

PART 1  
The Interrogation Period  
April–July 1943



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*,<sup>[2]</sup> which you rehearsed and performed with your brothers and sisters and the grandchildren for my seventy-fifth birthday.<sup>[3]</sup> Hopefully, we can speak with you soon. Kindest regards from Mama, Renate, and her fiancée,<sup>[4]</sup> 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.

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[1.] *NL*, A 76,2; handwritten; the letterhead reads: "Professor Dr. Bonhoeffer. Medical Privy Counselor"; the line below the return address "Berlin-Charl." reads: "Marienburger Allee 43" (the letterhead and information about the sender are the same in subsequent letters from Karl Bonhoeffer). Previously published in *LPP*, 21.

[2.] Helmut Walcha, *Lobe den Herren* (Praise the Lord); a cantata for choirs, wind instruments, and organ.

[3.] On March 31, 1943; see *DB-ER*, 785; and Bethge and Gremmels, *Life in Pictures*, centenary ed., 134.

[4.] Renate Schleicher and Eberhard Bethge. During the first six months of Bonhoeffer's incarceration in Tegel, Eberhard Bethge's name was never mentioned directly for safety reasons. The mail was being censored, and one did not want to draw attention unnecessarily to this relationship and to Bethge's UK classification by the Foreign Office/Military Intelligence Office (see Bethge, *In Zitz gab es keine Juden*, 122–33). [UK (*unabkömmlich*) classification meant that someone was "indispensable" as a civilian engaged in the war effort; Bethge and Bonhoeffer both received this classification through Canaris's office as a cover for their resistance activities. Bethge was eventually unable to avoid military service. See *DBWE* 16:11.—JDG]

**2. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer**<sup>[1]</sup>

April 14, 1943

My dear Parents,

44 Above all you need to know and indeed believe that I am doing well.<sup>[2]</sup> That has really been true for the whole past ten days<sup>[3]</sup> 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!<sup>[4]</sup>—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,<sup>[5]</sup> as I am currently doing. By the way, I have my Bible<sup>[6]</sup> and reading material from the library here, and now sufficient stationery as well.

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[1.] *NL*, A 76,2; handwritten; from Tegel (as are all of the following Bonhoeffer documents, up to no. 200). Previously published in *LPP*, 21–22.

[2.] In an unpublished letter, Paula Bonhoeffer replied on April 22, 1943 (*NL*, A 76,6): “Your letter has been a great relief to us. While we did not expect anything other than that you would calmly accept the external deprivations you are experiencing, it does give us great relief to read in your letter that you are really not doing badly and that we should really believe it.”

[3.] Until the end of July 1943, the censor only permitted Bonhoeffer to write letters to his parents every ten days.

[4.] The parenthetical comment is a later addition.

[5.] [On the importance of the seventeenth-century German poet and hymn writer Paul Gerhardt to Bonhoeffer from 1933 onward, but especially during his imprisonment, see Henkys, *Geheimnis der Freiheit*, esp. chap. 5, 75ff.—JDG]

[6.] A copy of the 1911 edition of Martin Luther's translation. The Bible was Paula Bonhoeffer's present to her son Walter for his confirmation in 1914. After Walter was killed in the war in 1918, Dietrich was given this Bible and used it for his personal medi-

As you can imagine, it is my fiancée<sup>[7]</sup> 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.<sup>[8]</sup> 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;<sup>[9]</sup> 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."<sup>[10]</sup> 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<sup>[11]</sup> 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!

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tations. He had it with him in his cell in Tegel prison. [Cf. 2/131, p. 343. Initially, all of Bonhoeffer's belongings were taken; the Bible was returned to him after forty-eight hours, after prison officials had examined it for hidden sharp objects; he probably kept it until his transfer to the Reich Central Security prison on October 8, 1944.—JDG]

[7.] Maria von Wedemeyer, daughter of Hans and Ruth von Wedemeyer, owners of the Pätzig estate in the Neumark [in eastern Brandenburg, now part of Poland—JDG]. The correspondence with Bonhoeffer, which Maria von Wedemeyer initially did not release for publication, was first published in 1992 under the title *Brautbriefe Zelle 92* [and then in 1994 in English translation as *Love Letters from Cell 92*.—JDG].

[8.] Maria's father, Hans von Wedemeyer, died on the eastern front on August 22, 1942; see Bonhoeffer's condolence letters to Maximilian von Wedemeyer and Ruth von Wedemeyer in *DBWE* 16:350–52. Maximilian (Max), her brother, died on the eastern front on October 26, 1942; see *Love Letters from Cell 92*, 243–50 and 254–55.

[9.] Maria visited Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer on May 23, 1943; see *Love Letters from Cell 92*, 15–16.

[10.] *Lutheran Book of Worship*, no. 543, excerpt from vv. 1 and 3. Translation by Catherine Winkworth. Walcha's cantata based on the hymn was sung on the seventy-fifth birthday of Karl Bonhoeffer; cf. 1/1, ed. note 2.

[11.] For Renate Schleicher and Eberhard Bethge.

46 **3. From the Senior Reich War Military Prosecutor  
to Karl Bonhoeffer<sup>[1]</sup>**

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*]<sup>[2]</sup> is denied.

Under the authority of  
pp. signed Dr. Roeder  
Reich War Court 18<sup>[3]</sup>  
Attested as correct.  
Ladenig<sup>[4]</sup>  
Army Judicial Inspector

**4. From Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer<sup>[1]</sup>**

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

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[1.] *NL*, A 76,4; typewritten manuscript; letterhead reads: "The Senior Reich War Court Prosecutor *StPl. (RKA) III 114/43*"; sender's address: "Witzlebenstraße 4-10," "Phone: 30 06 81"; "To Professor Dr. Bonhoeffer, *Berlin-Charlottenburg 9*, Marienburger Allee 43"; no salutation. Previously published in *LPP*, 23.

[2.] [*Sprecherlaubnis* literally means "speaking permit." Throughout we have translated it as "a visitor's permit."—JDG]

[3.] Stamp.

[4.] Handwritten.

[1.] *NL*, A 76,10; handwritten; annotation by the censor: "delivery permitted," illegible signature, "April 27." Excerpts previously published in *LPP*, 23–24.

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<sup>[2]</sup> hang around in it all day long. The two little ones<sup>[3]</sup> are in bed with harmless sore throats. Grete<sup>[4]</sup> is on the go all day long, busy from early morning until late at night, dealing with children, kitchen, house, garden, and rabbit hutch.<sup>[5]</sup> 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<sup>[1]</sup>

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,

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[2.] Karl and Friedrich Bonhoeffer.

[3.] Martin and Katharina Bonhoeffer.

[4.] Margarete Bonhoeffer, née von Dohnanyi.

[5.] [Rabbits were a source of meat during the war.—JDG]

[1.] *NL*, A 76,7; handwritten; from Berlin-Moabit (the military prison for prisoners of officer rank, located at Lehrter Straße 61); letterhead: “Dr. iur. H[ans] von Dohnanyi, Sacrow near Potsdam, Am Haemphorn”; dated by Bethge as “April 23, 1943.” Excerpts previously published in *LPP*, 24–25. Hans von Dohnanyi, director of the Department of Political Analysis in the Military Intelligence Office of the Armed Forces High Command, was arrested in his office on the morning of April 5, 1943, by the senior Reich military prosecutor, Dr. Manfred Roeder. Two days earlier Roeder “had been appointed by Admiral Max Bastian, the president of the Reich War Court, as the lead investigator in the *Depositenkasse* case” (Meyer, *Unternehmen Sieben*, 383). [*Depositenkasse* (literally, “cash fund deposit”) was the Gestapo file name for the investigation of the money transfers to Switzerland in conjunction with the Operation 7 rescue that originated in Canaris’s office. See also *DBWE* 16, 1/221, p. 395, ed. note 1, and pp. 661, 663.—JDG] His wife, Bonhoeffer’s sister Christine, was also arrested on April 5 for “being an accessory to high treason.” She was initially incarcerated in the police prison on Kaiserdamm, transferred twice to other prisons, and released on April 30, 1943. In order to write this letter during the interrogation period (April 12 to June 9, 1943), Hans von Dohnanyi even surrendered the right to write an Easter letter to his wife’s parents and the Dohnanyi children, instead writing a “personal” letter to Bonhoeffer in Tegel, calculating, of course, that Roeder would read it (*DB-ER*, 800). For more details, see *DB-ER*, 799–810; Chowaniec, *Der “Fall Dohnanyi,”* 43–54; Smid, *Hans von Dohnanyi–Christine Bonhoeffer*, 360–61.

good, and solemn hours we spent together in the Garrisonkirche<sup>[2]</sup> 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*<sup>[3]</sup> may be a consolation, but the *habere*<sup>[4]</sup> 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.<sup>[5]</sup> I have also been allowed to speak to Christel<sup>[6]</sup>—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?<sup>[7]</sup> 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.<sup>[8]</sup> This morning Matt. 26–28, Luke 22–24, and Pss. 68 and 70. I had never noticed before the peculiar differences in the Passion

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[2.] A famous church in Potsdam.

[3.] “*To have had* companions in misfortune.”

[4.] “*To have* companions in misfortune.”

[5.] They were able to see each other during the interrogation at the Reich War Court on April 14, 1943.

[6.] Hans and Christine von Dohnanyi saw each other during the interrogation on April 16, 1943.

[7.] Hans von Dohnanyi wrote to his wife on April 6, 1943 (literary estate of Hans von Dohnanyi, NL Dohnanyi 17/10, BA Berlin-Lichterfelde, quoted in Chowanec, *Der “Fall Dohnanyi,”* 54): “I am having an especially bad day today. All my attempts to form thoughts that would ease my longing for you fail. . . . A great, gloomy tiredness mixed with an internal restlessness won’t allow me to sit still. . . . When the need is greatest, they say, God’s help is closest. How long must the need still grow?”

[8.] Cf. on the same day (Good Friday) in a letter to his wife, Christine: “The Bible is the only book that I can stick to for any length of time” (literary estate of Hans von Dohnanyi, NL Dohnanyi 17/2, BA Berlin-Lichterfelde, quoted in Chowanec, *Der “Fall Dohnanyi,”* 52).

Narrative between the two evangelists. How much I wish I could talk with you about this.

From Urse!<sup>[9]</sup> I hear that the children<sup>[10]</sup> are in Friedrichsbrunn.<sup>[11]</sup> 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<sup>[1]</sup>

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.

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Good Friday was Maria’s birthday.<sup>[2]</sup> 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,<sup>[3]</sup> and two of her cousins<sup>[4]</sup> whom she especially loved. Now Easter will comfort her, her large family will strongly

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[9.] Ursula Schleicher, eldest sister of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who lived with her family at Marienburger Allee 42, the house next to Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer.

[10.] Barbara, Klaus, and Christoph von Dohnanyi; Renate, Dorothee, and Christine Schleicher.

[11.] A village in the eastern Harz Mountains, where the family had owned a vacation home since 1913; see Bethge and Gremmels, *Life in Pictures*, centenary ed., 26.

[1.] *NL*, A 76,8; handwritten; annotation by Bethge: “arrived May 3, 1943.” Previously published in *LPP*, 25–27. See also a draft of this letter from April 24, 1943, in *NL*, A 76,9.

[2.] April 23, 1943, was Maria von Wedemeyer’s nineteenth birthday.

[3.] See 1/2, ed. note 8.

[4.] The brothers Jürgen Christoph and Hans-Friedrich von Kleist-Retzow.

support her, and her work at the Red Cross<sup>[5]</sup> 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<sup>[6]</sup> 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.<sup>[7]</sup> 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,<sup>[8]</sup> 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.<sup>[9]</sup> 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?<sup>[10]</sup> 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.<sup>[11]</sup> 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

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[5.] Maria von Wedemeyer had begun her training as a nursing student at the Clementine nursing facility in Hanover at the beginning of April 1943.

[6.] "Not" added later.

[7.] Unpublished letter from Ursula Schleicher to Bonhoeffer on April 20, 1943 (*NL*, A 76,5): "Maria came yesterday and brought a beautiful bouquet of spring flowers. She brought them for you and gave them to Eberhard."

[8.] John 17; see also 1/14, p. 76.

[9.] On Tegel note 5 (*NL*, A 86), Bonhoeffer listed key terms from 1 Cor. 7 and Phlm. 8–9, such as "permission"; cf. *DBWE* 6:382–85.

[10.] Dietrich Bonhoeffer is referring to the seventy-fifth birthday of his father, Karl Bonhoeffer; cf. 1/1, ed. note 3.

[11.] Wedding of Renate Schleicher and Eberhard Bethge.

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<sup>[12]</sup> 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,<sup>[13]</sup> 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<sup>[14]</sup> to read this letter! In front of me are the brief notes from Papa<sup>[15]</sup> and Ursel,<sup>[16]</sup> 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

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[12.] Ruth von Kleist-Retzow in Klein-Krössin. Cf. *DB-ER*, 438–89; *Love Letters from Cell 92*, 257–61; Pejsa, *Matriarch of Conspiracy*, 239–315; Ruth von Wedemeyer, *In des Teufels Gasthaus*, 159–71.

[13.] Schilling, *Lehrbuch der Moraltheologie*, vol. 2: *Spezielle Moraltheologie*; see also *DBWE* 16, 2/10, p. 506, and 2/19, p. 606.

[14.] By implication Bonhoeffer also meant to include Eberhard Bethge; see 1/1, ed. note 4.

[15.] See 1/1.

[16.] See ed. note 7 above.

**7. From Paula Bonhoeffer<sup>[1]</sup>**

Berlin-Charlottenburg 9

Wednesday after Easter, 1943

Twenty-fifth anniversary of Walter's death<sup>[2]</sup>

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.

53 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.<sup>[3]</sup>

Today Ursula is at work decorating Renate's apartment.<sup>[4]</sup> 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.

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[1.] *NL*, A 76,11; handwritten; letterhead reads: "P. Bonhoeffer," with the return address underneath: "Marienburger Allee 43," "Phone 932900" (the letterhead and sender's address are the same in Paula Bonhoeffer's subsequent letters); annotation by Bethge: "April 28, 1943." Excerpts previously published in *LPP*, 27–28.

[2.] Addition by Paula Bonhoeffer. Her son Walter was killed as a soldier in France on April 28, 1918; see Leibholz-Bonhoeffer, *Bonhoeffers*, 16–19.

[3.] This passage was intended for the censor.

[4.] Burckhardthaus, Rudeloffweg 27, in Berlin-Dahlem.

**8. From Rüdiger Schleicher<sup>[1]</sup>**

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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<sup>[2]</sup> 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.<sup>[3]</sup> 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<sup>[1]</sup>**

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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

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[1.] *NL*, A 76,12; handwritten; letterhead reads: "Prof. Dr. Rüdiger Schleicher. Ministry Officer at the Reich Ministry of Aviation"; below the city name: "Marienburger Allee 42." Previously published in *LPP*, 28.

[2.] Son of Rüdiger and Ursula Schleicher.

[3.] See 1/5, ed. note 10.

[1.] *NL*, A 76,13; handwritten; letter of May 4 (erroneously dated "April 5") 1943; annotation by Bethge: "arrived May 13, 1943." Previously published in *LPP*, 29–31. First and second drafts of this letter exist in *NL*, A 76,14 (handwritten and typewritten transcript) and *NL*, A 76,15 (copy).

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.<sup>[2]</sup> 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*<sup>[3]</sup> printed a reproduction from Dürer's *Apocalypse*,<sup>[4]</sup> 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

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[2.] Ps. 68:20: "God places a burden on our shoulders; but he also helps us." [NRSV reads (v. 19): "Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears us up."—JDG] In Bonhoeffer's Luther Bible, this verse is marked with a pencil line in the margin just like the preceding v. 19, in which Bonhoeffer underlined: "You . . . have taken the prison captive." [NRSV reads (v. 18): "You ascended the high mount, leading captives in your train."—JDG] See also 2/76, ed. note 10.

[3.] *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, a conservative, bourgeois daily newspaper; editorially there remained sections that weren't in total conformity with the National Socialist regime.

[4.] Albrecht Dürer's *Apocalypse* (1498) comprises fifteen woodcuts portraying the martyrdom of John the Evangelist. In its column *Zeitbilder* (contemporary pictures), the Easter edition of the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* printed the woodcut *St. Michael Battling the Dragon* (*DAZ*, no. 197, April 23, 1943, *Reichsausgabe* [Reich edition], Berlin). Bonhoeffer's extant library contains a copy (*NL-Bibl.* 9.9) of Dürer, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* [The Revelations of John]: *Sixteen Woodcuts*, Berlin, undated, with a handwritten dedication: "To Eberhard Bethge on his ordination March 22, 1936. Dietrich Bonhoeffer."

that the “the only joys that can survive a fire are the domestic joys.”<sup>[5]</sup> 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.<sup>[6]</sup> 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.<sup>[7]</sup> They should take a few photos.<sup>[8]</sup>

57

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<sup>[9]</sup> (it seems to be getting warmer today),<sup>[10]</sup> one warm shirt and socks; also: Holl, *Kirchengeschichte*, volume 3: *Der Westen*,<sup>[11]</sup> and things to smoke, whatever is possible, and matches. I too cannot understand that you are unable find my suit and jacket.

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[5.] Jean Paul, *Leben des vergnügten Schulmeisterleins Maria Wuz in Auenthal*, 408.

[6.] Gotthelf, *Geld und Geist oder die Versöhnung: Eine Erzählung*. In the first draft (*NL*, A 76,14), Bonhoeffer had made the comment: “I greatly enjoyed reading Jeremias Gotthelf again, whom, in his clear, healthy, quiet style, I consider to be one of our very great writers. Someone ought to publish a selection of his writings [*Brevier*] sometime. G [not identified; see below the comment on Stifter, pp. 80–81] also belongs in this milieu, whereas I find Jean Paul just too eccentric.”

[7.] The wedding of Renate Schleicher and Eberhard Bethge took place on the twentieth wedding anniversary of Rüdiger and Ursula Schleicher.

[8.] See Bethge and Gremmels, *Life in Pictures*, centenary ed., 140.

[9.] First draft of the letter (*NL*, A 76,14): “During these cold days I have always dressed for winter and repeatedly done physical exercises to warm up.”

[10.] The phrase in parentheses is an addition.

[11.] Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, vol. 3: *Der Westen*.

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.<sup>[12]</sup> Please give Maria my special thanks for her greetings! How nice that the grandmother<sup>[13]</sup> 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<sup>[14]</sup> for the Bach cantatas. Please do greet her warmly also.

58 I now often think of the beautiful song by Hugo Wolf, which we<sup>[15]</sup> 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.”<sup>[16]</sup> 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,<sup>[17]</sup> 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

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[12.] Due to the mourning for Hans and Maximilian von Wedemeyer, Ruth von Wedemeyer’s husband and son (see 1/2, ed. note 8), “the subject [the engagement] was not supposed to be mentioned until the summer” (1/10, p. 69). [Regarding the early period of their engagement, see also *DBWE* 16:20–21, as well as the letters 1/206a, 1/208a, 1/209a, 1/209b, 1/214a, 1/215a, 1/215b, 1/215c, 1/220a, and 1/220b in that volume.—JDG]

[13.] Ruth von Kleist-Retzow; see 1/6, ed. note 12.

[14.] Elisabeth von Hase in Breslau, sister of Paula Bonhoeffer.

[15.] Eberhard Bethge, accompanied by Dietrich Bonhoeffer on the piano, during frequent musical evenings at the Schleicher home.

[16.] Text by Julius Sturm; published in Hugo Wolf, *Lieder aus der Jugendzeit*, no. 48, (E-flat).

[17.] Allusion to interrogation dates at the Reich War Court.

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.<sup>[18]</sup> Many thanks.

## 10. To Hans von Dohnanyi<sup>[1]</sup>

59

May<sup>[2]</sup> 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,<sup>[3]</sup> 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.<sup>[4]</sup> 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

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[18.] From the couple Margret Onnasch (sister of Eberhard Bethge) and Pastor Fritz Onnasch, who served as Bonhoeffer’s inspector of studies at the preachers’ seminary in Finkenwalde and the collective pastorate in Köslin from 1937 to 1939.

[1.] *NL*, A 76,16; handwritten; annotation by Bethge: “reply to letter from Hans of April 23, 1943.” Previously published in *LPP*, 31–33.

[2.] The original is erroneously dated “April 5.”

[3.] On March 31, 1943; see 1/1, ed. note 3.

[4.] See 1/9, ed. note 12.

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."<sup>[5]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup>

61 Separation from people  
from work  
from the past  
from the future  
from honor  
from God

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[5.] See 1/9, ed. note 16.

[1.] *NL*, A 86,1; handwritten in pencil and ink; 2 pages. On the left of the front page of the sheet, Karl Bonhoeffer listed the contents of a package that had been dropped off for Dietrich (see *DB-ER*, 831; a new line is indicated by "—"): "May 8—1 brown suit, 1 pair of black boots—1 blue shirt—1 pair of socks—1 handkerchief—1 washcloth—1 hairbrush—2 pipes, 1 cleaner—1 packet of tobacco—3 boxes of matches—50 cigarettes—60 Recresal tablets—1 Haag Cola—125 g butter—125 g bacon fat—125 g cheese—200 g sausage—1 tin of pork fat—1 container of malt extract spread—1 box of cookies and sweets—2 hard-boiled eggs—1 loaf of bread, 1 small bag of sugar cubes—1 package of pumpernickel." Bonhoeffer's notes begin to the right of this list on the front page, next to "1 handkerchief." Previously published in *LPP*, 33–34.

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

Fulfilled, unfulfilled, depending on *history*.

Self-deception, *idealizing*<sup>[2]</sup> the past and<sup>[3]</sup> about the present in<sup>[4]</sup> a sober  
way instead of illusion.

fading of memories

self-pity<sup>[5]</sup>

*passing time—killing time*

for the one who has overcome, humor,<sup>[6]</sup>

smoking and the emptiness of time<sup>[7]</sup>

memory of what is possible

although not correct.

The meaning of illusion

Understanding<sup>[8]</sup> of the past—fulfillment, gratitude. Remorse  
sense of time<sup>[9]</sup>

not only what has been *understood* is said to be present?

thus past after all?

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[2.] Added later after “idealizing”: “about” (deceiving oneself about the past).

[3.] [Bonhoeffer has possibly omitted a word here indicating a shift in his thought pattern. Probably “thinking” or “reflecting” about the present.—JDG]

[4.] Uncertain reading.

[5.] Bonhoeffer wrote this word in English.

[6.] This line is an addition to “passing time”; “humor” was added within this addition.

[7.] See Kant, *Anthropology*, 133 (Bonhoeffer was reading Kant’s *Anthropology* at this time; see 1/25, p. 98): smoked tobacco becomes “a sort of companion who entertains and constantly stimulates sensations and even thoughts, though they are only of the roaming kind. Finally, the one who is not induced to activity by any positive pain will always be affected by a negative one, namely boredom, perceived as a form of emptiness of sensation by the person accustomed to change of sensations. In trying to fill his life with something such a person will often feel compelled to do something harmful to himself rather than do nothing at all.”

[8.] Here the writing on the back begins.

[9.] Cf. 1/17, p. 79: “I am currently trying my hand at a small study on the ‘sense of time’”; 1/25, p. 98: “I have just written some more on the ‘sense of time’”; 1/29, p. 106: “The study on the sense of time is practically done”; 2/73, p. 181: “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.’”

*Possession*

Gen. 3 Eccl. 3

Rev. 10 Matt. 6<sup>[10]</sup>

Novalis

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

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wall slogan<sup>[11]</sup>  
and Ps. 31:16<sup>[12]</sup>

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*<sup>[13]</sup> as experience of *separation*—engaged couple  
before God

the past: why: in one hundred years everything will be over<sup>[14]</sup> rather  
than: until recently

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

---

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

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[10.] See Gen. 3:22 (not living “forever”); Eccl. 3:1–8 (“for everything there is a season”); Rev. 10:6 (“there will be no more time” [NRSV reads: “delay”]); Matt. 6:34 (each day has “enough”; cf. 1/12 [Notes II]: “do not worry”).

[11.] See 1/17, pp. 79–80: “One of my predecessors scrawled above the cell door: ‘In one hundred years everything will be over.’”

[12.] “My times are in your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.” [Ps. 31:15 in the NRSV.—JDG]

[13.] An exclamation mark is placed before “*experience of time*.” On Tegel note 12, presumably written in 1944 (*NL*, A 86), Bonhoeffer noted among other things: “*experience of time*—emptiness—horror vacui [the abhorrence of the void]. Separation of: past, present, future—love, faithfulness—‘sentimentality’ instead of love, instead of gratitude, instead of remorse.”

[14.] See ed. note 10.

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

The ravages of time—the gnawing of time

healing time—scarring over,<sup>[15]</sup> unde est memoria . . .<sup>[16]</sup>

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

## 12. Notes II, May 1943<sup>[1]</sup>

wall slogan<sup>[2]</sup>—time as help—as torment, as enemy.

boredom as expression of despair.

Ps. 31:1<sup>[3]</sup>

time

benefit of time: forgetting, scarring over<sup>[4]</sup>

opposite: Irrevocability

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

“If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength being small”<sup>[5]</sup>

Prov. 31 laughs at the time to come<sup>[6]</sup>

Matt. 6 do not worry . . .

waiting

boredom

[15.] Regarding “scarring over” or “cicatrized existence,” see Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, 221; see Bonhoeffer, *Zettelnotizen*, 33, and *DBWE* 6:88 and 143.

[16.] “Whence and how entered these things into my memory?” [translation by F. J. Sheed, from *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, p. 217—JDG]. The word “unde” is not clearly legible. The quote cannot be verified as a saying of Augustine (*Augustinus-Lexikon*, letter of March 4, 1997, from the editors); however see—besides *Confessions* 10.17—*Sermo* 323.2 (Migne, PL 38, col. 1445): “memoria ibi unde erat?” (this memory—where may it have come from?) See also 1/25, p. 98: “Can you send me something good on the forms and functions of memory? I am very interested in it in this connection.”

[1.] *NL*, A 86,2; handwritten in pencil and ink; 2 pages (part of a double sheet with the watermark “Eichberger Papierfabrik,” written in landscape format). Previously published in *LPP*, 34–35. A copy was also made by Bethge.

[2.] See 1/11, ed. note 11.

[3.] Correctly Ps. 31:16 [Ps. 31:15 in NRSV—JDG]; see 1/11, ed. note 12.

[4.] See 1/11, ed. note 15.

[5.] Citation (Prov. 24:10) deleted by Bonhoeffer.

[6.] Citation from Prov. 31:25.

64 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<sup>[7]</sup>—tension<sup>[8]</sup>

impatience

yearning

boredom<sup>[9]</sup>

night—deeply lonely<sup>[10]</sup>

apathy

urge to be busy, variety, novelty

dullness,<sup>[11]</sup> tiredness, sleeping—against it strict<sup>[12]</sup> order<sup>[13]</sup> 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,<sup>[14]</sup>

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*<sup>[15]</sup>

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[7.] Beginning of the second page, on the back of the sheet.

[8.] Bonhoeffer has drawn a line connecting “tension” to the next line.

[9.] Bonhoeffer has drawn a line connecting “boredom” to the word “apathy.”

[10.] Originally: “lonely deeply,” with a marker before “deeply” to transpose the words.

[11.] Added later.

[12.] Added later.

[13.] Marker to transpose the current line with the following.

[14.] The section “discontent . . . line drawn at the end,” was deleted by Bonhoeffer.

[15.] The word “prayer” is further highlighted by being enclosed in a rectangle. See Tegel note 12 (*NL*, A 86) (presumably 1944) after the section cited above, in 1/11, ed. note 12: “Christian? *what* I believe—specific matter of faith, piety. Prayer does not help. Question about the future—no answer,—about the meaning—no answer,—for help . . . prayer does not change [replaces: “help”] anything—count on miracles.”

**13. From Karl Bonhoeffer to the  
Senior Reich Military Court Prosecutor<sup>[1]</sup>**

65

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 (StPI [RKA] III 114/43).<sup>[2]</sup> 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<sup>[1]</sup>**

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,<sup>[2]</sup> 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,<sup>[3]</sup> and all the young people will sing the beautiful old folk song "Ännchen von Tharau,"<sup>[4]</sup> by Simon Dach,

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[1.] *NL*, A 76,17; typewritten carbon copy; from Berlin-Charlottenburg. Previously published in *LPP*, 36.

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

[1.] *NL*, A 76,19; handwritten; letterhead ("P. Bonhoeffer") etc. as in 1/7; annotation by Eberhard Bethge: "arrived May 11." Excerpts previously published in *LPP*, 37.

[2.] Wedding of Renate Schleicher and Eberhard Bethge on May 15, 1943.

[3.] These were all wedding customs.

[4.] The poem "Anke van Tharaw öß de my geföllt" was translated into High German by Johann Gottfried Herder as "Ännchen von Tharau" [Little Anna from Tharau—JDG].

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.<sup>[5]</sup> 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."<sup>[6]</sup> 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,<sup>[7]</sup> 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

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It is a wedding dance of unknown origin but has been attributed to Simon Dach. See Dach, *Gedichte*, 2:333 and 393–94, regarding the origin of the poem.

[5.] See 1/6, p. 62.

[6.] The phrase cannot be traced verbatim to Augustine. However, its meaning and terminology allude to certain Augustinian figures of speech. These include, among others, the expression "ears of the heart" ("auris cordis"; Augustine, *Confessions* 7.1.5 and 7.4.11), or Augustine's notion that the "ear" is not a natural faculty but a "gift of divine grace" ("On the Gift of Perseverance," 37, in Rotelle, *Works of Saint Augustine*, pt. 4) to enable human beings to find God. (Information received by the German editor from the editors of the *Augustinus-Lexikon*, letter of March 3, 1996).

[7.] For his seventy-fifth birthday on March 31, 1943.

**15. From the Senior Reich Military Court Prosecutor  
to Karl Bonhoeffer<sup>[1]</sup>**

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<sup>[2]</sup>  
Army Judicial Inspector

**16. From Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer<sup>[1]</sup>**

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.

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From your letters I have now also learned that you are secretly engaged.<sup>[2]</sup> 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

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[1.] *NL*, A 76,18; typewritten manuscript; letterhead (“The Senior Reich Military Court Prosecutor *StPL*. [RKA] III 114/43”) etc. as in 1/3; no salutation. Previously published in *LPP*, 36.

[2.] Handwritten.

[1.] *NL*, A 76,21; handwritten; from Leipzig. Previously published in *LPP*, 37–38.

[2.] See 1/9, ed. note 12.

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

69 **17. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer**<sup>[1]</sup>

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.<sup>[2]</sup> 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!<sup>[3]</sup>

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

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[1.] *NL*, A 76,22; handwritten. Previously published in *LPP*, 38–40. See also *NL*, A 76,23; handwritten fragment of a draft of the letter, typewritten copy of the complete draft, and additional note with handwritten note on the back ("May 25. The week after the lonely days" [not clearly legible]).

[2.] "Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." See also I/18, p. 87.

[3.] [The golden sun.—JDG] The English translation of this is "Evening and Morning," no. 465, *Lutheran Book of Worship*.

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.<sup>[4]</sup> However, I have never understood as clearly as I have here what the Bible and Luther mean by “temptation” [*Anfechtung*].<sup>[5]</sup> 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.<sup>[6]</sup> 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.

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I am currently trying my hand at a small study on the “sense of time,”<sup>[7]</sup> an experience likely characterizing pretrial detention. One of my predecessors scribbled above the cell door: “In one hundred years everything will be

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[4.] In the draft for the letter (*NL*, A 76,23), Bonhoeffer wrote: “In such a situation, there also exists an internal right to rebel against what is inevitable and apparently ordained [deleted: “willed”] by God. I believe this to be one of the basic Christian truths, but a truth that one makes one’s own only after much practice.”

[5.] [The German word *Anfechtung* has a broader meaning than the English word “temptation” as translated here (the German equivalent of temptation is *Versuchung*). *Anfechtung* includes the idea of a person being lured to act against God’s will, but it also denotes “tribulation” in the sense of being assaulted by the powers of darkness.—JDG] Concerning the significance of *Anfechtung* in Luther, see Karl Holl’s comment that Luther “is regularly *assaulted* by temptation/tribulation. . . . Unexpectedly, in the middle of the night, the unspeakable suddenly confronts him” (Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, 1:68). The subject of temptation in connection with Luther is already present in Bonhoeffer’s thought from early on; cf. *DBWE* 2:123, 142, 155–56. See also the passage “The Person Who Is Tempted” in the 1935–36 lectures on pastoral care, *DBW* 14:582–86; 583: “Another temptation [*Anfechtung*] that is experienced is . . . *acedia*, of which Luther has so gravely warned. In it *a person disintegrates internally*. . . . Everything is meaningless, everything completely dark between the person and God, so that the person loses God altogether.” On this subject, see Bobert-Stützel, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Pastoraltheologie*, 173–79.

[6.] Jer. 17:9.

[7.] This document has been lost; see 1/11, ed. note 9.

71 over,”<sup>[8]</sup> 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,<sup>[9]</sup> 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.<sup>[10]</sup>

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?<sup>[11]</sup> 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,<sup>[12]</sup> two pairs of briefs, a string vest,<sup>[13]</sup> 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;<sup>[14]</sup> 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!<sup>[15]</sup> I recall that the old Schoene<sup>[16]</sup> 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.<sup>[17]</sup> Adalbert Stifter’s background is also pri-

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[8.] See 1/11, p. 72.

[9.] Ps. 31:16 [v. 15 in NRSV; see comment above in 1/11, ed. note 12, and 1/12, ed. note 3—JDG].

[10.] Ps. 13:1: “How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?”

[11.] Konstantin von Kleist-Retzow, cousin of Maria von Wedemeyer. [He was a soldier in the Afrikakorps. Tunis was lost by the German and Italian troops on May 7, 1943.—JDG]

[12.] [A laxative.—JDG]

[13.] [I.e., an undershirt.—JDG]

[14.] Gotthelf, *Geld und Geist*; see 1/9, ed. note 6.

[15.] Gotthelf, *Zeitgeist und Berner Geist*; see DBWE 7:60, ed. note 30.

[16.] Richard Schöne.

[17.] See 1/9, ed. note 6.

marily 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 contemplativa*,<sup>[18]</sup> I am nevertheless not a born Trappist monk.<sup>[19]</sup> 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.<sup>[20]</sup> Thanks to Renate, who introduced me to this music;<sup>[21]</sup> it has become one of the greatest enrichments of my life.

Please give Ursel my warmest good wishes on her birthday;<sup>[22]</sup> 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<sup>[23]</sup> and Maria's grandmother<sup>[24]</sup> together with her whole family.

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[18.] The "contemplative life" of monks in contrast to the "active life" (*vita activa*) in secular vocations.

[19.] Draft of the letter in *NL*, A 76,23: "Even though I like to be quiet on my own without feeling bored, I have come to realize that I would not fit into a Trappist monastery. Conversational exchange is something that I do miss very much."

[20.] Ps. 3: "Ach, wie groß ist der Feinde Rott" (H. Schütz, *Der Psalter*, 3); Ps. 47: "Frohlocket mit Händen und jauchzet dem Herren" (H. Schütz, *Zwei deutsche Konzerte*); Ps. 70: "Eile, mich, Gott, zu erretten, Herr, mir zu helfen!" (H. Schütz, *Kleine geistliche Konzerte*, 5–7); see also 2/73, ed. note 50.

[21.] Bonhoeffer means Eberhard Bethge; see Bonhoeffer's letter of February 4, 1941, to Bethge, *DBWE* 16, 1/71, p. 139: "I am indebted to you for Heinrich Schütz and with him for a whole rich world."

[22.] May 21.

[23.] Elizabeth von Hase.

[24.] Ruth von Kleist-Retzow.

73 18. Wedding Sermon from the Prison Cell<sup>[1]</sup>

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<sup>[2]</sup> 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.”<sup>[3]</sup> You long to find

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[1.] *NL*, A 76,25; handwritten; 6 pages; written for the wedding of Renate and Eberhard Bethge on May 15, 1943. Previously published in *LPP*, 41–47.

[2.] See *DBWE* 3:137.

[3.] Johannes Brahms, *Von ewiger Liebe* (op. 43, Vier Gesänge, no. 1, in *Sämtliche Werke*, 24:5–6): “Iron or steel, people reforge it / this love of ours who will reshape it? / Iron and steel, they can melt / our love, our love must endure forever and ever!” Bonhoeffer’s sister Ursula had frequently sung this song with him accompanying her on the piano.

in each other the earthly bliss that consists, in the words of the medieval song, in comforting each other in body and soul.<sup>[4]</sup> 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.

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*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,

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[4.] "Du sollst an mich gedenken," fifteenth century, melody from the *Lochheimer Liederbuch*, ca. 1450 (song no. 287 in the *Volksliederbuch für gemischten Chor*, vol. 2), v. 2: "This, my chosen one, my only comfort, keep in mind! / my body and my goods are all for you to own. / Yours I will remain, for ever and ever. / You give me joy and high spirits, you dispel my sorrow."

an estate [ein Stand],<sup>[5]</sup> 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."<sup>[6]</sup> 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  
76 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).<sup>[7]</sup> 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.<sup>[8]</sup> 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

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[5.] [The German *Stand*, referring to feudal social structures, is usually translated "estate" in Lutheran theology as in "the estate of matrimony." It here reflects Bonhoeffer's traditional understanding of marriage. See *DBWE* 6:389, ed. note 2.—JDG]

[6.] Matt. 19:6.

[7.] Col. 3:18–19.

[8.] Gen. 2:20.

“loves her like his own flesh.”<sup>[9]</sup> 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.’”<sup>[10]</sup> The happiness that a husband finds in a proper wife, or one who is “virtuous” and “wise,” to use biblical

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[9.] Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5 [NRSV reads: “the two shall become one flesh”—JDG]; see also Eph. 5:28. Cf. *DBWE* 3:94–102.

[10.] Bonhoeffer, with slight changes of the text, cites Prov. 31, vv. 11–13, 15, 20, 25, 28–29.

terms, is praised in the Bible again and again as the greatest earthly happiness altogether—it “is far more precious than pearls.”<sup>[11]</sup> “A virtuous wife is the crown of her husband.”<sup>[12]</sup> However, the Bible is equally clear about the misfortune that befalls the husband and the entire home through a perverse, “foolish” wife.<sup>[13]</sup>

78 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,”<sup>[14]</sup> 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<sup>[15]</sup> 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,”<sup>[16]</sup> and keeping the fourth commandment has the special scriptural promise of a long life on earth.<sup>[17]</sup> However, because human beings live on earth, and for as long as

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[11.] Prov. 31:10. NRSV: “She is far more precious than jewels.”

[12.] Prov. 12:4. NRSV: “A good wife . . .”

[13.] E.g., Prov. 9:13 (“The foolish woman is loud; she is ignorant and knows nothing”).

[14.] Eph. 5:23.

[15.] [Bonhoeffer regarded marriage as a divine mandate. See *DBWE* 6:388–94; *DBWE* 16, 2/10, pp. 519–21.—JDG]

[16.] Cf. the reference to a “golden chain” (meaning worldly authority) in *WA* 10/1.2:426–27.

[17.] Exod. 20:12 par. Deut. 5:16; Bonhoeffer quotes from Eph. 6:2–3.

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.<sup>[18]</sup> 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.

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*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).<sup>[19]</sup> 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."<sup>[20]</sup> Amen.

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[18.] Gen. 3:16, 19.

[19.] Rom. 15:7.

[20.] Eph. 1:12, the opening verse upon which the sermon is based.

**19. From Susanne Dreß<sup>[1]</sup>**

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.<sup>[2]</sup> Tine is the same age as I was then, so the bridesmaids were rather young. Michael and Cornelia carried the train, and Andreas and Walter scattered flowers.<sup>[3]</sup> Eberhard's three siblings<sup>[4]</sup> all came, and Hans-Walter also was there on leave. . . .

We now have windowpanes and walls again;<sup>[5]</sup> 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,<sup>[6]</sup> the worst was over. . . .

Affectionate regards from  
Your Suse

81 **20. From Paula Bonhoeffer<sup>[1]</sup>**

Berlin-Charlottenburg 9

May 16, 1943

My dear Dietrich,

Many thanks for your third letter, which we received two days before the wedding.<sup>[2]</sup> By now you have hopefully received the letter from Renate<sup>[3]</sup> and the

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[1.] *NL*, A 76,24; handwritten; from Berlin-Dahlem. Previously published in *LPP*, 47.

[2.] See 1/9, ed. note 7.

[3.] [Christine Schleicher, Michael Dreß, Cornelia Bonhoeffer, Andreas Dreß, and Walter Dreß.—JDG]

[4.] Hans and Christoph Bethge, Margret Onnasch.

[5.] Reference to air-raid damage to the home.

[6.] To the air-raid cellar.

[1.] *NL*, A 76,26; handwritten.

[2.] 1/9, the letter of May 4, arrived on May 13, 1943.

[3.] Renate Schleicher to Bonhoeffer, unpublished letter of May 13, 1943 (*NL*, A 20).

letters from Maria<sup>[4]</sup> and her grandmother.<sup>[5]</sup> 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 Cornelie danced the "Ring-a-Ring o' Roses, I'm Dancing with My Wife"<sup>[6]</sup> 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<sup>[7]</sup> and some songs from *Frauenliebe und Leben*,<sup>[8]</sup> and then Thomas and his parents played the Mozart trio.<sup>[9]</sup> 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.

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[4.] Letter of May 7, 1943, *Love Letters from Cell* 92, 22–23. [As noted in the editor's introduction, all citations in this volume from *Love Letters* are from the British edition. —JDG]

[5.] Instead of a letter from Ruth von Kleist-Retzow, the reference is presumably to a letter from Maria's mother, Ruth von Wedemeyer; see 1/24, p. 95, and 1/25, ed. note 3.

[6.] The wedding dance that Bonhoeffer danced with his sister Sabine at the wedding of Rüdiger and Ursula Schleicher.

[7.] Peter Cornelius, *Brautlieder*, 3–5: "Ein Myrtenreis: In meinem Herzen regte . . ." (A sprig of myrtle: Arousing my heart); 6–11: "Der Liebe Lohn: Süß tönt Gesanges Hauch" (The wages of love: Sweetly sings the breath of song); 12–15: "Vorabend: Nun, Liebster, geh' und scheid" (The eve before: Now, my love, go and depart); 16–17: "Erwachen: Die Nacht vergeht nach süßer Ruh'" (Awaking: The night passes after sweet rest); 18–22: "Aus dem hohen Lied: Mein Freund ist mein" (From the Song of Songs: My friend is mine); 23–29: "Erfüllung: Nun laß mich träumen" (Fulfillment: Now let me dream).

[8.] Robert Schumann, *Frauen-Liebe und -Leben* (Women's Love and Women's Life), an anthology; 3–4: "Seit ich ihn gesehen" (Since I saw him); 5–9: "Er, der Herrlichste von allen" (He, the most wonderful of all); 9–11: "Ich kann's nicht fassen, nicht glauben" (I cannot comprehend, not believe); 12–14: "Du Ring an meinem Finger" (You, ring on my finger); 15–17: "Helft mir, ihr Schwestern" (Help me, you sisters); 18–21: "Süßer Freund, du blickest" (Sweet friend, you glance); 22–25: "An meinem Herzen, an meiner Brust" (At my heart, at my breast); 26–27: "Nun hast du mir den ersten Schmerz getan" (Now you have pained me for the first time).

[9.] Trio in G-sharp for Piano, Violin, and Cello (KV 564).

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<sup>[10]</sup> 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 Cornelie 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<sup>[11]</sup> also said a few kind words to the couple. He had come from Prague with his wife and child. Christoph<sup>[12]</sup> has two weeks of vacation.

83 Soon after dinner, the couple had to leave.<sup>[13]</sup> Afterward the young people, under the leadership of Uncle Jörg,<sup>[14]</sup> 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."<sup>[15]</sup>—And in the morning, let me add, we sang "Die güldne Sonne" and "Nun danket alle Gott"<sup>[16]</sup> 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

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[10.] Gerhard Ebeling, who, as a medical orderly stationed in Berlin, was "to a limited extent" able "to continue to serve" his congregations in Berlin-Hermsdorf and Berlin-Frohnau (letter of July 1, 1996, from Ebeling to the German editor).

[11.] Hans Bethge.

[12.] Christoph Bethge.

[13.] Renate Schleicher in an unpublished letter of May 13, 1943, to Bonhoeffer (*NL*, A 76,20): "On the evening of the wedding, we will leave right away for Dresden. There we will hear a performance of *Carmen* on Sunday and do sightseeing in the city. Afterward we will spend some time in the Sudeten [Riesengebirge] mountains."

[14.] Jörg Schleicher, brother of Rüdiger Schleicher.

[15.] In *Ein Neues Lied* (see 2/73, ed. note 68), no. 319, 1: "Hört, Ihr Herrn, und laßt Euch sagen: / unsre Uhr hat zehn geschlagen" [Listen, gentlemen, and let me tell you: / our clock has struck the hour of ten].

[16.] "Die güldne Sonne" ("Evening and Morning," *Lutheran Book of Worship*, no. 465); "Nun danket alle Gott" ("Now thank we all our God," *Lutheran Book of Worship*, no. 533).

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<sup>[1]</sup>

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,<sup>[2]</sup> 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,<sup>[3]</sup> 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<sup>[4]</sup> 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<sup>[5]</sup> are in Friedrichsbrunn. Suse is also thinking about sending her children<sup>[6]</sup> 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.

84

[1.] *NL*, A 76,27; handwritten.

[2.] The first permitted visit [*Sprecherlaubnis*] of Bonhoeffer's parents to Tegel military prison on May 23, 1943.

[3.] Robert Graf von Zedlitz-Trützschler.

[4.] Lotte Pisker.

[5.] Cornelia and Walter Bonhoeffer.

[6.] Susanne Dreß's sons Michael and Andreas.

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<sup>[1]</sup>

Berlin-Charlottenburg 9  
May 25, 1943

My dear Boy,

I would like to tell you today about Maria's visit.<sup>[2]</sup> 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,<sup>[3]</sup> which is truly rather tough (although she won't admit it).

85 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.<sup>[4]</sup> 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.<sup>[5]</sup> Maria once again brought

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[1.] *NL*, A 76,28; handwritten.

[2.] Cf. *Love Letters from Cell 92*, 24–25.

[3.] As a Red Cross nursing student in Hanover; see 1/6, ed. note 5.

[4.] See the letter of May 24, 1943, from Maria von Wedemeyer to Bonhoeffer, *Love Letters from Cell 92*, 26: "Oh, I fell in love with everything. Your house, the garden, and—most of all—your room. I don't know what I wouldn't give to be able to sit there again, if only to look at the inkblots on your desk pad."

[5.] See Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer's report in the following letter, 1/23.

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,<sup>[6]</sup> 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.<sup>[7]</sup> 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*<sup>[8]</sup> 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,<sup>[9]</sup> 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

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### 23. From Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer<sup>[1]</sup>

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

[6.] See 1/2, ed. note 8.

[7.] See 1/9, p. 67.

[8.] [Actually *Zeitgeist und Berner Geist*.—JDG] See 1/17, p. 80.

[9.] See 1/17, p. 80.

[1.] *NL*, A 76,30; handwritten. Previously published in *LPP*, 47–48.

87 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.<sup>[2]</sup> 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.<sup>[3]</sup>

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<sup>[4]</sup> 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

88 **24. From Paula Bonhoeffer<sup>[1]</sup>**

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

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[2.] Cf. *Love Letters from Cell* 92, 28–29.

[3.] See 1/9, p. 68.

[4.] [I.e., in Leipzig.—JDG]

[1.] *NL*, A 76,31; handwritten.

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,<sup>[2]</sup> which you must have enjoyed. Today she<sup>[3]</sup> 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.<sup>[4]</sup> 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.<sup>[5]</sup> 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.

89

Today three small, used “Calderon”<sup>[6]</sup> volumes that you ordered arrived from the bookshop. I am putting them in the package. I’ve also put in Reuter’s<sup>[7]</sup> *Ut mine Stromtid*, which I love so much. It<sup>[8]</sup> 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,”<sup>[9]</sup> so you can perfect your skills. . . .

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[2.] See 1/20, ed. notes 4 and 5.

[3.] [Ruth von Wedemeyer, Dietrich’s mother-in-law.—JDG]

[4.] See 1/9, ed. note 12.

[5.] See 1/17, p. 79: “I am currently trying my hand at a small study on the ‘sense of time,’ an experience that may be especially characteristic during a pretrial detention.”

[6.] Calderón de la Barca, *Calderons ausgewählte Werke in drei Bänden*.

[7.] Fritz Reuter.

[8.] [I.e., the dialect used in the book.—JDG]

[9.] This would have been either Eduard Lasker’s *Schachstrategie* or his *Lehrbuch des Schachspiels*.

Perhaps you know from the newspaper that Aunt Friedchen, Uncle Paul's ninety-three-year-old mother,<sup>[10]</sup> 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."<sup>[11]</sup> 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<sup>[12]</sup> 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<sup>[13]</sup> send lots of love.

Your old Mother

90 **25. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer**<sup>[1]</sup>

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<sup>[2]</sup> and my mother-in-law<sup>[3]</sup> 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.<sup>[4]</sup> Maria writes with such

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[10.] Frieda von Hase; Major General Paul von Hase, military commander of Berlin, was a cousin of Paula Bonhoeffer.

[11.] Abbreviated paraphrase of John 16:19–20.

[12.] To Alexander Stahlberg in Stettin; see Stahlberg, *Die verdammte Pflicht*, 102ff.

[13.] Eberhard and Renate Bethge.

[1.] *NL*, A 76,33; handwritten; annotation by Bethge: "arrived June 10." Previously published in *LPP*, 48–51. There are also drafts of this letter dated June 3 [which was Ascension Day—JDG] (*NL*, A 76,34; original and copy) and June 4, 1943 (*NL*, A 76,35; copy).

[2.] Letter of May 24, 1943; *Love Letters from Cell* 92, 26–27.

[3.] Unpublished letter of May 27, 1943, from Ruth von Wedemeyer to Bonhoeffer: "I am so happy that I have permission to write to you—that all the obstacles have been cleared away by the events of the last few weeks—that I am now able to write to you as to a very dear son."

[4.] Bonhoeffer did not receive permission to write to his fiancée until after the conclusion of the first phase of interrogations (end of July 1943); see 1/39.

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,<sup>[5]</sup> 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,<sup>[6]</sup> 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.<sup>[7]</sup>

91

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

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[5.] Regarding the background, see Bonhoeffer's report in his letter of November 27, 1942, to Eberhard Bethge (*DBWE* 16, 1/210, p. 374): "From Tuesday through Wednesday noon I was at Mrs. von Wedemeyer's. . . . Gist of the discussion she requested: a year of total separation in order to enable Maria to find some peace. . . . My response: . . . that I understood and recognized her maternal authority over her daughter; but future circumstances themselves would show whether such a stipulation could be followed; I didn't think so." See also *DB-ER*, 787–90, and *Love Letters from Cell 92*, 253 and 288–91.

[6.] See 1/23, p. 94.

[7.] *Ibid.*

seem unable to laugh. One therefore makes the fullest use of all internal or external sources of joy.

92 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.<sup>[8]</sup> 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,”<sup>[9]</sup> and I enjoy it greatly. One writes more fluently from direct experience and feels liberated. Many thanks, Papa, for Kant’s *Anthropologie*,<sup>[10]</sup> 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<sup>[11]</sup> 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.<sup>[12]</sup>

I am very happy to know that you are now reading Gotthelf; I’m sure you would enjoy his *Wanderungen*<sup>[13]</sup> just as much—I think Susi has it. With regard to academic books, I very much enjoyed Uhlhorn’s large *Geschichte der christlichen Liebestätigkeit*,<sup>[14]</sup> and Holl’s *Kirchengeschichte*<sup>[15]</sup> reminded me of his seminars.<sup>[16]</sup>

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[8.] See Bonhoeffer’s sermon in the Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtnis Kirche in Berlin on Ascension Day 1933, *DBW* 12, 3/6.

[9.] See 1/11, ed. note 9.

[10.] Kant, *Anthropology* (see also 1/11, ed. note 7); the draft of this letter, dated June 4, 1943, contains the following note: “I found the sections on ‘boredom’ etc. very interesting.” Kant, *Anthropology*, par. 61, 101–3: “On boredom and diversion.”

[11.] [Bonhoeffer uses the word *Rokokopsychologie*, alluding to the ornate and elaborate artistic style, rococo, of eighteenth-century Europe.—J.D.G.]

[12.] Kant, *Anthropology*, par. 23, 39 (see 1/11, ed. note 7): “This sort of communication with ourselves takes the place of companionship insofar as it fills our empty time, not with conversation, but with sensations that are always stirred up afresh and with stimuli that, though transitory, are always renewed.”

[13.] Gotthelf, *Jakobs des Handwerksgelesen Wanderungen durch die Schweiz*.

[14.] Uhlhorn, *Christian Charity in the Ancient Church*. In the draft for this letter of June 4, 1943, Bonhoeffer wrote: “. . . reading the portrayal of the prison system of times past, I was happy indeed not to have been born earlier.” See Uhlhorn, 190–98, 237–38, et passim.

[15.] Karl Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, vol. 3: *Der Westen*; see 1/9, ed. note 11.

[16.] See *DB-ER*, 68–69.

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?

93

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*<sup>[17]</sup> (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,<sup>[18]</sup> 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.<sup>[19]</sup>

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

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[17.] Hoskyns and Davey, *Riddle of the New Testament*.

[18.] Ruth-Alice von Bismarck, née von Wedemeyer.

[19.] Ruth von Kleist-Retzow.

94 **26. From Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer**<sup>[1]</sup>

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.<sup>[2]</sup> . . .

On Sunday we attended the installation service for Walter Dreß.<sup>[3]</sup> 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,<sup>[4]</sup> whom I had not seen since I worked for the Lubbe trial.<sup>[5]</sup> 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*<sup>[6]</sup> 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

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[1.] *NL*, A 76,29; handwritten. Previously published in *LPP*, 51.

[2.] Hans von Dohnanyi.

[3.] Walter Dreß's installation as pastor of the Annenkirche in Dahlem; see 1/27, p. 102.

[4.] Senate president Wilhelm Bünger.

[5.] In 1933 the Reichstag fire trial was held before the Reich Supreme Court in Leipzig; commissioned by the examining magistrate, Karl Bonhoeffer had written an expert opinion regarding the defendant, Marinus van der Lubbe. See K. Bonhoeffer and Zutt, "Über den Geisteszustand des Reichstagsbrandstifters Marinus van der Lubbe," 100–101; *DB-ER*, 263–65. See also Gerrens, "Zum Karl-Bonhoeffer-Gutachten."

[6.] Gotthelf, *Zeitgeist und Berner Geist*.

preserve “a portrait of myself for future times.”<sup>[7]</sup> I believe it is sufficient for my picture to be preserved within the family.<sup>[8]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup>

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.”<sup>[2]</sup> In the garden a peony is actually about to bloom for Pentecost, the first time ever!<sup>[3]</sup> . . .

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[7.] The Filmarchiv der Persönlichkeiten was commissioned by the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda as “a collection of selected portraits of renowned persons from politics, business, and art and science, initially not intended for distribution” (those interviewed included Ferdinand Sauerbruch, Gerhart Hauptmann, Robert Bosch, and Sven Hedin). The series was produced by “a special production team of the Deutsche Wochenschau GmbH.” Fascius, Granier, Henke, and Oldenhave, *Das Bundesarchiv und seine Bestände*, 749.

[8.] See *DBWE* 7:86: “I am having my portrait painted for my family, not the town hall,’ grandfather Brake had said.” [This was a character in Bonhoeffer’s novel written in prison.—JDG]

[1.] *NL*, A 76,38; handwritten. Excerpts previously published in *LPP*, 52.

[2.] “O Heiliger Geist, kehre bei uns ein,” fourth stanza. Translation by Reinhard Krauss. [The English version of this hymn is “O holy spirit, enter in,” *Lutheran Book of Worship*, no. 459.—JDG]

[3.] [The German term for peony is *Pfingstrose*, literally “Pentecost rose.”—JDG]

Your letter of the fourth<sup>[4]</sup> 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.<sup>[5]</sup> 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.<sup>[6]</sup> 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*<sup>[7]</sup> instead. I hope that, as you read, you get used to the dialect,<sup>[8]</sup> and then, I think, you will get much pleasure out of Reuter. I am also sending *Häuser über dem Rhein*,<sup>[9]</sup> 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.<sup>[10]</sup> Text: "You did not choose me but I chose you."<sup>[11]</sup> 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."<sup>[12]</sup> 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.

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[4.] See 1/25.

[5.] See 1/21, letter of May 25, 1943.

[6.] [Manfred Roeder, the military prosecutor.—JDG]

[7.] Reuter, *Ut mine Festungstid*.

[8.] [Reuter wrote in Mecklenburg Low German.—JDG]

[9.] Rudolf Löw, *Häuser über dem Rhein*.

[10.] [Pastor Werner Messow.—JDG]

[11.] John 15:16.

[12.] 1 Cor. 3:22–23. [The *NRSV* translation reads: "all belong to you."—JDG]

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<sup>[1]</sup>

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<sup>[2]</sup> 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.<sup>[3]</sup> 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.

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Recently we had Benedikt’s boy<sup>[4]</sup> 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,<sup>[5]</sup> 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.<sup>[6]</sup> At any rate,

[1.] *NL*, A 76,39; handwritten; from Leipzig. Excerpts previously published in *LPP*, 52.

[2.] In using the plural pronoun here, Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer is referring to Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Hans von Dohnanyi.

[3.] At the Dratzigsee [now Jezioro Drawsko; it was the largest lake in Pomerania—JDG] in what was then Pomerania.

[4.] Johann Georg von Hase.

[5.] Karl and Johann Friedrich Bonhoeffer.

[6.] [A popular German author of westerns.—JDG]

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<sup>[7]</sup> 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.<sup>[8]</sup> 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;<sup>[9]</sup> 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<sup>[10]</sup> closed a letter to Hans<sup>[11]</sup> 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

99 **29. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer**<sup>[1]</sup>

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<sup>[2]</sup> 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

[7.] Martin Bonhoeffer.

[8.] Ritter, *Die Weltwirkung der Reformation* (1941).

[9.] Weizsäcker, *World View of Physics*; the German edition was first published in 1943; see 3/149, p. 401, and 3/152, p. 405.

[10.] [Christoph von Dohnanyi.—JDG]

[11.] [Hans von Dohnanyi.—JDG]

[1.] *NL*, A 76,40; handwritten. Excerpts previously published in *LPP*, 53–55. There is also a draft of the letter in *NL*, A 76,41 (handwritten in pencil; with copy).

[2.] Rev. 1:9–10. (“I, John, . . . was on the island called Patmos. . . . I was in the spirit on the Lord’s day.”)

bist ein Geist der Freude . . .” and “Gib Freudigkeit und Stärke . . .”<sup>[3]</sup> as well as the Scripture verses: “He who does not stand firm in adversity, is not strong” (Prov. 24),<sup>[4]</sup> 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).<sup>[5]</sup> I have also thought a lot again about the peculiar story of the “miracle of tongues.”<sup>[6]</sup> 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<sup>[7]</sup>—an expression of his desire to heal the fractured world of his day—a philosophical reflection of the Pentecost story.

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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

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[3.] From the hymn “Zieh ein zu deinen Toren,” *Evangelisches Gesangbuch*, no. 133, v. 6: “Du bist ein Geist der Freuden, / von Trauern hältst du nichts, / erleuchtest uns im Leiden / mit deines Trostes Licht. / Ach ja, wie manches Mal / hast du mit süßen Worten / mir aufgetan die Pforten / zum güldnen Freudensaal” [You are a spirit of joy, / mourning you dismiss, / you enlighten us in suffering / with the light of your consolation. / Oh yes, how many times / did you with sweet words / open to me the gates / of the golden hall of joy]; and v. 12 from the same hymn: “Gib Freudigkeit und Stärke / zu stehen in dem Streit, / den Satans Reich und Werke / uns täglich anerbeut. / Hilf kämpfen ritterlich, / damit wir überwinden / und ja zum Dienst der Sünden / kein Christ erbege sich” [Grant joyfulness and strength / to fight the battle / that Satan’s realm and works / present to us each day. / Help us to fight with valor, / to let us overcome / and to the servitude of sin / no Christian might succumb]. The English translations here are by Reinhard Krauss. The English version of this hymn is “O Enter, Lord, Thy Temple,” *Lutheran Hymnal*, no. 228.

[4.] Prov. 24:10; see also 1/12, ed. note 5. [The NRSV reads: “If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength being small.”—JDG]

[5.] 2 Tim. 1:7; NRSV reads “self-discipline.” The Luther Bible reads *Zucht* (discipline) instead of *Besonnenheit* (prudence).

[6.] Acts 2:1–13; see also *DBW* 14:427.

[7.] Leibniz, *Consilium de Encyclopaedia nova conscribenda methodo inventoria*, 30–41; also *Generales Inquisitiones de Analysis Notionum et Veritatum*, 356–99, both in *Opuscules et fragments inédits de Leibniz*. On this subject, see Krämer, *Berechenbare Vernunft*, 242–54.

some region of my subconscious, I had hoped that by Pentecost I would be free again,<sup>[8]</sup> 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”<sup>[9]</sup>—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.<sup>[10]</sup> The poor thing always must write now without receiving a direct reply from me.<sup>[11]</sup> 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.<sup>[12]</sup> It now has to sit for a while; we’ll see how it will survive that.<sup>[13]</sup>

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[8.] *DBWE* 16, 1/226, p. 409 and ed. note 1; after June 10, 1943, Bonhoeffer wrote letters to the senior military prosecutor, Dr. Manfred Roeder, in addition to the interrogations at the Reich War Court. Drafts of the letters from this period, until the beginning of August, are extant; see *DBWE* 16, 1/226, pp. 409–11, and 1/228, pp. 413–27.

[9.] Reuter, *Ut mine Festungstid*, sec. 1, chap. 1, first par.

[10.] Letter of May 30, 1943, *Love Letters from Cell 92*, 28–29.

[11.] See 1/25, ed. note 4.

[12.] See 1/11, ed. note 9.

[13.] Draft of the letter: “I’ve been reading a rather good biography of Moltke [Count Helmuth von Moltke, the grandfather of Bonhoeffer’s compatriot in the conspiracy—JDG] by Naso [Naso, *Moltke*] on the side. However, having just been exposed

It is Whit Monday.<sup>[14]</sup> 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.<sup>[15]</sup> Please give my special thanks to Renate for this special treat. I wish her much daily joy in her marriage and in her calling.<sup>[16]</sup> 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

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I would still like some cotton wool; the “Oropax”<sup>[17]</sup> gives me such a dull feeling in the head.

### 30. From Paula Bonhoeffer<sup>[1]</sup>

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*.<sup>[2]</sup> Both of us really enjoy it. . . . Hopefully, you

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to such excellent stylists as Stifter, Gotthelf, or Keller, one is bothered by the poverty of the range of expressions. When Moltke proposed, he was forty-one and his fiancée was sixteen [replaces: “was, by the way, twenty-five years older than his wife”]; this is certainly quite another difference in age! And it must have been a very good marriage.”

[14.] [The day after Pentecost.—JDG]

[15.] See Feil, *Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 48–49; Gerhard Ludwig Müller, *Bonhoeffer's Theologie der Sakramente*.

[16.] [I.e., as a pastor's wife.—JDG]

[17.] [Earplugs made from wax and marketed under the name Ohropax since 1908.—JDG]

[1.] *NL*, A 76,42; handwritten. Excerpts previously published in *LPP*, 55.

[2.] See 1/26, ed. note 6.

103 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.<sup>[3]</sup> 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.<sup>[4]</sup>

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.<sup>[5]</sup> . . .

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 und Irrtümer*.<sup>[6]</sup> I have asked the grandmother for the book on the senior Kleist-Retzow.<sup>[7]</sup>

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

Your Mother

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[3.] [The German editor notes that this remark was probably intended for the censor.—JDG]

[4.] The family emphasized their hopes for his release repeatedly. [While they may have had doubts, they did not give up hope until after the failure of the plot against Hitler in 1944.—JDG]

[5.] [The German editor notes that this comment was probably intended for the censor.—JDG]

[6.] Karl von Hase, *Ideale und Irrtümer*.

[7.] Petersdorff, *Hans Hugo Kleist-Retzow*. The extant copy (*NL-Bibl.* 10,3) contains a dedication by Ruth von Kleist-Retzow on the occasion of the announcement of Bonhoeffer's engagement on June 24, 1943; see Pejsa, *Matriarch of Conspiracy*, 308

We have just learned that Maria has been transferred to be a nurse here at the Augusta hospital.<sup>[8]</sup> She is already here and will join us for a meal.<sup>[9]</sup> Greetings, Father

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### 31. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer<sup>[1]</sup>

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,<sup>[2]</sup> 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,<sup>[3]</sup> for which I especially thank him; good that he is now so close to Berlin.<sup>[4]</sup> Christoph in his letter shared some nice tales from Sakrow.<sup>[5]</sup> If only the children were soon relieved of this stress. In the last package little Michael<sup>[6]</sup> 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.<sup>[7]</sup> I've probably already sent my thanks for Ursel's

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[8.] Maria von Wedemeyer's letter of June 9, 1943, *Love Letters from Cell 92*, 34: "I've requested a transfer to the Augusta Hospital in Berlin, and am now waiting to be posted there. It could happen within the next few days. Being near you would be so much nicer, and I look forward to being able to visit your parents more often."

[9.] See *Love Letters from Cell 92*, 36.

[1.] *NL*, A 76,43; handwritten. Excerpts previously published in *LPP*, 70–72. There is a draft of the letter in *NL*, A 83,2.

[2.] Letter of June 9 and 10, 1943, *Love Letters from Cell 92*, 33–35.

[3.] Unpublished letter of June 6, 1943, from Hans-Walter Schleicher to Bonhoeffer (*NL*, A 76,36).

[4.] In Cottbus; see 2/45.

[5.] Unpublished letter of June 6, 1943, from Christoph von Dohnanyi to Bonhoeffer (*NL*, A 76,37).

[6.] Michael Dreß.

[7.] See 1/28.

letter.<sup>[8]</sup> 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,<sup>[9]</sup> 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;<sup>[10]</sup> 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<sup>[11]</sup> 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<sup>[12]</sup> 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!<sup>[13]</sup> 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

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[8.] Unpublished letter of June 5, 1943, from Ursula Schleicher to Bonhoeffer (*NL*, A 76,32).

[9.] [There were occasional arrests of Confessing Church pastors throughout the 1930s, including the March 1935 arrest of some seven hundred pastors for reading a statement critical of the Nazi regime from their pulpits. See Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 40 and 56–57.—JDG]

[10.] See 1/27.

[11.] See 1/30; Ruth von Kleist-Retzow's letter is not extant.

[12.] [Or chickadee.—JDG]

[13.] Not identified.

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*<sup>[14]</sup> with great pleasure; I also enjoyed Stifter's *Nachsommer* very much. You must read *Waldsteig*, by Stifter, and *Uli*, by Gotthelf,<sup>[15]</sup> sometime; they are really worthwhile.

I am just returning to my cell and have seen Maria<sup>[16]</sup>—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<sup>[17]</sup>

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[14.] See 1/30, ed. note 6.

[15.] Stifter's *Nachsommer* and *Der Waldsteig*; Gotthelf, *Uli der Knecht*. [*Nachsommer* was translated as *Indian Summer*; Gotthelf's novel appeared in English as *Utric, the Farm Servant*.—JDG]

[16.] Maria von Wedemeyer's first face-to-face encounter with Bonhoeffer at the Reich War Court, on June 24, 1943. Cf. Wedemeyer-Weller, "Other Letters from Prison," 25: "Our first meeting . . . took place in the *Reichskriegsgericht* [Reich War Court] and I found myself being used as a tool by the prosecutor Roeder. I was brought into the room with practically no forewarning, and Dietrich was visibly shaken. He first reacted with silence, but then carried on a normal conversation; his emotions showed only in the pressure with which he held my hand."

[17.] This presumably refers to Maria von Wedemeyer's letter of June 20, 1943 (*Love Letters from Cell* 92, 36–37). In an unpublished letter of June 14, 1943, Ruth von Wedemeyer wrote Bonhoeffer: "Again and again our hearts ache because you have to suffer so much and we cannot help you except through our prayers. But they really *do* help. . . . With some creativity and craftiness, we now arranged Maria's transfer to Berlin—an unusual favor! But I considered it to be very important that she be allowed to be close to your parents and to all of us, and not be left so alone as she was. May it soon be granted that you can see and embrace each other. I have no more ardent wish than that."

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

108 **32. From Paula Bonhoeffer**<sup>[1]</sup>

June 27, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

We were very happy that you were able to see and talk to Maria,<sup>[2]</sup> even though I was a little worried right away that now it would probably not work out for us.<sup>[3]</sup> However, it is perhaps a good thing for us to get a little bit used to this, and we were told by Captain Maetz<sup>[4]</sup> 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.<sup>[5]</sup>

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."

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[1.] *NL*, A 76,44; handwritten. Excerpts previously published in *LPP*, 72–73.

[2.] On June 24, 1943, at the Reich War Court; see 1/31, ed. note 16.

[3.] Permits were not granted before the conclusion of the investigation and depended on the discretion of the officials in charge.

[4.] Commandant of the Tegel military prison.

[5.] See letter of June 20, 1943, *Love Letters from Cell 92*, 36–37.

It's nice that you completed your study on the sense of time.<sup>[6]</sup> 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<sup>[7]</sup> 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"<sup>[8]</sup> 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

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### 33. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer<sup>[1]</sup>

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<sup>[2]</sup> 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!

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[6.] See 1/29, p. 106 ("The study on the sense of time is practically done").

[7.] Eberhard and Renate Bethge.

[8.] *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*; see 1/9, ed. note 3.

[1.] *NL*, A 76,45; typewritten copy; handwritten note by Bethge: "arrived July 14." Excerpts previously published in *LPP*, 73–75.

[2.] Marianne Leibholz.

The past week has been filled with much quiet work and good books, and also with letters from you and Maria,<sup>[3]</sup> 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<sup>[4]</sup> 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,<sup>[5]</sup> 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;<sup>[6]</sup> 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]<sup>[7]</sup> and footbaths have been tried but with no success at all.

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[3.] 1/32, and Maria von Wedemeyer's letter of June 26, 1943, in *Love Letters from Cell 92*, 39–42.

[4.] Captain Maetz.

[5.] *Love Letters from Cell 92*, 40–41.

[6.] This photo is included in the German edition of *Brautbriefe*, 276. [It is not included in the English translation, *Love Letters from Cell 92*.—JDG]

[7.] [This probably refers to treatment using infrared light.—JDG]

A quarter of a year has now passed in custody. From my student days I recall Schlatter<sup>[8]</sup> 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.<sup>[9]</sup> 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<sup>[10]</sup> 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<sup>[1]</sup>

112

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.<sup>[2]</sup> Yesterday, Grete and the four children<sup>[3]</sup> left for Tempelburg after staying with us overnight. Karl-Friedrich is still teaching and was thus unable

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[8.] See *DB-ER*, 54: "Schlatter did not lecture on ethics in 1923 and 1924 [when Bonhoeffer attended his lectures]. . . . Bonhoeffer may have been recalling some other reading or a statement Schlatter made at one of his open houses." There is no such statement in Adolf Schlatter's *Ethics*.

[9.] [Dealing with a newborn baby.—JDG]

[10.] [A reference to Maria's grandmother, Ruth von Kleist-Retzow.—JDG]

[1.] *NL*, A 76,47; handwritten. Excerpts previously published in *LPP*, 75.

[2.] July 5, 1943.

[3.] Karl, Friedrich, Martin, and Katharina Bonhoeffer.

to come along. . . . Did you find anything useful for your project in Heidegger's *Phänomenologie des Zeitbewußtseins*?<sup>[4]</sup> 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<sup>[5]</sup> 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.<sup>[6]</sup> 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

113 **35. From Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer**<sup>[1]</sup>

July 11, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

Hope does not disappoint!<sup>[2]</sup> 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,

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[4.] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pars. 65–83, pp. 370–488; see also Edmund Husserl's article (edited by Martin Heidegger), "Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins."

[5.] "Die Einkehr" (Stopping Off), in Stifter, *Der Nachsommer*, 42–65.

[6.] Stifter, *Die Mappe meines Urgroßvaters*, 131: "In the garden the irrepressible angelica root still ran riot; next to it stood a gray trunk whose two remaining living branches still bore black wild cherries every year, and dropped leaves as red as blood in the fall." See also *DBWE* 7:90, ed. note 77.

[1.] *NL*, A 76,48; handwritten; from Leipzig; previously published in *LPP*, 76.

[2.] Allusion to Rom. 5:5a, which has become proverbial.

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<sup>[1]</sup>

114

Berlin-Charlottenburg 9  
July 14, 1943

Dear Dietrich,

Your letter from the fifth didn't arrive until today.<sup>[2]</sup> Even though mail is not supposed to be routed via Florastraße<sup>[3]</sup> 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.<sup>[4]</sup> 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.<sup>[5]</sup> 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.<sup>[6]</sup> With Uncle Rudi<sup>[7]</sup> still in Sweden and Rüdiger Goltz<sup>[8]</sup> in Kiensegg, probably no

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[1.] *NL*, A 76,49; handwritten. Excerpts previously published in *LPP*, 75.

[2.] The reference is to Bonhoeffer's letter of July 3, 1943, 1/33.

[3.] Not identified [most likely a censorship facility—JDG].

[4.] See 1/33, p. 114.

[5.] Hans von Hase in Frankfurt/Oder; he was Dietrich Bonhoeffer's godfather and Paula Bonhoeffer's brother.

[6.] Countess Hannah von der Goltz, née von Hase, the twin sister of Hans von Hase.

[7.] Count Rüdiger von der Goltz.

[8.] Count Rüdiger von der Goltz, son of "Uncle Rudi."

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

115 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<sup>[9]</sup> 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,<sup>[10]</sup> 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.”<sup>[11]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup>

Sunday, July 24,<sup>[2]</sup> 1943

My dear Parents,

116 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.

[9.] Not identified, but see ed. note 3 above.

[10.] The Moravian boarding school where Paula von Hase was enrolled at age fifteen “because she was so wild” (Sabine Leibholz to the German editors).

[11.] See Bonhoeffer's sermon for his pre-ordination theological exam in 1930, *DBWE* 10, 3/22, p. 578: “As has been related regarding the great church father [John Chrysostom—JDG] of the East whose life concluded with tribulation and prison and from whose mouth came the final words: Thanks be to God for all things.”

[1.] *NL*, A 76,51; handwritten; previously published in *LPP*, 76–78. There is a draft of the letter in *NL*, A 76,52; handwritten in pencil; with copy.

[2.] Correctly: “25.”

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,<sup>[3]</sup> 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,<sup>[4]</sup> and especially Susi for often delivering the packages, which, of course, is always a strain on her.<sup>[5]</sup> 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.<sup>[6]</sup>

I very much enjoyed two nice letters, one from Maria<sup>[7]</sup> and one from my mother-in-law<sup>[8]</sup>—dated June 27, by the way. Was it left somewhere?

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[3.] Unpublished letter of July 18, 1943, from Susanne Dreß to Bonhoeffer (NL, A 76,50).

[4.] Unpublished postcard of July 11, 1943, from Walter Dreß to Bonhoeffer (NL, A 76,46).

[5.] Susanne Dreß describes this delivery service in W.-D. Zimmermann, *I Knew Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 215–21.

[6.] Deleted in the draft: "Until I have read the *Daily Texts* and a few psalms, I am." [The daily Old and New Testament readings, along with a hymn verse, prayer or maxim (*Losung*) for each day of the year, are published annually as the *Losungen (Daily Texts)* by the Moravian Brethren (Brüdergemeine) in Herrnhut, Saxony, and are now distributed in forty languages. They are published in English as the *Daily Texts*.—JDG]

[7.] From July 6 and 13, 1943, *Love Letters from Cell 92*, 43–47.

[8.] Unpublished letter of June 27, 1943, from Ruth von Wedemeyer to Bonhoeffer: "Coming back from seeing you [after their first encounter on June 24, 1943, at the Reich War Court; see 1/31, ed. note 16], Maria was initially so shaken that for a long time she could not utter a word and first had to release her strong emotions through tears. Then she told me many things, and in each sentence one could sense a great, brightly burning joy. To my eyes, her expression was totally transformed. Now she lives entirely from this hour and ponders all the words in her heart. How wonderful that there was no strangeness between you, that you were able to be so cheerful with her!"

117 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<sup>[9]</sup> makes sense to her. It would be wonderful if she could get hold of a viola da gamba.<sup>[10]</sup> 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.<sup>[11]</sup> By the way, once again I was captivated by the most recent Reuter book.<sup>[12]</sup> 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.

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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.

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[9.] See 1/33, p. 114.

[10.] [A precursor to the modern cello.—JDG]

[11.] Here the draft of the letter reads: "Incidentally, I continue to study Catholic [the word deleted here is illegible] ethics with an increasing inner objection to casuistry. Undoubtedly the outcome [illegible] closed [illegible] system, but of course a system of duties cannot comprise life."

[12.] Reuter, *Ut mine Festungstid*; see 1/29, ed. note 9.

By the way, Papa, did you consent to appear in the “Film of Notable Personalities”?<sup>[13]</sup> 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,<sup>[14]</sup> and of course all my brothers and sisters and their children. In love and gratitude,

Your Dietrich

### 38. From Karl Bonhoeffer<sup>[1]</sup>

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.<sup>[2]</sup> 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<sup>[3]</sup> 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.<sup>[4]</sup> 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

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[13.] See 1/26, ed. note 7.

[14.] Maria von Wedemeyer’s brothers and sisters.

[1.] *NL*, A 76,53; handwritten; on the letterhead a penciled note from Bonhoeffer: “Air-raid protection! Travel, Reuter, Captain on vacation. Hans can’t stand the heat!” Previously published in *LPP*, 78–79.

[2.] On July 30, 1943, at the Reich War Court; see 1/39, ed. note 2.

[3.] The families of Karl-Friedrich and Margarete Bonhoeffer and Rüdiger and Ursula Schleicher.

[4.] Emmi Bonhoeffer with Thomas, Cornelia, and Walter, as well as Susanne Dreß with Michael and Andreas.

taken the woolen blanket, while we ourselves had in fact been unable to escape from the heat during the night.<sup>[5]</sup>

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

120 **39. To Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer**<sup>[1]</sup>

July 30, 1943

My dear Parents,

During today's meeting at the Reich War Court,<sup>[2]</sup> I received permission from Dr. Roeder<sup>[3]</sup> to write to you and to Rüdiger Goltz<sup>[4]</sup> regarding my

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[5.] Regarding the visit by Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer in Barcelona in September 1928, see, e.g., *DBWE* 10, 1/45 and 1/48, as well as *DB-ER*, 103.

[1.] *NL*, A 77,55; handwritten comment by Bethge regarding the date: "Friday." Previously published in *LPP*, 80.

[2.] On July 30, 1943, at the Reich War Court, Bonhoeffer was informed that the criminal investigation had been concluded for the time being; this marked the beginning of the preparations for the prosecution case by Roeder as chief investigator. At the same time Bonhoeffer's fiancée visited; see *Love Letters from Cell* 92, 46.

[3.] The right of an accused to choose his own defense attorney according to paragraph 72 of the War Criminal Code was applied "very restrictively." The question of whether to allow the defense attorney chosen by the accused or to have one appointed by the court was decided by the presiding judge or (in the main trial before the Reich War Court) by the president of the senate, who acted as chief justice. Special circumstances applied to cases classified as "secret operations"; here "practically all the defendants had a court-appointed defense attorney" in the main trial. However, exceptions were made in the cases against Hans von Dohnanyi, Josef Müller, and Bonhoeffer, who "in the end were all able to have attorneys of their own choosing" (Chowaniec, *Fall Dohnanyi*, 55).

[4.] Count Rüdiger von Goltz (son of Hannah, the sister of Paula Bonhoeffer), attorney and state counsel, and an NSDAP member with a golden party badge [these were

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,<sup>[5]</sup> you also know Dr. Sack.<sup>[6]</sup> 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.<sup>[7]</sup> What I have in mind is a calm, experienced, older man<sup>[8]</sup> 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.

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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.<sup>[9]</sup>

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

Yours,  
Dietrich

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special honorary badges, held by the first one hundred thousand party members and by those personally designated by Adolf Hitler—[JDG]. In 1931/32 he was the defense attorney for Joseph Goebbels, who had insulted Field Marshal von Hindenburg during the election campaign. See *DB-ER*, 821–22. Bonhoeffer is hinting at his excellent connections for the censor.

[5.] See *DB-ER*, 264–65.

[6.] Dr. Alfons Sack, public defense attorney in the 1933 Reichstag fire trial; see also 1/26, ed. note 5. Regarding Alfons Sack, see König, *Vom Dienst am Recht*, 74–77, 161–64.

[7.] "From the Lubbe trial . . . make a judgment" added later.

[8.] This was a hint that the services of attorney Horst Holstein should not be engaged for Bonhoeffer's political military case, since Holstein had long worked for the Confessing Church; in particular he had represented Martin Niemöller.

[9.] See letter of July 30, 1943, *Love Letters from Cell 92*, 41–42.