 497–98, 502; suffering and, 480
- Freiburg, 393
- French impressionists, 320
- Friedrichsbrunn: beauty of, 49, 94; books sent to, 464; condition of, 195–97; Emmi and children, 61, 84; enjoyment of, 101, 115, 140–41; future wedding in, 465; Karl Friederich in, 273, 542; memories of, 280; refuge from war, 104, 113, 121, 195–96; Susanne in, 93; Ursula in, 28; war in, 246
- “Friend, The,” 510–14
- friends, trust in, 381
- friendships: brotherhood and, 262; childhood friends *vs.* adult, 162; cornflower in wheat field as image of, 286; Eberhard Bethge, 155–59, 299–300; expectations of, 275; marriage *vs.*, 229; stability and status of, 203, 228–29, 252–53; terrifying aspect of, 480
- Fuchs, 224
- fugues, fragments and the whole, 293
- Furtwängler concert, 152
- future: abstract concept of, 528; condition, 462; living as if no, 313; most important question for, 402; new generation and, 382–83; optimism for, 18; solutions for a, 9; of world, 383–84
- G minor sonata, 163
- Gardening: difficulties in, 150; family enjoyment of, 27, 33, 83–84, 88, 101, 123; harvest and the fall, 115, 138–39; receipt of produce, 69
- Geld und Geist*, 35
- General Command intelligence check, 416
- generations, tasks of new, 380–83
- German army, *see* military
- German Christians, 193
- Germany, viii, xi, 7, 105, 292, 320, 505; fate of, 216, 515–23; nationalism, 74
- Geschichte als System*, 354
- Geschichte der Akademie*, 292

Geschichte der christlichen

Liebestätigkeit, 69

Geschichten aus alter Zeit, 185

Gestapo, viii, x, 416, 530, 535,
537, 539–40, 541

Gethsemene, 467, 474

gifts: for Dietrich Bethge, 283,
285, 385; fur sleeping bag, 283;
of God and worldly happiness,
208–9; joy of giving, 373; for
Maria Wedemeyer, 154, 225;
naïveté, 281; poems, 507

giving and receiving, 129, 182,
508–9

Glocke, 446

Gnadenberg, 90

goals, importance of, 299

goals, the great, 370

goals and lack of planning, 292

God: accomplishments of, 355;
“*etsi deus non daretur*” 463–64;
in the center, 358; danger and,
499; domain of, inner life as,
447; expulsion from the world,
441–42, 446, 477; in the facts,
250; falling away from, 419;
finding in what we know, 399;
forsaken by, 467; guidance of,
52, 501–2; guide of history, 8;
honoring by enjoying life, 251;
in human form, 487; marriage

and, 51–57; as nature, 465;
nonreligious interpretation,
364; pain of, 467; perceivable
unity, 428; relationship to, 487;
religion and, 478, 487; as
stopgap, 399, 486; suffering in
this world of, 474; trust in, 279;
way of, 410; weak and
powerless in the world, 467;
who is, 487; will of, 52, 206,
499; without, 408; as working
hypothesis, 418–19, 466–67,
486

“God believers,” 296

godchildren: Christoph Dohnanyi,
130; Dietrich Wilhelm Rüdiger
Bethge, 275–77, 374, 375, 389;
Marianne Leibholz, 84

godparents: of Dietrich Bethge,
231, 285; Eberhard Bethge and
Bonhoeffer as, 254; Eberhard
Bethge as, 239; roles of, 396

gods of ancient Greece, 428–29,
431

golden chain, 56

good comes from bad, 8, 13, 140,
147

Good Friday, 27–29, 30, 153, 291,
311, 330, 331, 363

good news, torment of, 285

goodness, human, 448

- goodwill of others, 378
 gospels and redemption, 415, 439
 Gothic art, 321
 Göttingen, 114, 273
 grace, baptism as gift of, 318
 grace, heart made secure by, 192
 “Grandfather, The,” 495
 graphology, 329, 350
 gratitude: acceptance of difficulties
 with, 37–38; joy in, 218;
 keeping past present, 157;
 memories and, 490; notes on,
 40; for parents, 25, 47, 226,
 354, 531–32; for past and
 present, 474; in prison, 164; for
 Ruth von Wedemeyer, 332–33
 greatness of heart, 16–17
 Greek mythology, 428–29, 431
Grosse Männer: Biographien, 533
 ground surrendered by
 Protestants, 406–7
 growing pains, 352
grüne Heinrich, 101, 107, 146, 187,
 220
 Grunewald, 441
 Grunewald reproduction, 170
 Guben, 373
 guidance of God, 52, 501–2
 guilt and freedom, 429
 “guldne Sonne,” 60
 habituation, 118
Habitus, 299
 Hades, 428, 439
 Hadrian’s villa, 319
 hand writing analysis, 329, 350
 Hanover, 64
 happiness: earthly, 160, 208–9;
 marriage and, 51; notes on, 42;
 suffering and, 479, 506
 hardships, sensitivity to, 351–52
 Harz Mountains, 168, 273, 280–81
Häuser über dem Rhein, 72–73
 Havel region, 302
 healing, 41, 442–43, 468, 479
 health: asthma, 49, 79; of
 Christoph, 126; cold
 symptoms, 90, 135, 139; of
 Dietrich Bethge, 289, 365; of
 Eberhard Bethge, 161, 317; flu,
 279, 283, 294, 304; of Hans
 Dohnanyi, 542; of Hans
 Walter Schleicher, 224;
 lumbago, 86, 101, 135; of
 Maria Wedemeyer, 106, 465,
 484; medical care, 117; mental,
 156, 216, 246; of mother, 493,
 507, 534, 543; of parents, 107,
 147, 190, 191, 269;
 rheumatism, 150, 151, 163;
 stomach and intestinal, 112,
 117

- hearing, legal, 168, 206
- hearing according to disposition
of heart, 44
- heart, biblical sense of, 448
- heart, greatness of, 16–17
- hearts, winning, 421
- heat, managing, 99
- helping others, 273
- heritage from parents, 204–5
- Herzlieb cupboard, 258, 277, 286
- hesitation, 216
- heteronomy, 466
- high priestly prayer, 30, 44
- hilaritas*, 248, 267, 307–8, 311, 326
- history: of the academy, 305;
connections to eras in, 305; as
continuum, 309; fulfilled/
unfulfilled depending on, 39;
guide of, 8; influencing course
of, 381; success and, 8–9
- holier-than-thou, 447, 448
- Holy Spirit and Pentecost, 393
- home, described, 54
- home, earth is not our, 208
- home as image of eternal home, 56
- honesty, English hypocrisy *vs.*
German, 194
- honesty and strength, 10
- Hope, 35, 85, 87, 102, 114, 119,
124, 129, 145, 155, 162, 165,
172, 176, 185, 195, 197, 214,
215, 232, 275, 279, 190, 294,
299, 318, 328, 342, 357, 259,
267, 493; of Easter, 29,
259, 437; for future, 375, 378;
hopelessness, 414, 423, 460,
474, 481, 533; power of, 18
- “Hort, Ihr Herrn, und Lasst Euch
sagen,” 60
- hubris, 429, 489, 494
- human beings, xvi, 11–12, 14, 19,
45, 51, 53, 56, 76, 172, 194,
238, 252, 322, 354, 356,
379–80, 381, 397, 405, 510;
autonomy of, 416, 463, 484;
God becoming human, 11,
397, 416–17, 445, 465, 485;
and Christ, 437, 471–72, 475,
497
- human form, 429
- human goodness, 448
- human predicament, 423
- humanism, 309
- humanity, contempt for, 11–12
- humanity, preservation of, 52
- humility, 489
- humor, 39, 81, 235, 308, 479, 481
- hunger and family members, 176
- Hungerpastor*, 139, 146
- hymnals, Moravian community,
278
- hymns: Ascension, 344; baptism

- and, 392, 395; Claudius, 275;
 coping with, 200; Dietrich
 Bonhoeffer, 525; “earth is not
 our home,” 200; Easter, 321;
 Heinrich Schütz, 210–11;
 Hugo Wolf, 38; *Imitatio
 Christi*, 210–11; New Year’s,
 226–27; Paul Gerhardt, 24–25,
 210, 462, 473; Pentecost, 72,
 75; Schütz, 39, 392
- hypocrisy, German honesty *vs.*
 English, 194
- hypothesis, God as working,
 418–19, 466–67, 486
- “I stand here at your manger,” 210
- icons, 134, 170, 496, 508
- Ideale and Irrtümer*, 79, 82
- idealizing the past, 39
- ideas, origin and clarification of,
 158
- idolatry, 438, 462
- illusion, 40, 194, 476
- illusionism, power and envy,
 worship of, 489
- Imitatio Christi*, 210, 216
- immanent justice, 12–13
- impatience, understandable, 215
- impatience and Christians, 160
- impressionist painters, French, 320
- imprisonment, effects of, 114
- independence, *see* autonomy;
 freedom
- Indians in America, 300
- indictment, 182
- infinity of the universe, 466
- injustice, response to, 6
- inner life, 446–48
- innocence, family belief in, 78–79
- installation of Walter Dress, 73
- instinct, brotherly, 358
- insurance industry, 486
- intellect and intellectualism:
 achievement and, 377; anti-,
 310; circumstances and, 69;
 creativity, and countries of,
 440–41; freedom in Europe of,
 463; sacrifice of, 204; stupidity
 and, 9–10
- intensive study *vs.* extensive
 learning, 293
- intercession, faithfulness in, 159
- intercession, weapon of, 119
- interpretations, Christological, 403
- interpretations, false, 269
- interpretations, religious/
 nonreligious, 364, 465, 488
- interrogation, 335, 338–39
- inwardness, passing of age of,
 355–56
- Irrungen, Wirrungen*, 101
- isolation in prison, 334, 482

- Isophan, 396, 406
- Israelites and name of God, 165
- Italy: travel in, 441; war in, 294–95, 312–13, 407, 460–61, 482–83, 527, 529; weather in, 440, 445, 485
- Jesus Christ: acceptance of humankind, 442; all found in, 499; “being-for-others,” 487; call of, 468–69; cause of, 156; claim on the world of, 443; comfort to the thieves, 261; congregations, Christ formed in, 465; despair of, 421; divine and human natures of, 388; greatness of heart, 15–17; healing the sick, 479; help of, 467; high priestly prayer, 30, 44; lord of the world, 357; marriage, foundation of, 56–57; meaning to modern people, 355–56; object of religion, 357; participation in, 487; revelation in, 408
- jewelry box, 134, 171
- jewelry for Maria Wedemeyer, 154
- “Jonah,” 529–30
- journalism, tabloid, 446
- joy: altruism and, 199; domestic, 35; longing for, 68; sorrow and, 30, 36–38, 44, 390
- judgment, 16, 32, 298, 382
- judgment day, 18
- judgments on uneducated and poor, 298
- Jürg Jenatsch*, 101
- justice, immanent, 12–13
- justice and reason, 381
- justification and circumcision, 357
- Kade, 126, 127, 133, 505
- Kalkreuth painting, 170
- Karolus, 199
- Keilverlag, 150
- Kein Hüsung*, 101
- Kieckow, 199
- Kiensegg, 89
- Kiepenheuer Verlat, 149
- Kinderszenen*, 360
- kingdom of God, 364–65, 383–84, 389, 443
- Kircengeschichte*, 69
- Klein Krössin, 199, 307
- Kleine Stücke*, 360
- Kniephof, 147
- Knight of Bamberg, 307–8, 309
- knock on wood, 310–11
- knowledge, finding God in our, 399

- knowledge of countries *vs.* classics,
 309–10
 Kohlhammer Verlag, 108
 Königsberg, 386, 431
 Köslin, 128, 170, 239
 Kottbus, 110
 Krössin, 242
Kultur der Renaissance, 348

 Lake Alba, 302
 Lake Nemi, 302
 lamb of God, 468
 Landhaus Clinic, 116
 landscapes: alpine, 171; drawings
 by Eberhard Bethge, 395;
 Germany and, 302; Italian,
 281–82, 301–2; paintings in
 southern countries, 320;
 winter, 196
 language of God, 76
 Laocoön, 254, 281, 294
 Lasbeck, 242
 last things, ready for, 332
 Last Will and Testament, 134,
 158–59, 170–71
 Lateran, 292
 laughter, notes on, 42
 law(s): German, 105; of God and
 grace, 192; human communal
 life, 12; life's basic, 12–13;
 obedience and, 105; of the
 world, 419
 leadership in family heritage, 377
 learning *vs.* study, 293
 leave from military, Eberhard
 Bethge's, 359–60, 370–71, 372
 leave from military, Hans Walter
 Schleicher, 401
 legal case: attendance at hearings,
 303; attitude towards, 369;
 counsel, 136; delays in, 307,
 319, 345, 364, 404; disposition
 of, 283; progress in, 483; status
 of, 287–88, 290
 legal profession and theological
 existence, 291
 legalism and baptism, 318
 Lehrter Strasse prison, 188, 541
 Leipzig: Karl Friedrich Bonhoeffer
 in, 26, 64, 151, 190, 324, 542;
 Susanne Bonhoeffer Dress in,
 196; war in, 273–74, 288
 leniency, 309
Lesebuch der Erzähler, 149
 letters: absence of, 121; biblical
 expressions about, 186–87;
 censorship of, 27, 60, 71, 533;
 Christmas, 204–6, 206–8;
 Christmas Letter 1943, 222–23;
 from Christoph Dohnanyi,
 122–23, 125–26, 130, 137,

- 227–28; delays and missing, 115, 118, 124–25, 128–29, 138, 188–89, 258, 265, 271, 362, 435, 528; eating, 202; to Eberhard and Renate Bethge, 249–56, 369–71, 375, 384–86, 393–95; from Eberhard Bethge, 186–89, 228–30, 230–31, 243–45, 264–68, 283–87, 294–98, 301–4, 326–27, 348–50, 359–62, 362–63, 405–8, 415–17, 424–26, 427–28, 433–37, 460–63, 503–7, 507–9, 509–10, 523–27, 527–29; to Eberhard Bethge, 155–61, 162–65, 165–66, 166–67, 167–68, 177–78, 178–80, 182, 191–95, 197–203, 206–9, 209–14, 219–20, 246–49, 260–64, 268–70, 270–72, 274–76, 276–78, 279–82, 283–84, 289–91, 291–94, 298–301, 307–12, 312–15, 317–19, 319–21, 321–23, 327–30, 343–46, 350–52, 363–66, 365–67, 367–69, 372–74, 386–88, 388–93, 395–96, 396–97, 397–99, 400–401, 403–4, 408–9, 409–10, 415, 417–23, 423–24, 430–31, 437–40, 440–43, 444–49, 463–67, 467–69, 473–75, 475–76, 477, 478–80, 484–85, 489–91, 491–93, 494–97, 500–503; effects of, 523; from father, 60–61, 87, 93–94, 116, 150–51, 190–91, 245–46, 256–57, 306–7, 324–26, 533–34, 534–35; to father, 315–16; from father to military, 43; frame of mind for writing, 288; for Friedrich Justus Perels, 417; from Hans von Dohnanyi, 27–28; to Hans von Dohnanyi, 37–39; to Hans Walter Schleicher, 401–2; importance of, 68, 228, 353, 397; from Karl Friedrich, 26–27, 46–47, 64–65, 73–75, 88, 104–5, 113–14, 121–22, 168–69, 273–74, 323–24; keeping theological, 449; lack of, 398–99; lost and missing, 367, 368, 389, 405, 416, 423, 436, 467; to Maria, 102, 118; Maria to her mother, 535–36; military, 26, 43, 45; military prosecutor, 130–31; from mother, 32, 58–60, 62–63, 65–67, 72–73, 78–79, 83–84, 89–90, 105–7, 115, 119–20,

257–58; to mother, 531–32; from parents, 23, 44–45, 70–71, 132–33, 138–40, 147–48, 223–25, 536; to parents, 24–25, 29–31, 34–37, 47–49, 67–70, 75–78, 80–82, 84–87, 90–93, 94–95, 99–102, 102–4, 107–9, 110–11, 111–13, 117–19, 123–25, 128–30, 135–36, 140–42, 142–44, 145–47, 148–50, 151–53, 153–55, 184–86, 204–6, 225–27, 242–43, 287–89, 304–6, 353–54, 532–33; from parents to Eberhard Bethge, 482–84; regularity of, 287–88, 306; for Reinhold Niebuhr, 392; for release of Dietrich to Reich War Court, 144–45; from Renate Bethge, 126–28, 239–42, 258–60; to Renate Bethge, 278–79; restrictions on writing, 24, 26, 29, 37, 46, 60, 67, 95, 99, 334; from Rüdiger Scheicher, 33–34, 330–32; to Ruth von Wedemeyer, 332–33; sharing, 114, 362, 436; short, 396–97; from Susanne Bonhoeffer Dress, 57–58, 195–97; to Ursula Bonhoeffer

Schleicher, 374; from Ursula Schleicher, 346–48
 liberal reductionism, 422
 liberal theology, 406, 408, 420, 421, 422, 485
 liberation, external and internal, 10
 liberation and suffering, 480
 liberation of self, 487
Lichtenstein, 103
Lienhard, 533
 lies, 202
 life: abundant, 314; center of, 408; early adversities, 207; enjoyment of, 251, 474; fragmentary nature of, 380–81, 397–98; fundamental truths, 378; God as center of, 399; God as solution, 442; interconnections of, 123–24; intimate, 446; meaning of, 29, 499–500; polyphony of, 387, 398; in prison, 30, 31, 35, 47–48, 68, 76, 81–82, 99, 125, 129; problems in, 77; safe keeping, 371; satisfaction with situation, 345; understanding, 48; wholeness of, 397–98
 limitations, Christianity and human, 358
 Lippi nativity scene, 178

- Lissa, 164, 177, 182, 188, 191, 231, 237, 240, 346
- literature, opinions on, 180
- lives, building from pieces, 288
- lives, fragmentary and unfinished
nature of, 288, 292, 293
- living without God, 465–67
- Lobe den Herren*, 23, 315, 321
- loneliness, 42, 75
- longing: of angels, 355; Christians and, 160; managing torment of, 207–8; maturity and, 313; personal, 344; for reunion, 286; sense of, loss of, 361
- Lord's Supper, 156, 157, 281, 479
- losses, bearing, 190
- lost years, 345
- love: counterpoint theme and, 387–88; earthly, 387, 403; erotic, 387; of family, 80; of God, 208–9; of life and the earth, 192; marriage and, 52–53, 368; of neighbor, 313, 352; notes on, 40, 41; two kinds of, 368
- Lubbe trial, 71, 94
- luck, 436
- lumbago, 86, 101, 135
- Lutherans: on Catholicism, 289; divine mandate and, 252; doctrine of ministry, 421; infant baptism, 477; orthodox, 486; ritual, 421; ultimate and penultimate, 192
- Lyon, 526
- Magdeburg, 248, 491
- Magdeburg Cathedral, 272, 298, 308, 320–21
- malice *vs.* stupidity, 9
- man of sorrows, 254, 281, 294
- mandates, divine, 252, 286
- manual tasks, 378
- Mappe des Urgrossvaters*, 87
- Marburg, 169
- “Mariages,” 248
- Mariankirche, 331
- Mark Brandenburg, 44, 59
- marriage: age differences in, 234–35; benefits of, 189, 199–200, 203, 228–29; burdens of, 56; compatibility in, 180; described, 52–57; divine mandate and, 252; of Eberhard and Renate Bethge, 166, 278; forgiveness in, 56–57; foundation of, 56–57; friendship *vs.*, 229; God as founder of, 52; responsibilities in, 51; unity in, 180, 238, 262–63, 296–97; war and, 135–36, 161

- material things and spiritual realities, 77
- maturity, essential part of, 313
- meaning, the term, 500
- meaning and events, 370
- Mecklenburg, 346
- medical care: fatigue, 161;
 medicine, 254, 287, 396, 406;
 prison, 112; prison and air-raid attacks, 183–84; rheumatism, 150, 151, 163
- medical corps, 248, 373, 374, 385
- mediocrity, settling for, 495
- mediocrity, wisdom of, 6
- meditations, 45, 510
- Melozzo da Forli paintings, 198
- Memoiren aus dem Totenhaus*, 464, 476
- memories: bells and, 84;
 childhood, 280; comfort of, 90;
 Easter, 321; enjoyment of, 445;
 fading, 39; importance of, 315, 393–94; remembering, 42, 43;
 strengthen or torment, 375;
 wallowing in, 218
- memory, form and functions of, 69
- memory, loss of, 269–70, 297–98
- memory of what is possible, notes on, 39
- mental patterns, notes on, 39
- Meran, 186
- messengers for Bonhoeffer, 385
- metaphysical interpretation, 364–65
- metanoia, 466, 468, 474
- methodism: pietist-, 421;
 secularized, 420, 423, 442;
 unhealthy, 479; ways, 282
- Mexican rug, 134
- Michelangelo's *Pietà*, 284, 319
- Middle Ages, 253, 308, 466
- middle-class heritage, 377
- Mikrobenjäger*, 112, 118
- military: conditions for Eberhard Bethge, 187, 360–62;
 conditions in Italy, 369;
 Dietrich and the, 203, 213, 215–16, 230, 265–66, 312;
 leave, effects of, 286; leave and finding ones' unit again, 407, 410, 416–17, 426, 427, 433–34, 435, 441; pecking order, 287;
 postings of Eberhard Bethge, 160, 198; travel, 230
- Military Intelligence Office, connection to, 200
- military prosecutor, 26, 43, 45
- ministry, revision of preparation for, 489
- Ministry for Church Affairs, 416
- miracle of tongues, 76

- miracles, nonreligious
 interpretation of, 364
Missa Solemnis, 523, 524
 mission work of Eberhard Bethge,
 503
 missionary drive, 361
 mistakes, good from, 13
 mistrust, 446–47
 Moabit military prison, 541
 moderation, 309, 481, 489
 modern theology, 485
 modernity, 309
 modesty and the church, 489
 money: gifts of, 160, 166, 221,
 227, 236, 251; will and
 distribution of, 170
 monks, benefits of, 49
 Monte Pincio, 292
 Monte Rosa group, 462
 moon phases, interest in, 245
 moral memory, 270
 moralizing, 438, 464
 morals of the people, 487
 Moravian community hymnal,
 278
 Moravian *Daily Text*, *See Daily*
 Texts, Moravian
 mornings, difficulties of, 160
 morphology, 309
 mother-in-laws, 328, 349, 367–68
 motorcycle, 134, 170
 motto: what do you want..., 478
 Munich, 352, 426, 430, 435, 445,
 467
 “Münich,” 129
 music: Advent, 179–80; baptism
 and, 371; on birthdays, 274;
 dangers of, 211–12; with
 Eberhard Bethge, 232–33;
 family enjoyment of, 23, 32,
 33, 36, 38, 59, 60, 78, 128, 147,
 152, 259, 300, 315; friends and
 enjoyment of, 163, 165;
 funeral, 211; hymns (*See*
 hymns); importance of, 378;
 instruments, 35, 59, 66, 78, 85,
 127, 137, 259, 322, 525; Maria
 Wedemeyer and, 85, 89, 91;
 modern, 344; musical score,
 525; piano, 259, 360, 525;
 polyphony in, 388; psalms and
 songs, 36, 44, 50, 51, 59, 60,
 197, 208, 210, 410, 525; study
 of, 305; wedding, 59;
 Wedemeyer home, 325
 Muslims, tolerance toward, 308
 mythology, Greek, 428–29, 431
 mythology and Christianity, 422
 myths, redemption, 438–39

Nachsommer, 82, 87, 146, 347
 naïveté, 281

- name of Dietrich Bethge, 219,
236, 241, 254, 259, 275–76,
278–80, 376–77, 391
- name of God, 165
- naming children, 219
- Naples, 441
- Napoleon pictures, 264
- Naseband, 526
- nativity scenes, 178, 179, 184
- natura corrupta*, 319
- nature: beauty of, 142–43;
enjoyment of, 25, 81, 281, 428;
God is, 465; independence
from, 486
- Naumburg Cathedral and statues,
308, 321
- necessity, historical, 4
- necessity and friendship and divine
command, 252
- necessity and principle, 13
- Negroes in America, 300
- neighbor, love of, 313, 352
- Nettuno, landing at, 250, 259
- Neues Lied*, 167, 178
- New Testament: apolitical
character of, 463; on baptism,
318; demythologizing, 364;
health and happiness in, 479; in
light of Old Testament, 359;
mythology and, 422; sharing in
the suffering of Christ, 468;
wishes *vs.* Old Testament, 202
- New Year's Eve, 226–27
- news, difficulty getting, 195
- Nibelungen, 308
- Nietzschean Engaldine, 281
- night, notes on, 42
- night, spirit of, 428
- “Night Voices,” 452–60, 484
- nihilists, 438
- nineteenth century, study of, 305
- nobility, new sense of, 14, 15, 236
- noble simplicity, 281, 303
- nonreligious interpretation of
Christian concepts, 437, 446
- nonreligious people, drawn to,
358
- nonreligiousness and God, 469
- notes: of Bonhoeffer, 39–43;
Miscellaneous Notes, 480–82;
Notes I, Tegel, end of June
1944, 428–29; Notes I, Tegel,
July–August 1944, 477–78;
Notes II, Tegel, end of June
1944, 429; Notes II, Tegel,
July–August 1944, 478; Tegel,
July 1944, 444
- novelty, notes on, 42
- “Nun danket alle Gott,” 60

- “O bone Jesu,” 211
 “Oak Forest,” 302
 Oberbehme, 475
 obstacles, value of, 495
 occupation in prison, 337
 office of marriage, 52
 office of pastor, 57
 Old Testament: afterlife in, 462;
 church at the center, 359;
 health and happiness in, 479;
 name of God and Jesus Christ
 in, 192; passionate love in, 387;
 prophetic, 407; punishment in,
 164; reading of, 157;
 redemption in, 438; saving
 one’s soul in, 364; sins in New
 Testament *vs.*, 193; wishes *vs.*
 New Testament, 202
 omnipotence, omniscience,
 omnipresence, 487
 opportunism, fruitlessness of, 8
 oppression, standing up against,
 407
 optimism, 18, 255, 256, 258, 308
 opus 111, 321
 Oranienburg concentration camp,
 542
 order, importance of, 207–8
 order and marriage, 53–56
 organizations, dangers of, 486
 organizations, small *vs.* colossal,
 382
 original sin, 319
 Osram, 323
 outcasts, 446
 outcomes in God’s hands, 249–50
 outer life *vs.* inner life, 446–48
 “over night, over night, joy and
 sorrow come,” 36, 38
 overcoming, meaning of, 253
 overcoming adversities, 195
 Oxford movement, 422
 packages: appreciation for, 91;
 Christmas, 219, 225–26;
 delight in, 29, 36–37, 49, 69,
 72, 77, 78, 124, 135, 148–49,
 151; delivery of, 147, 542;
 family contributions to, 80;
 food, 90, 99, 337; importance
 of, 353; need for, 181
 pain, 42, 250, 251, 381
 Palestine, 212, 505
Palestrina, 232
 pantheism, 465, 466
 papacy, struggle against, 308
 parades, 435
 paralysis, 480, 482
 parents, gratitude for, 47, 315–16
 parents, importance of good, 378
 parents, roles of, 504, 525

- parsonage life, 376–77
 partisan activities, 461, 509, 527
 Passau, 543
 passing time, notes on, 39
 passion, tempering, 387
 Passion Narrative, 30
 Passiontide, 311
 past: continuity with, 351, 436;
 future and, 42, 43, 197, 270,
 275; holding on to, 409–10;
 longing for something, 209;
 notes on, 40, 41; present,
 keeping, 157; relationship to,
 basis of, 309; roots in, 377–78;
 separation from, 42
 “Past, The,” 411–15, 424–26
 pastoral care, problems in, 270
 pastoral care and confession, 282
 pastors: arrests and duties, 80, 86;
 calling to be, Bonhoeffer’s, 72;
 care of family, 57; deaths of,
 109, 161; need for a, 156;
 prying into sins of others,
 446–47; robustness of, 269;
 wives of, 57, 268
 patience: church and, 489;
 difficulties of, 102; need for,
 76–77; response to God must
 be, 37; test of, 108, 132, 140,
 240
 Patience, card game, 116
 Patmos, 75
 Pätzig: belongings in, 110; books
 in, 464; friends in, 535; Maria
 Wedemeyer in, 124, 125, 141,
 535; parents in, 100, 242, 289,
 305, 306, 307, 319, 323, 324,
 328, 346, 349, 405, 437, 475
 peace: adversity and, 192; desire
 for, 112; enduring in, 355; in
 face of unalterable, 120;
 feelings of, 164; God with
 humankind, 383–84; inner,
 251
 peasant ethic, 447
 peasants’ revolt, 149
Peccatum originale, 319
 penal systems theory, 164
 pencil, gold, 134
 pens, 170
 Pentecost, 72, 75–76, 78, 393–94,
 398
 penultimate and ultimate, 192, 357
 people, differences in, 267
 People’s Offering, 532
 perfection, 481
 peril, 19
 personal sphere, holding on to
 God in, 446
 personality of Bonhoeffer:
 assertion, 265; calmness of,
 250, 262; change in, 351;

- contempt for hypocrisy, 271;
 coping with past mistakes, 351;
 decision making, 418;
 empathy, 329; impatience with
 people, 255; peaceful and
 cheerful, 164, 355; questioning
 self, 200, 201–2; reserved and
 demanding, 247;
 scrupulousness, excessive, 290;
 sensitivity to rudeness, 166–67;
 solitude, love of, 343; talents
 and, 395–96; tyrannical and
 self-serving, 157, 180
- personality of Eberhard Bethge,
 201, 246–47, 299–301, 329,
 445
- personality of Klaus Bonhoeffer,
 418
- perturbatio animorum*, 322
- Pervitin, 396, 406
- Phänomenologie des
 Zeitbewusstseins*, 87
- philistinism, 310
- philosophers, existential, 419–20,
 436–37
- philosophy, study of, 305
- photographs of Dietrich Bethge,
 391, 394, 493, 506
- photographs of Eberhard Bethge,
 478–79
- physical nearness, impact of,
 29–30, 57, 77
- physical needs, importance of, 24
- physics, 394
- piano, grand, 35, 66, 78, 127, 134,
 170
- Pietà*, Michelangelo's, 284, 319
- pietists, 192, 421
- piety, natural, 477
- piety and escapism, 359
- Plahn Bookstore, 117
- plan of God and Eberhard Bethge,
 392
- playing along, 435
- Pleskau Lake, 526
- Plestrina*, 352
- Po, 527
- poems: “By Powers of Good,”
 530–31; “Christians and
 Heathens,” 451, 467; criticisms,
 430, 490, 501, 507, 508, 523,
 528; “Death of Moses, The,”
 515–23, 524, 527, 528;
 discussion of, 409–10, 424–26,
 437; by Eberhard Bethge,
 489–91, 491–93, 504–5, 528;
 “Fortune and Calamity,”
 431–33, 501; “Friend, The,”
 510–14; gift of, 507; “Jonah,”
 529–30; “Night Voices,”
 452–60, 484; notes on, 444;

- sharing, 449, 462, 484;
 “Stations on the Way to Freedom,” 497–98, 502; “The Past,” 411–15, 430; “Who Am I?,” 450–51
- poetry, characteristics of, 507
- poetry, Insel volume of German, 529
- poise, meaning of, 200
- political action, 13
- politics, crossier and ring of Pope/Emperor and, 463
- polyphony of life, 387, 390–91, 398
- Pope, crosier and ring of the, 463
- positivist doctrine of revelation, 365, 421, 422
- possession, notes on, 41
- possessions; claims to, 532–33; disposition of, 83, 85, 103, 106, 110, 122, 127–28, 133, 532–33; last will and testament, 134, 158–59, 170–71; notes on, 40
- Potsdam, 89, 224, 227, 241, 347, 430
- power, envy and illusionism, worship of, 489
- power, spirit of love, prudence and, 75–76
- power and stupidity, 10
- powerlessness, 249, 264–65
- praise, God elicits, 496
- prayer: answered, 371; deprivation of, 485; fear and, 253; for freedom, 160; God’s response to, 13; high priestly, 30, 44; inner life and, 446; intercessory, 119, 159, 500, 501; need for, 156; ninety-first Psalm, 410; not knowing what to pray, 478; for prisoners, 158, 171–73, 173–74, 174–75; in religionless Christianity, 357; thankful in, 490; in time of need, 260–61; war and, 181
- preaching texts, 465
- predestination, 212
- predicament, human, 423
- pregnancy: birth of son to Eberhard and Renate, 275–77; childbirth, 185; of Renate Bethge, 86, 101, 125, 133, 155–56, 166, 178, 188, 219, 224–25, 241, 248, 267, 270
- Prenzlau, 526
- present and future, 17–18, 162, 263
- pride, dangers of, 300
- pride, false, 182
- pride and Christians, 250–51
- pride in family, 140, 154
- priestly prayer, high, 30, 44

- principle(s); acts of freedom *vs.*, 6;
 cross as, 479; ethical fanaticism
 and, 5; ignoring success, 8;
 necessity and, 13; responsible
 action and, 9; suffering and,
 479; suspension of
 commandments, 12–13
- Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse, SS prison
 on, 537, 541
- prison; accomplishments in, 187;
 activities, 337; adjustment to *vs.*
 life in, 118; air-raids and, 177,
 337–38; cell as analogy for
 Advent, 165; Christmas in,
 205; communication within,
 338; concentration in, 154;
 conditions in, 99, 109, 181,
 185, 202, 542; effects of, 114,
 200, 353; exercise, 334; family
 connections and treatment, 335;
 food in, 336–37, 542; freedom
 in, 40; isolation, 334; Karl
 Friedrich Bonhoeffer on, 541;
 life in, 24, 30, 31, 35, 47–48,
 68, 76, 81–82, 99, 125; lighting
 in, 337; medical care, 150;
 move to different cell, 125;
 occupation, 337; Protestant
 Christians in, 377; psychosis,
 81–82; rights of prisoners, 335;
 sanitation in, 338–39; schedule
 in, 31, 107, 143, 163, 271;
 treatment by guards, 135;
 treatment upon incarceration,
 333–39; walking partners, 271;
 writing in, 129, 143, 146;
 young people and, 353
- prisoners: ages of, 312; air-raids
 and, 177, 337–38; behavior of,
 271–72; death of friend, 261,
 275; dependent on Bonhoeffer,
 prisoner, 193, 212, 254;
 execution of, 543; prayers for,
 158, 171–73, 173–74, 174–75;
 rights of, 335; treatment of,
 203, 335; visiting, 176
- private sphere, hanging on to God
 in, 446
- problems, coping with, 263, 267
- proletarian classes and longing,
 207
- promise, the term, 500
- promises of God, 496, 499
- promotions and Eberhard Bethge,
 435
- promotions of Eberhard Bethge,
 396, 445
- Propaganda, 254
- propaganda, ministry of, 71, 92
- Propaganda fide, 202
- prophetic, role of, 407
- protection and God alone, 392

- protest and Christians, 160
 Protestant–Catholic conversation,
 166
 Protestant Prussian world and
 divine mandates, 252
 Protestantism: historical views on
 God, 419; pietism, 486;
 rejecting and, 408; religion
 and, 486; theological progress,
 406–7
 providence, 372
 Prussia, east, 216
 Prussian Academy, history of, 264
 Psalms, 31, 50, 156, 253, 326, 361,
 410
 psychic pressure, 200
 psychology and deprivation, 24
 psychology and understanding
 humans, 448
 psychology of Kant, 69
 psychosis, prison, 81–82
 psychotherapy, 408, 419–20, 442,
 448
 public service, 377
 purification plant, water/spiritual,
 214, 239, 301, 320, 502
 purposes and circumstances, 370

 quality, pursuit of, 14–15
 questions, ultimate, 419, 442
 questions, “what for,” 385

 questions, “why,” 28, 37, 41
 quiet, longing for, 379

 rabble, 14–15
 Rackow language school, 141
 radicalism, fruitful, 6
 Radicofani, 301
 radio broadcasts, 360
 rain and protection from air-raids,
 434
 rations, 25, 64, 242
 reading genres, 157
 reason and justice, 381
 reason and religious
 understanding, 465
 reason and stupidity, 9, 11
 reasonable ones, failure of, 4–5
 rebellion of the inferior, 446–47
 receiving and giving, 182
 recognition, excitement of, 491
 recognition of God, 399
 Red Cross, 252, 484
 redemption, 415, 438–39
 reductionism, liberal, 422
 reflection, life of, 314
 reflection and strengthening of
 life’s impulses, 300
 reform, criminal justice, 212
 Reformation, theology and study
 of, 305

- Reformation, unintended
 consequences of, 149
- Reformation Day, 149
- refugees, shelter for, 325
- regrets, 157, 216, 345
- Reich (empire), 163, 326
- Reich War Court: appointment of
 legal counsel, 130–31; defense
 case, 94–95; location, 108, 115,
 138; visitation and, 101
- rejecting, Catholicism and
 Protestantism, 408
- relationships: age differences,
 234–35; with Eberhard Bethge,
 155–56, 176–77, 182, 186,
 197–98, 199–200, 203, 214–15,
 216–17, 220, 228, 232–34, 250,
 317, 344–45, 362, 384, 386–87,
 404, 410, 504, 506, 508;
 importance of, 494–95;
 intensive human, 509; with
 Maria Wedemeyer, 201–2,
 328, 424–26; Maria with
 Dietrich's parents, 132, 142,
 144, 147; mother/daughter-in-
 laws, 366–67, 435–36; with
 parents, 312; with Renate
 Schleicher Bethge, 218–19;
 sibling, 91
- religion: battle against, 421;
 Christianity not a, 477; church
 and, the, 365; condition for
 faith, 422; condition for
 salvation, 357–58; critique of,
 364–65; expulsion of God from
 the world, 441–42, 446, 477;
 God in, 419; God not a, 478;
 Jesus Christ as object of, 357;
 passing of age of, 355–56;
 relationship to God and, 487;
 save Christianity as a, 486;
 understanding, 465
- religionless Christianity, 355–57,
 364
- religionlessness, 435, 486
- religions, differences between, 488
- religiosity, suspicion of, 165
- religious act *vs.* faith, 469
- religious blackmail, 446
- religious interpretation, 364
- religious obligations and
 inhibitions, false, 468
- religious people, discomfort
 around, 358
- religious renewal, 422
- religious socialists, 421
- Rembrandt Bible and
 reproductions, 134
- remembered, being, 438
- Remembrance Sunday, 165
- remorse, notes on, 40
- Renaissance, 307–8, 309, 448

- Renaissance* (book), 266
 renewal, religious, 422
 renunciation of fulfilled life, 288
 repentance and keeping past
 present, 157
 Repentance Day, 153
 Report on Experiences during
 Alarms, 178–79, 183–84
 Report on Prison Life after One
 Year in Tegel, 333–39
 reputation, value of, 6
 resignation, 141, 206, 256–57, 314
 resistance *vs.* submission, 290–91
 respect for above and below, 15
 responses to God, 37
 responsibility for events, 404
 responsibility and confidence, 216
 responsibility and marriage, 55–56
 responsible action, 6, 11, 13,
 16–17
 responsible life, 11
 responsible ones, identity of, 6
 rest, need for, 407
 restlessness, 435
 restoration, conservative, 422
 restoration, doctrine of, 210–11
 restoration and religionless
 Christianity, 356–57
 resurrection, 192, 322, 358, 439,
 474
 reticence, 177, 349, 368
 return to Germany in 1939, 216
 revelation: “positivism of” (Barth),
 355, 363, 419, 420; theory of,
 421, 486
Reynard the Fox, 154
 rheumatism, 150
 rich young man loved by Jesus,
 468
Riddle of the New Testament, 69
 righteousness of God, 364–65
 Rignano, 434
 “Ring-a-Ring o’ Roses, I’m
 Dancing with My Wife,” 59
 ritual, role of, 407
 ritual in religionless Christianity,
 357
 rituals, Lutheran, 421
 Rocca di Papa, 302
 Romantic period, 302
 Rome, 254, 256, 270, 284, 291,
 434
 rugs, 134, 170
 Russia, 526
 sacrament, spirit visible in, 78
 sacrifice of intellect, 204
 sadness of the heart, 156
 saints, becoming, 474
 Sakrow: birth of Dietrich Bethge
 in, 279; Dresses in, 306;
 Eberhard and family in, 236,

- 394; lake in, 111; parents in, 100, 102, 103, 120, 245, 482; refuge in, 123, 125, 168, 185; Renate Bethge in, 310, 363, 430, 482; war and, 295
- salvation, church as institution of, 486
- salvation, individualistic doctrine of, 364–65
- salvation, religion as condition for, 357–58
- San Gimignano, 485
- Satan and permission from God, 289
- savings account, 134
- Saxony, 526
- scarlet fever, 542
- scarring over, time and, 42
- schedules, importance of, 207–8
- Schlönwitz, 178, 275, 301, 509
- scholarship, universal, 293
- Schwiednitz, 106
- science, God in, 399, 419
- Scotland Yard, 248
- script, universal, 76
- season, to everything there is a, 209
- secrecy, need for, 194, 446
- secrecy, truth and, 202
- secrecy about poetry, 409–10
- secrets, night as mother of all, 428
- secularized methodism, 420, 423, 442
- Seeckt barracks, 132
- seeing with intellect *vs.* senses, 492–93
- seizure of homes, 461
- self-assertion, 299, 301
- self-confidence of Saint Paul, 361
- self-deception, 6, 39, 195, 200
- self-determination, loss of, 187
- self-development, 351
- self-doubt, 200
- self-justification and soldiers, 296
- self-knowledge, 200
- self-love, selfless, 367
- self-pity, 39, 208
- self-preservation, 12–13, 383
- self-revelation by the gods, 429
- self-sufficiency, 182
- selfishness, 314
- selfless self-love, 367
- selflessness, 400
- sensitivity to hardships, 351–52, 353
- sentencing, guesses about, 166
- separation: Dietrich and Eberhard Bethge, 232–34; effects of, 373; enduring, 217–18, 236, 375; experience of time and, 41; faithfulness and, 400; fear of, 388; flesh (*savrx*) and, 297;

- longing of, 207–8; notes on, 39, 42
- September Bible, 274–75
- serenity, false, 160
- serenity, notes on, 40
- sermon, baptism, 386, 392, 404, 406, 415
- sermon, wedding, 50–57, 166, 188, 198, 238
- Sermon on the Mount, 448
- serving others and the church, 489
- Seven Hills, 244
- sexuality, 194, 201, 446
- shame, 32
- sharing, joy of, 176
- Sheol, 439
- shepherds at the manger, 468
- shortages, stationery, 360, 373
- Siebenk*, 130
- significance, degrees of, 365
- Sigurdshof, 178, 216, 275, 509
- silence. forced, 49
- Silesia, 371, 373
- simplicity, 20, 281, 303, 492
- sin and sinners: comprehension of, 358; made whole, 442; marriage and forgiveness of, 56–57; original, 319; prisoners and, 282; prying into, 446–47; weakness *vs.* strength, 447, 448; weakness *vs.* willful, 500
- sleep, notes on, 42
- sleeping bag, fur, 283, 304
- smoking: cigars, 221, 391, 438; enjoyment of, 30, 39, 69, 77, 82, 92, 186; pipe, 236, 506; productivity and, 502; ration cards, 25; restrictions on, 24, 30; supplies, 78, 82, 92, 124, 133, 147, 153, 163, 175, 179, 186; tobacco leaves, 148; “Wolf” cigar, 176, 179
- soap in prison, 338–39
- sociological concepts and friendship, 252
- soldiers; behavior of, 295, 302–3, 318, 360, 461; capture of Australian, 122; character of, 238, 287; spiritual matters and, 295–96
- solitude, longing for, 379
- solitude, love of, 220, 264, 343
- solutions and Christian answers, 399
- solutions to the unsolvable, 355, 358
- “Solveig’s Song,” 400
- sorrow and joy, 30, 36–38, 44, 390
- soul, disturbance of, 322
- soul, power of the, 486
- soul, preservation of, 380–81
- soul, saving our personal, 364–65

- southern peoples, character of, 303
Sozialpädagogik, 533
 Spandau, 132, 188, 230, 386
 speaking in tongues, 76
 Speyer, 346
 spheres of divine mandates, 252
 spirit becoming visible, 77–78
 spiritual development of children,
 300
 spiritual fruitfulness, ruin of, 207
 spiritual inheritance, 204–5
 spiritual life, 197
 spiritual matters and soldiers, 295
 spiritual pain of separation, 297
 spoons, Indian scorpion, 134, 170
 SS prison on Prinz-Albrecht-
 Strasse, 541
 St. Jakobi Church, 526
St. Matthew Passion, 153, 331
 St. Peter's Basilica, 284–85, 291
 St. Privat, 443
 standing firm, 4–6
 state and divine mandate, 252
 state hospital in Berlin, 542
 state of corruption, 194
 “Stations on the Way to
 Freedom,” 497–98, 502
 statues of Magdeburg. *See*
 Magdeburg Cathedral
Stechlin, 101
 Steglitz, 137
 Stettin, 128, 239, 526
 “Stock-Taking of Christianity, A,”
 502
 stopgap, God as, 399, 486
 stories, importance of telling, 506
 stories of bourgeois family,
 157–58
 strangers, discussion of private
 matters with, 208
 strength, speaking of God in, 358
 strength and adversity, 184
 strength and Christ, 500
 strength *vs.* weakness, 481
 studying *vs.* learning, 293
 stupidity, 9–12, 163, 444, 500
 Stuttgart, 346
 sublimation, 211
 submission, false, 251
 submission to God, 37
 submission *vs.* resistance, 291
 substitutes, cheap, 207–8, 217–18,
 275
 success, ethical problems of, 7–9
 suffering: dramatizing, 311, 327;
 in faith, 215; freedom and, 480;
 of God, 467–68, 474; goodness
 and, 279; happiness and, 479;
 helping others, 273; liberation
 and, 480; meaning of, 20, 29;
 of others, 16, 296; as principle,

- 479; response to, 38; source of joy in, 499; spiritual and bodily, 31
- “Stations on the Way to Freedom,” 498; ultimate, 29
- suicide, 43, 156
- sun, thoughts on the, 440, 445
- supernatural, belief in, 310
- supernatural and hubris, 429
- superstition, 185, 310–11
- supplies: meaning of receiving, 29–30; requests for, 25, 30–31, 36, 49, 69, 101, 108–9, 533
- survival, worthy of, 382
- survivors and forgetting the crises, 297–98
- Swabian values, 325, 346
- sympathy, call to, 15–17
- Synod of Dort and Arminians, 444
- System der Geschichte*, 142
- System der Philosophie*, 129, 133, 141, 146
- Systematische Philosophie*, 108
- table fellowship, 165
- tabloid journalism, 446
- talents of Bonhoeffer and Bethge, 395–96
- talking, difficulties, 390, 403
- talking, *vs.* discussion *vs.* confession, 282
- tantalized, 214
- tasks, notes on, 41
- technicians *vs.* universal scholarship, 293
- technology, countries of, 440
- Tegel military interrogation prison, 57, 79, 102, 119, 183, 324, 541
- Tempelburg, 74, 84, 87, 88, 93
- temperate, concept of, 281
- temptation, 48, 156
- Ten Commandments: exposition on, 438, 485; fourth commandment, 462; honoring parents, 56; innermost interior and, 448; peasant ethic and, 447; philosophy and rules for life *vs.*, 465; suspension for self-preservation, 12
- tension, enduring, 334
- tension, notes on, 42
- testing, times of, 352
- theology: of Bultmann, 364, 403, 405–6; changing thoughts, 355–57; liberal, 408, 420, 421, 422, 485; modern, 485; offshoots of Christian, 419–20; reason and religious understanding, 465; Reformation and study of, 305;

- of revelation, 356–57, 365,
421–22, 486
- theomorphism, 429
- Theresienstrasse, 427
- thinking, freedom through, 408
- thinking, objective *vs.* personal,
270
- thinking and deepest thoughts,
429
- Thirty Years' War, 462
- Thomas Knauer Verlag, 149
- “Thou” and “It,” 291
- Thoughts on the Day of Baptism
of Dietrich Bethge, 376–84
- Thuringian Forest, 280–81
- Tiedemann, 221
- time: benefit of, 42; of day, 41;
emptiness of, 39, 41, 48;
everything suitable for it's, 209;
flight from, 41; as help/
torment/enemy, 41; lost, 3;
passing/killing, 39; ravages of,
41; sense of, 40, 48, 66, 69, 77,
83, 138, 157; separation and,
41; slipping by, 40
- tiredness, notes on, 42
- Tod Adams*, 330
- “to do the whole,” 263
- tolerance, 309, 444
- tomorrow, worry about, 197
- tongues, miracle of, 76
- Torgau, 115, 138, 306
- traditional ideas, burden of, 487
- tragedy, basis of, 6
- transcendence and Jesus Christ,
478, 487
- transfer of Bonhoeffer, 535–36,
542
- Trappist monk, 49
- travel difficulties, 105, 195, 465,
493
- traveling: Italy, 244, 254, 289, 295,
302, 319, 434, 449, 475, 485;
Munich, 232; Palestine, 212,
485; Sweden, 274
- treatment facility for purification,
502
- trenches, 125, 132, 183–84
- Trent, 134, 171
- Treseburg, 280
- trial, 144–45, 200
- Trinità del Monte church, 292
- tristitia*, 156
- true to oneself, 257
- trust: church and, 489; in God, 38,
208, 279; judgment and loss of,
446; learning to, 13–14; life
dependent on, 34; truth and,
202
- truth: freedom to speak, 214;
fundamental, 378;
interpretation of Scripture and,

- 444; meaning of, 194, 202;
 need for, 407; telling, 158,
 194–95; trust and, 202
- Tuscany, 434
- Uli der Knecht*, 49, 63, 82
- ultimate and penultimate, 192
- ultimate questions, 419, 442
- uncertainty and human
 manipulation, 216
- unconscious Christianity, 477,
 478, 507
- undivided yet distinct, 388
- unity and marriages, 262–63
- unity of church and the West, 149
- universal scholarship, 293
- universal script, 76
- usefulness, 19–20
- Ut mine Stromtid*, 66, 72
- V-1 missile, 483
- variety, notes on, 42
- Vatican, the, 198, 285, 289, 297
- Velletri, 397, 416
- Verona, 239, 246, 248, 434, 437,
 445
- verses: to Eberhard Bethge, 164;
 installation of Walter Dress, 73;
 memorization of, 31, 75–76,
 101, 179
- Via Cassia, 301
- Via Flaminia, 244
- violence and effects on lives, 288
- virtuousness, private, 6
- visitation: arrangements for, 395,
 397, 401; attorneys, 203, 248,
 267, 312; Christine Dohnanyi,
 363; denial of, 329, 347;
 differences in, 268–69;
 disappointments and, 312;
 Eberhard and Renate Bethge,
 384; Eberhard Bethge, 162–63,
 175, 186, 214, 228, 363, 375,
 385–86, 395, 416, 417;
 emotions and, 416; Hans von
 Dohnanyi, 28; importance of,
 353; Karl Friedrich Bonhoeffer,
 168, 191; limits on, 323; Maria
 Wedemeyer, 82, 93, 116, 143,
 163, 175, 201, 395;
 meaningfulness of, 176–77;
 parents, 61, 72, 86, 107, 110,
 128, 142, 148, 175, 185, 304,
 312; postponement of, 324;
 restrictions on, 43, 45, 82, 334
- visitor's permit, 26
- Volksmision, 526
- Volksgenosse*, 267
- Vom römischen Imperium*, 142
- “Vor Deinem Thron tret' ich
 allhier,” 293

- Wahrheit*, 446
- waiting, notes on, 40, 42
- waiting and trust, 76–77
- waiting for God, 444
- Waldsteig*, 82
- walking path of Jesus Christ, 468
- wall slogan, notes on, 40, 41
- Wanderungen*, 69
- Wanderungen durch die Mark*, 133
- Wandervogel, 281
- war: air-raids (*See* air-raids);
 conditions of, 104–5; forces of,
 381; impact on people of, 181;
 progress of, 462; religious
 reactions to, 356; young people
 and, 266, 401–2
- wardens, 334–36
- Warmbrunn, 534, 535
- Warsaw, 160, 198
- “Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan,”
 389
- watch, baptismal, 134, 171
- watch, Hans von Wedemeyer’s,
 219, 225
- water-clarification plant, 214, 239,
 301, 320, 502
- weakness: Christianity and,
 271–72, 358; danger of, 500;
 human dignity and, 490–91;
 strength *vs.*, 447, 448, 481
- wedding of Dietrich and Maria,
 161, 375
- wedding of Renate to Eberhard
 Bethge, 25, 30, 33, 35, 36–37,
 44–45, 46–47, 50–57, 58, 155,
 166, 188, 198
- Wehrmacht reports, 326
- Weimar, 526
- Weltanschauung und Analyse des
 Menschen seit Renaissance und
 Reformation*, 305
- Weltbild der Physik*, 399
- Weltwirkung der Reformation*, 75
- Weser, the, 302
- Weser Mountains, 281
- Westphalia, 475
- “what for” questions, 385
- Whit Monday, 77
- White Sunday, 350
- “Who Am I?,” 450–51
- whole, the, 263, 281, 293, 448
- “why” questions, 28, 37, 41
- Wilhelm Meister*, 146
- Will and Testament, Last, 134,
 158–59, 170–71
- will of God, 52, 206, 499
- will of humans, 51
- winning hearts, 421
- wisdom, cardinal virtue of, 12
- wisdom and fear of God, 11
- wisdom and learning, 15–16

- wishes, 313–14, 496
- wishing horror on others, 319
- Witiko*, 109, 133, 151–52, 194, 237, 255, 262, 296
- Wittenberg, 445
- wives, love of, 368
- wives and marriage, 53–56
- wives of pastors, 57
- “Wolf” cigar, 176, 179
- woman who was a sinner, 468
- women, freedom and natural visitation with, 268, 297
- women at the tomb, 469
- Word of God, speaking, 383
- work: difficulties of doing, 324; divine mandate and, 252; Eberhard Bethge, 188, 189, 198; Eberhard Bethge – military, 240, 259, 266, 270, 283, 284, 286, 302, 434, 524; future, 200; Karl Friedrich Bonhoeffer, 114, 169, 273–74, 288, 323–24; Karl Ludwig Bonhoeffer, 116, 138; Maria Wedemeyer, 29, 64, 66, 68, 91, 116, 141, 305, 314, 316, 484, 491; notes on, 42; politics and brotherhood, 252
- working-class folk, 238
- world, the; beauty of, 142–43; belonging to, 357; beyond, 365; change and renewal of, 383–84; change through the resurrection, 322; church and, dispute between, 420–21; coming of age of, 419–20, 422–23; form through religion, 421; God pushed out of, 441–42, 446, 477; machine without God, 465; Reformation and order in, 149
- World Alliance, 213
- world autonomy, 465
- world of Hermes, 428
- worldliness: abolishment of, 439; Christian, 308; God and, 487; thirteenth century, 308; this–, 474
- worldly: interpretation of concepts, 365, 463–67, 477; lives as, 468; religionless, 357
- worldview, Teutonic past, 305
- worrying: about tomorrow, 197; desire for others to worry about you, 398–99; entrust to God *vs.*, 218; against ideas of, 429; uselessness of, 279
- worship: absence of, 202; idolatry, 438, 462; longing for, 75, 156; of power, envy and illusionism, 489; refuge in quiet acts of, 407
- writings: on Commandments,

- 485; criticisms, 506; of
 Eberhard Bethge, 490–91,
 491–93, 495, 501, 504–5;
 exposition of first three
 commandments, 438; fitting
 together of, 503; novel, 449;
 outline and book, 486–89, 491,
 502; piece for Eberhard
 Bethge, 449; prayers for
 prisoners, 158; in prison, 129;
 of Renate Bethge, 524–25;
 story of family, 108; story of
 middle class family, 157–58;
 story of two friends and war,
 262
- yearning: notes on, 42; personal,
 344; separation and, 297;
 unquenchable, 429; in the
 world, 428
- Yes and Amen of God, 499
- Yes of God, 52
- youth: bearing the yoke in, 381;
 future of, 279; prison and, 353;
 war and, 266, 401–2
- Zitz, 505

Index of Biblical References

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis

3.....40

41:52.....314

Exodus

34:10.....222

Numbers

11:23.....496

Deuteronomy.....438

34:1.....515

1 Samuel

31.....497

Job.....505

1.....289

7:1.....381

42:7.....251

Psalms

3.....50

9:19-20.....355

13.....48

18:29.....215

30:5.....383

31.....48

31:1.....41

31:16.....40

37:3b.....408

42:6.....465

47.....50, 163

50.....261

58:11.....355

60.....124

60:12.....215

62:2.....465

68.....70, 28

70.....50, 163

90:14.....373-74

91.....410

LETTERS AND PAPERS FROM PRISON

119:94a.....465	5:25.....261
121:6.....440	8:18.....374
127:3.....56	9:11-10:4.....261
144:1-2.....382	26:20.....382
	41:10.....465
Proverbs.....505	42:16.....249
4:18.....371, 384	43:1.....465
4:23.....380	53.....198, 468
6:20-22.....378	
18:24.....214, 382	Jeremiah
22:11-12.....359	27:11.....382
23:26.....371	29:7.....382
24.....75	31:3.....465
25:2.....505	31:26.....160
30:8.....379	33:9.....384
31.....42	45.....124, 293, 380, 474
	45:5.....355
Ecclesiastes.....505	51:6.....379
3.....40	
3:11.....209	Lamentations
3:15.....378	3:27.....381
5:102.....505	
Song of Solomon (Song of Songs)	NEW TESTAMENT
.....403, 505	Matthew
7:6.....387	5:48.....263
	6.....40, 42
Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)	7:21.....381
13:14.....527	8:17.....467, 468
40:28.....505	8:23.....264
	10:29.....206
Isaiah.....438	

INDEX OF BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- 18:3.....466
 25.....478
 25:36.....312
 26-28.....28
 28:20b.....465
- Mark
 15:34.....467
- Luke
 2:11.....222
 2:17.....221
 7.....468
 19:9.....378
 22-24.....28
- John
 1:14.....365
 1:47.....469
 17.....44
- Acts
 8.....468
 10.....468
- Romans
 3:24.....364-65
 15.....56
 15:7.....47
- 1 Corinthians
 10:16.....479
- 11:30.....479
 15:26.....322
 16:13.....500
- 2 Corinthians
 1:20.....496
 6:1-10.....301
- Galatians
 4:19.....465
- Ephesians
 1:12.....50
 3:10.....210
 5.....403
 6:10.....500
- Colossians
 3.....53
- 1 Timothy
 1:13.....351
 6:6-7.....379
- 2 Timothy
 1.....76
 1:3a.....351
 2:1.....371, 500
- James
 1:8.....263

LETTERS AND PAPERS FROM PRISON

1 Peter

1:12.....355

2:20.....157

3:14.....157

4:1.....161

1 John

2:14.....500

Revelation

10.....40

*“We have for once learned to see
the great events of world history from below . . .
from the perspective of the suffering.”*

—DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

Despite Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s earlier theological achievements and writings, it was his correspondence and notes from prison that electrified the postwar world. The materials gathered and selected by his friend Eberhard Bethge in *Letters and Papers from Prison* not only brought Bonhoeffer to a wide and appreciative readership, especially in North America, but they also introduced to a broad readership his novel and exciting ideas of religionless Christianity, his open and honest theological appraisal of Christian doctrines, and his sturdy, if sorely tried, faith in the face of uncertainty and doubt.

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER (1906–1945), a German theologian, pastor, and ecumenist, studied in Berlin and at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. He played a central role in the Confessing Church during the Nazi period and became one of the most influential theologians of the twentieth century.

Translated by

Isabel Best, Lisa E. Dahill, Reinhard Krauss,
Nancy Lukens, Barbara Rumscheidt,
and Martin Rumscheidt

With a new introduction by

John W. de Gruchy

Supplemental material by

Victoria J. Barnett

Theology / History / Ethics

ISBN: 978-1-5064-0274-1



9 781506 402741

fortress press
scholarship that matters
fortresspress.com