

0. Assignment as Assistant Pastor in the City [Stadtvikar]^[1]

17:89

June 12, 1931

In accordance with § 1 of the Church Law of March 4, 1930, Concerning the Assignment of Candidates for the Ministry to Work as Assistant Pastors in the Church—K.G. u. V. Bl.^[2] 1930, p. 113f.—your year of work as an assistant pastor begins on August 1, 1931.

We assign you, effective beginning on that date until further notice, to work as *assistant pastor in the city* [Stadtvikar] in Berlin^[3] for the time being, doing whatever work is possible without ordination.

Please see General Superintendent Dr. Karow^[4] in Berlin-Charlottenburg well before that date; he will decide about your further work as an assistant pastor in the church and give you the necessary instructions for your work.^[5]

Also, please introduce yourself to the superintendent and the pastor to whose church district and congregation, respectively, you will be assigned and request the necessary instructions for your work.

A separate order will be issued concerning your ordination.

From the aforementioned date onward, your compensation will be 183.68 reichsmarks per month, in accordance with Number 13 of the Instructions for Implementation of the Church Law of May 10, 1930, concerning the Assignment of Candidates for the Ministry to Work as Assistant Pastors in the Church—as cited above, p. 115ff.—in conjunction with the Decree of December 1, 1930, of the Reich president concerning the safeguarding of the economy and finances. The congregation will also provide you with a place to live free of charge. In case we should determine that this is not possible, you will receive a cash grant for housing costs at the level set for Prussian civil servants of salary grade V according to the local classification for your official place of residence for this work,

17:90

[1.] *NL*, D 11(69), Personnel File of the Consistory; typewritten on official stationery with printed letterhead: “Evangelical Consistory of the Mark Brandenburg, Berlin Division, Berlin SW 68, Lindenstrasse 14”; file number: K. II No. 3707. Previously published in *DBW* 17:89–90 and *GS* 6:211–12. [A *Stadtvikar* (literally, “city vicar”) would imply an urban ministry for the whole city, but in Bonhoeffer’s case this was a misnomer for his actual position, which was *Stadtsynodalvikar*, i.e., vicar assigned to the city synod. He was assigned not only directly to an urban parish, but also to the larger Berlin city synod on special assignment, supervised by the superintendent. See below 1/2, ed. note 5—*MBL*.]

[2.] [*Kirchliches Gesetz- und Verordnungsblatt* (Gazette of church laws and regulations).—*MBL*]

[3.] Handwritten underlining, probably made at a later time.

[4.] Emil Karow.

[5.] Vertical line marking the section “further work as an assistant pastor . . . instructions for your work” and handwritten in the margin: “Have already spoken with Dr. Karow. D[iestel].”

namely, 72 reichsmarks per month (special category). Salary and, if applicable, cash housing grant will be paid by the congregation monthly in advance, with a receipt given.

We are to be informed immediately of the day on which you begin your work as assistant pastor.

For the office

Wolff^[6]

13 1. From Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer^[1]

June 25, 1931

Dear Dietrich,

When you arrive home, you should at least find a greeting from us waiting for you. It's really too bad that we won't be there when you get there. There's so much I would like to ask you about America, and I would really like to know what impressions you have brought back with you. Once you've told all about it and talked it all out, you won't feel like repeating it, so we can't hope to hear it all later.

But we really are counting on your coming to see us for a short visit before you go to Bonn.^[2] It's really hardly out of your way,^[3] as you yourself have to admit now, compared to the distances in America. So come, have a look at the boy,^[4] who it seems to me looks a little like you sometimes. Probably that was the reason he pleased you in the photograph. And have a look at where we are living and what our life is like. If you have a little time, you also have to see the

[6.] Handwritten signature (Consistory Councillor Wolff); under this, stamped imprint: "Superintendent's Office Kölln-Land I, Telephone: Lichterfelde 476, Dahlemerstrasse 87, Berlin-Lichterfelde, *June 15, 1931*, Daily Log Number 2555 Diestel" (italicized portions entered by hand). At the bottom of the page, typed: "To the Candidate for Ministry Licentiate Dr. Bonhoeffer, currently in U.S.A."; added by hand: "Grunewald, Wangenheimstr. 20."

[1.] *NL*, C 3; handwritten.

[2.] On July 10, Bonhoeffer went to Bonn for three weeks to sit in on the lectures of Karl Barth and "to get in on as much as possible of the end of the semester at Bonn" (*DB-ER*, 175–76). [The summer semester at German universities usually runs from April to July.—MBL]

[3.] Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer was a professor of physical chemistry in Frankfurt.

[4.] Karl Walter Paul Bonhoeffer, born January 10, 1931; Bonhoeffer was supposed to baptize him in the summer after his return from America (see Bonhoeffer's letter of April 12, 1931, to Karl-Friedrich and Grete Bonhoeffer, *DBWE* 10:293), but since Bonhoeffer was not yet ordained at the time, this plan did not work out.

institute, which I've built up myself in the meantime. So it will be worth your while, even if it's only for twenty-four hours. But of course, the longer the better. I won't tell you much now about things here, simply because you should see everything. Besides, we'll call tomorrow night and hope to speak to you on the telephone then. We three are all doing fine (and I mean that).

Many greetings to the whole family gathered around you from your
Karl Friedrich

2. From Emil A. O. Karow^[1]

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Seefeld i. T.,^[2] July 10, 1931

Dear Mr. Bonhoeffer:

I have just received your letter of the seventh of this month.^[3] If I am not mistaken, the consistory has assigned you to me^[4] from August 1 on as an assistant pastor in the city [Stadtvikar].^[5] Your official duties will consist of providing pastoral care for the students at the Technical College.^[6] It is a field where no work has been done up to now and to which you will devote your energy. It is my wish that you work in cooperation with Pastor Bronisch-Holtze,^[7] whose main assignment is to work with students at the university. Yours will be a different kind of work than his. One reason is that your colleague is a parish pastor as well, has a regular preaching position, and has rooms in his parsonage and parish

[1.] *NL*, A 30,1 (10); handwritten; letterhead: "Dr. Karow—Generalsuperintendent—, Charlottenburg, Marchstrasse 4-5 II." Previously published with stylistic corrections in *GS* 6:212-13.

[2.] [Seefeld im Tirol, in the Tyrolean Alps on the German-Austrian border near Kufstein; Karow may have been on vacation there.—MBL]

[3.] Not extant.

[4.] Karow refers here to the Evangelical Consistory order of June 12, 1931 (see *NL*, D 11,69; previously published in *GS* 6:211; see also letter 1/0 above). The Evangelical Consistory was the highest administrative body of the provincial churches.

[5.] [The correct designation was "assistant pastor in the city synod" (*Stadtsynodalvikar*). This indicates that Bonhoeffer was assigned to a larger group of congregations that had joined together to form a city synod.—MBL]

[6.] [The Technical College (in the Charlottenburg section of Berlin) emphasized engineering and practical and applied sciences, whereas the university in Berlin (in Bonhoeffer's time the Friedrich Wilhelm University, renamed after the Second World War as the Alexander von Humboldt University) focused on academic programs oriented to the humanities, the arts, and social and natural science research.—MBL]

[7.] Ernst Oskar Paul Bronisch-Holtze had been pastor of the Church of the Trinity (Dreifaltigkeitskirche) since 1927 and at the same time student chaplain at the University (*DB-ER*, 223-25).

house that he can use. He has had experience in this field of work. I would like you to contact him and, when I am back in Berlin again, present a plan to me showing how you expect to approach your work.

Your work here will not actually begin until after the months of August and September.^[8] I will be glad to give you vacation for these months.

With best wishes I remain yours truly
Karow

17:90 **2a. To Paul Lehmann**^[1]

Bonn, July 10, [19]31.

My dear Paul,

17:91 this morning at 7 o'clock for the first time I heard K[arl] Barth. I could not help thinking all the time very strongly of you.^[2] How much would you have enjoyed this lecture! But as a weak consolation: Barth is not giving the lecture on:^[3] Why does one study theology? Only "Prolegomena" and two Schleiermacher seminars. How nice it would be if you were here! I am completely alone. So—next year for sure! In the meantime live ἐν ἐλπίδι.^[4] New York is nice, too, at least it was last year. I will send books from Berlin. Enjoy your vacation a lot! You both need it. Soon again and more. Kindest regards to you and your wife

Yours faithfully,
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

[8.] [The winter semester traditionally began in October and continued until February.—MBL]

[1.] Paul Lehmann Collection, Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library; handwritten picture postcard from Bonn (with a picture of the Drachenfels, a scene on the Rhine River); address: "Mr. Paul Lehmann c/o Pres[ident]. Lehmann, Elmhurst-Chicago, College of the Evang[elical] Synod, U.S.A."; postmark: "Bonn [illegible] July 1931." Originally published in *DBW* 17:90–91; Bonhoeffer began the letter in English [unedited here] but then changed to German.

[2.] On the friendship with Paul Lehmann, see *DB-ER*, 155–56.

[3.] [After this point, the letter continues in German.—MBL]

[4.] "In hope."

3. To His Parents^[1]

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My dear Parents,

Yesterday I came back by steamboat on the Rhine from Frankfurt, where I had visited Karl-Friedrich and Grete^[2] for two days.

I have now met Barth^[3] and got to know him quite well at a discussion evening at his house. I like him very much indeed and am also very impressed by his lectures. Everything is so well worked out and has not yet become mechanical to him. I think I shall gain a great deal from the time spent here.

The proofs^[4] arrived. I've already sent them back.

I believe I had forgotten to tell you, from the evening at Siegmund-Schulze's,^[5] that I'm supposed to travel to England as soon as August 14, which I want to do.^[6] There's a kind of retreat there for students and academics

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[1.] *NL*, A 28, 1(1); handwritten postcard from Bonn to Berlin, postmarked July 14, 1931. Partially reproduced in *GS* 6:203–4.

[2.] Margarete Bonhoeffer, née von Dohnanyi.

[3.] In the fall of 1930, Karl Barth had gone from Münster to Bonn, where he had been called to succeed Otto Ritschl in the Chair for Systematic Theology. In his lectures he covered the contents of the first volume of his *Church Dogmatics*; the title of the seminar was "Introduction to Schleiermacher's Doctrine of Faith [*Glaubenslehre*]"; [at the same time] the seminar discussion group was working through Schleiermacher's *Brief Outline on Theology as a Field of Study* (information from Dr. Klara Stoevesandt, Karl-Barth-Archiv, Basel, May 5, 1988). "A new feature of this series of lectures was that Barth opened each of them with a short devotion in which he read aloud the passage for the day from the Community of Brethren Bible readings* and led the students in a chorale." *"(The Herrnhut [Moravian] brethren publish annually a book of texts [*Losungen*] with Old and New Testament sayings for each day of the year, which then, as now, was widely used by individuals and in churches)" (cited from Busch, *Karl Barth*, 214).

[4.] Refers to the proofs of Bonhoeffer's postdoctoral dissertation, *Act and Being* (*DBWE* 2). The [original edition of the] book appeared in print in September 1931, published by Bertelsmann Verlag, Gütersloh; see *DB-ER*, 136. [At German universities it is necessary to write a second, postdoctoral thesis (*Habilitationsschrift*) and discuss it publicly in order to become a university lecturer (*Privatdozent*).—MBL]

[5.] Correction: "Siegmund-Schultze." Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze, one of the earliest proponents of the ecumenical idea and cofounder of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, was International Secretary of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches and served in this capacity as one of the main organizers of the conferences in Cambridge.

[6.] The reference here is to the following conferences: 1. The student conferences in St. Leonards and Westcliff on Sea, England, August 14–27, 1931; 2. the Youth Conference of the International Section of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches, August 29–31, 1931, in Cambridge [England]; and 3. the main conference of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through

of all nationalities, and those who are taking part at Cambridge^[7] can participate in the retreat for five m[arks] a day. Could you please be so good as to telephone Diestel^[8] and ask him how I can register there. Could you do that for me then? The sixty m[arks] must, I believe, be sent at the same time and the registration should be sent in as soon as possible.

Many thanks! Many greetings from your grateful

Dietrich

Karl Friedrich and Grete were very cheerful. So was the Rhine.

4. To Erwin Sutz^[1]

Dear Mr. Sutz,

17 I'm sitting here in the park in front of the university. Barth lectured at seven this morning. I spoke with him briefly. Tonight there is an evening of discussion at his house with people from Maria Laach.^[2] I'm looking forward to that very much. In spite of the extensive preparation you gave me, some things in the lecture course still surprised me. By the way, he looks frightfully unwell. Does he always look that way? He is *unfortunately* not lecturing

the Churches, September 1–5, 1931, in Cambridge. The latter gave Bonhoeffer the decisive impetus toward ecumenical work (*DB-ER*, 189–94).

[7.] Concerning the conference of the International Section of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches in Cambridge, September 1–5, 1931, see 2/1 below.

[8.] Max Diestel, superintendent of the church district Kölln 1 [in Berlin], to which the Bonhoeffer family belonged, mentored Bonhoeffer on his way into the church and introduced him to ecumenical work (see *DB-ER*, 91, and 1/10 below). In 1931, as chairman of the German Section of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches, he helped put together the German delegation for the conferences mentioned above. Concerning the difficulties Diestel had in getting permission from the Church Federation Office for Bonhoeffer to take part in the conference, see *DBWE* 10:303–4, especially ed. note 2.

[1.] *NL*, A 29,4(2) (a); handwritten picture postcard from Bonn, postmarked July 15, 1931; see also *NL*, 29,4(2) (b); later typewritten transcription by Eberhard Bethge. Partially reproduced in *GS* 1:17–18. Bonhoeffer had gotten to know Erwin Sutz in 1930–31 at Union Theological Seminary in New York (see *DBWE* 10:256–57 and *DB-ER*, 152–53). In 1931–32, Sutz was doing his pastoral internship in Pratteln near Zürich. He had arranged for Bonhoeffer to become personally acquainted with Karl Barth and Emil Brunner and later, during the war, became an important contact for Bonhoeffer.

[2.] The reference is to Maria Laach, an abbey on the Laacher See, founded in 1093 by Heinrich II, Count Palatine of Rhenish Franconia, and since 1892 an abbey of the Benedictines, with whom Barth had a good relationship.

on the encyclopedia!^[3] I am completely alone here and am killing time for the rest of the day quite unproductively. Too bad you are not here anymore. At least [it was] good that you were in New York. I thank you for the card.^[4] I would like to come and visit you. But on August 15 I will be sent to England for three weeks to the Cambridge conference.^[5] After our time in America, what should we relate about the friendship work done by the churches? At least maybe not nonsense like what Hirsch [wrote] recently in *Theologische Blätter*.^[6] Let me hear from you.

Sincere greetings from
Your Dietrich Bonhoeffer

5. To Erwin Sutz^[1]

July 24, 1931

Dear Mr. Sutz,

This is the precursor of a letter that I intend to put on paper for you during the next two hours. This one will go along with your faithful Hans Fischer,^[2] with whom, after Barth's lecture course, I have just taken a long

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[3.] Barth had indeed intended to lecture on a theological "encyclopedia" in the summer semester of 1931. He became ill with diphtheria of the ear, however, in February 1931, and this illness lasted for weeks, which kept him from carrying out this plan (information from Eberhard Busch, Göttingen, May 9, 1988; see also Busch, *Karl Barth*, 209).

[4.] Not extant.

[5.] Annual Conference of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches, September 1-5, 1931.

[6.] In May [1931], Paul Althaus and Emanuel Hirsch had sent a "statement" on the topic of "The Protestant Church and International Understanding [*Völkerverständigung*]" to selected journals. This statement appeared in *Theologische Blätter*, among other publications. To this statement Karl Ludwig Schmidt, editor of *Theologische Blätter*, wrote: "Its content can be summarized in the sentence: 'German theologians, when they speak responsibly to theologians of the nations [*Völker*] who are our enemies, must under all circumstances and as a *conditio sine qua non* [absolutely essential condition] of all further understanding and cooperation, bring into the discussion a condemnation of the anti-German politics practiced by these nations since 1914'" (*Theologische Blätter* 10 [1931]:178-79). The statement set off a bitter discussion (see *DB-ER*, 195). Althaus, coauthor of the statement, is conspicuously not mentioned in Bonhoeffer's postcard.

[1.] *NL*, A 29,4(3); handwritten postcard from Bonn, postmarked July 27, 1931. Partially reproduced in *GS* 1:18.

[2.] Hans Fischer, student of theology and in 1931 a student of Karl Barth in Bonn.

theological morning walk along the Rhine. We both, I believe, enjoyed it very much.

Sincere greetings from

Your

Dietrich Bonhoeffer^[3]

6. To Erwin Sutz^[1]

July 24, 1931, Bonn

Dear Mr. Sutz,

Hans Fischer has just left. I have just read again the last two pages of Barth's *Ethics II*^[2] from a notebook, and now I want to write. The letter you told me you were sending me about your trip has not reached me yet. When I found your other letter at home—when I came back from a trip to Maria Laach—I was so happy that I would have liked to have answered it immediately, but I wanted to wait for the one you had sent before it. Now it is not here yet, and I will write anyway. You yourself can imagine that I have often wished you were here, sometimes especially strongly, so that in some situations within the circle of the initiated disciples, I, as one yet uninitiated, could have a good laugh. I don't dare do that here really, just a little shy laugh (that sounds unlikely, doesn't it?), but I, with my theological *bastard origins*,^[3] have little reason to laugh, as I note again here very clearly. Here they have a very finely honed sense for recognizing thoroughbreds. No *Negro* can pass "for white."^[4] His fingernails and the soles of his feet

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[3.] Also on the postcard is the following greeting from Hans Fischer to Sutz: "Erwin, I have said yes to the decision, which has been 'stalking through our house,' and I am happy that I am here. This noon I'll be with Barth—the walk was good! It would be excellent if you were still here. You would meet the American from Marburg here." The "American from Marburg" could not be identified.

[1.] *NL*, A 29, 4(4) (a); handwritten; *NL*, A 29, 4(4) (b); later typewritten transcription by Eberhard Bethge; the postscript of this letter was accidentally listed as a separate document under the same file number: *NL*, A 29, 4(4). Partially reproduced in *GS* 1:18–22.

[2.] Karl Barth had held this lecture in Münster in the winter semester 1928–29 and repeated it in the winter semester 1930–31 in Bonn (see Karl Barth, *Ethik II*, VII).

[3.] Bonhoeffer is referring here to his studies in the Department of Theology in Berlin, in which liberal theology and its methodology played a dominant role.

[4.] ["For white" in English.—MBL]

are inspected.^[5] I am still being shown the hospitality due the unknown foreigner.

Now everything is very much or completely different when it comes to *Karl Barth* himself. You can breathe freely. You are no longer afraid you will die for lack of oxygen in the rarefied atmosphere. I have, I believe, seldom regretted not having done something in my theological past as much as I now regret that I did not go to hear Barth sooner. Now it is only three weeks that I can be here, lectures—Oh, excuse me. I just remembered that it is so hard for you to read my German script handwriting. But I don't want to write all of that again—otherwise I won't write it—so, I hope it will be better now.

The seminar, the *Societät*,^[6] an open-house evening, and now yesterday a couple of hours for lunch at Barth's. There you can really hear and see something. There's no point in my writing to you about something that you have seen much better for yourself. But it is important and surprising in the nicest way to see how Barth still stands beyond his books. There is an openness, a willingness to listen to a critical comment directed to the topic at hand, and with this such concentration and with a vehement insistence on the topic at hand, for the sake of which he can speak proudly or humbly, dogmatically or with utter uncertainty, in a way that is certainly not intended primarily to advance his own theology. It is becoming easier and easier for me to understand why it is unbelievably difficult to grasp Barth through the literature. I am impressed by his discussion even more than by his writing and lectures. He is really fully present. I have never seen anything like it nor thought it possible.

My visit at his home yesterday, about which I was really somewhat hesitant, especially because I knew how busy he is at the moment, was like you had told me when you described such occasions. At first we spoke—of course—about you. Barth, while speaking very warmly of you, said he had

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[5.] On Bonhoeffer's participation in Karl Barth's seminar, see Maechler, *Ein Christ in den Wirren des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 24. "I first met him at an open house evening at Karl Barth's. We had been discussing the content of each of his [Barth's] lectures on dogmatics. A blond, Germanic-looking man stood up and said, 'There is a saying from Luther: For God the curse of a godless man can be more pleasing than the Hallelujah of the pious!' Barth jumped up from his chair: 'That's great! Where is that quotation and who in the world are you?'" [See also *DB-ER*, 176 and 961, ed. note 10.]

[6.] [The *Societät* was a separate small discussion group for advanced undergraduates, graduate students, and doctoral candidates. Often it centered on a topic independent of the lecture series and traditionally had a more intense and specialized thematic or textual focus.—MBL]

always thought you were a somewhat unreliable character,^[7] that after having looked at things long enough from the inside out, you were tempted to suddenly look at them again from the vantage point of Mount Zürich.^[8] Now you're familiar with this criticism yourself, and that's exactly it, of course. I'm only writing to you about it because Barth probably expects that I will, and it may possibly be of interest to you again—as a “review.”

We got to the ethical problem then very quickly and had a long discussion. He did not want to concede to me what I had expected he would have to. He said there were, besides the one great light in the night, many other little lights, so-called relative ethical criteria, although he could not make their meaning, justification [Recht], and nature understandable to me. There was only the simple referral to the Bible. At the end, he said he thought I was making grace into a principle and was bludgeoning everything else to death with it. Naturally, I disagree with him on the first point and would like to know why all the rest should *not* be bludgeoned to death. If you had been there, we would have had a third battlefield, and maybe some things would have become even clearer. But I was very happy to be able to hear Barth's opinion in detail. We then talked about many other things. He urged me to write the little paper I probably already told you about on the differentiation from Catholicism in contemporary theology.^[9] Many a delightful and funny bon mot came out in the course of the conversation, but it would be too stupid to repeat them here. Finally, I made the hard decision to leave, and I went home. This is really someone from whom one could learn something, and there one sits in poor, desolate Berlin and is discouraged because there is no one there from whom one can learn theology and some other useful things along with it. But it is true that, ultimately, that's not really what makes the most difference, and one shouldn't ask for too much. Tonight I've been invited to join a group of Barth's closest

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[7.] [This is wordplay on the phrase *unsicherer Kantonist*, literally meaning “unreliable character” and often in Germany referring to people whose attitudes and ideas may be inconsistent, but here referring to Sutz's origin in Switzerland as a resident of a *Kanton* (“canton,” or Swiss province).—MBL]

[8.] This is a reference to Sutz's orientation toward Emil Brunner, who taught in Zürich. Brunner was a professor of systematics and practical theology there from 1924 to 1953. [There were times of gracious but nonetheless intense controversy and competition between Barth and Brunner.—MBL]

[9.] As far as we know, this paper was never written, but see Bonhoeffer's doctoral examination paper in the field of dogmatics, written in answer to the question: “To what extent is the question of certainty of personal salvation the decisive difference between Catholicism and Protestantism?” See *DBWE* 9:441–44, and Bonhoeffer's paper on “The Catholic Church” for the “Thursday Circle” (*DBWE* 9:525–29).

students for the evening, and after that is the small discussion group [Societät].^[10] It's all over next Tuesday. I won't want to go home. This morning after the lecture course, I was speaking with Elmer Arndt^[11]—who has been here for a week and leaves again tomorrow and naturally has not understood very much—when suddenly your friend Fischer came up to me and said hello. Right then we took a very nice walk together. He really understands a lot and is very Barthian. In any case, we will be seeing each other again soon in Berlin. This noon he is at Barth's. Barth had kindly told me he was here and also told him I was here.

In the course of the day (it is already noon now), your letter^[12] finally did arrive after all. By mistake it had been left lying at my home. Thank you very much. I am amazed that you could decide to fly home despite your hay fever. Was it at least nice? And I find it right and understandable that you didn't want to leave right away on another trip, since you also have to give your mother support and can take sunbaths in the meadow with Brunner and *filiis*,^[13] and since, after all, any trip with a firm destination usually turns out differently than you think beforehand. I would have liked to have come to Zürich, or even to your mountains, but the Emergency Decree concerning Foreign Travel^[14] makes it not only financially impossible but also makes one a little hesitant about activities of that sort. Why don't you come to Berlin? There are no emergency decrees yet in your country! I have probably already written that I am supposed to go to Cambridge. But I hope I can take a pass on having to talk about things I know nothing about.

By the way, at the moment I am studying up energetically on economics—you are partly responsible for that—and am reading several really interesting and simple books about it.

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The church has given me two more months of vacation. On October 1, I will be the pastor for the students at the Technical College.^[15]

Now I must close. I must go to meet the students. Take care. I have understood a lot about you better since I have gotten to know Barth. Enjoy your mountains and the solitude that is not allowed me—I beg you, that

[10.] [See ed. note 6 above.—MBL]

[11.] Elmer Jakob Frederick Arndt was a "resident fellow" [and associate of Bonhoeffer] at Union Theological Seminary in New York in 1930–31.

[12.] Not extant.

[13.] "With Brunner and sons."

[14.] The Emergency Decree concerning Foreign Travel of July 18, 1931, referred to here, required a payment of one hundred reichsmarks for trips to foreign countries.

[15.] Berlin/Charlottenburg.

is nothing to be envied—neither is the other, especially the dullness, and that least of all.

Sincere greetings from your faithful
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

In reading over this letter again now, I have some doubts about whether I may possibly not have given a really fair portrayal of Barth's students. After all, they are at least people who are really interested and who have some understanding and try to conceal their "pride of knowledge." I have spent some pleasant hours with them. Yesterday, at the last open-house evening, they put on a play that Barth had written at the age of fifteen in the style of Schiller.^[16]

7. To His Parents^[1]

July 27, 1931, Bonn

My dear Parents,

23 Since Barth finishes his lectures tomorrow, I want to come home on Wednesday. I don't know the exact train yet [. . .]^[2] toward evening in any case. Yesterday I came back from Düsseldorf,^[3] where it was very nice. I have to go to the seminar. That's why this is so brief. I'll see you day after tomorrow.

Many greetings from your
Dietrich

The proofs^[4] came and have been sent on.

[16.] This was a play titled *Leonardo Montenuova oder Freiheit und Liebe* (Leonardo Montenuova or freedom and love), which Barth had written in 1901. Helmut Gollwitzer was responsible for this performance of the play. (See Busch, *Karl Barth*, 28.)

[1.] *NL*, Anh. A 14(10); handwritten transcription by Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer of a postcard. Original formerly owned by the Leichtle family in Germany, now in the possession of Colin Fraser, Ontario, Canada. See also *NL*, A 28,1(2); typewritten transcription. Partially reproduced in *GS*6:204.

[2.] Illegible.

[3.] Gertrud Wedell, Bonhoeffer's cousin, lived in Düsseldorf.

[4.] The proofs of Bonhoeffer's postdoctoral dissertation, *Act and Being* (*DBWE* 2).

8. From the Evangelical Consistory of the Mark Brandenburg^[1]

Berlin SW 68, August 17, 1931

Reminder

The order of June 12, 1931—K. II No. 3707—regarding the beginning of work as an assistant pastor,^[2] requires a response by September 1, 1931.

If this deadline cannot be met, the reasons must be given.

On behalf of the consistory:
Schlabritzky

8a. To Paul Lehmann^[1]

17:91

August 23, [19]31

My dear Paul,^[2]

Many thanks for your kind letter. After so many weeks, I was very glad to hear from you and your wife. I hope, too, that both of you have recovered from your attacks of toothache and can really take advantage of the last weeks of your vacation to get a lot of extra sleep and be lazy in preparation for the coming strenuous winter. I will soon be leaving now for Cambridge^[3] and have been loaded down with so much work up to now. I wrote a catechism together with a friend.^[4] When it is printed, you will get it.^[5]—

[1.] *NL*, A 30,1(9); typewritten document.

[2.] See the order of June 12, 1931, from the superintendent's office regarding Bonhoeffer's assignment as assistant pastor in the city: *NL*, A 30,1(7) and *NL*, D 11,69. See letter 1/0 above.

[1.] Paul Lehmann Collection, Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library; handwritten letter, from Berlin. Previously published in *Evangelische Theologie* 56 (1996): 466–68, and in *DBW* 17:91–94. The editorial notes here were written by Hans Pfeifer.

[2.] [The salutation is in English; Bonhoeffer alternates between English and German in the original. Most of the letter, including irregularities and errors, is in Bonhoeffer's original English.—MBL]

[3.] To attend the conference of the Youth Commission of the International Section of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches (August 29–31, 1931) and, immediately following, the Conference of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches (September 1–5, 1931) in Cambridge, England. See 2/1 and p. 494.

[4.] The friend is Franz Hildebrandt. The catechism is titled "Glaubst du, so hast du" (As you believe, so you receive). See 2/7. [Bonhoeffer and Hildebrandt used the German title, "Glaubst du, so hast du," in reference to a renowned passage on the priority of faith alone in Luther's treatise "On the Freedom of the Christian" (*LW* 31:348–49).—MBL]

[5.] [The letter continues here in English.—MBL]

17:92

The time at Bonn^[6] was marvellous not only from the theological point of view but also or perhaps even more by the fact that I learned to know Barth personally. He really is a theologian at home as well as in the classroom. His whole thinking swings around one point, and whosoever is willing to keep his eyes straight on this point is considered by Barth a good theologian no matter how ever he tries to formulate his ideas and views. I do not have to tell you that this point is the cross and the resurrection of Christ, truly a strange thing for a modern and intelligent man to concentrate his thoughts and his whole life to. But when you see Barth you know at once—even if [you] come entirely from outside—that there is something worthwhile to risk one’s life for. He is personally very modest, he knows how to listen to other people and he has a splendid humor. I had some long discussions with him concerning the ethical problem—which we were discussing for so many times with Sutz at Union^[7] and Elmhurst!^[8]—and I learned to admire his tremendous power of concentration to the one main thing in theology. He is not wordcatcher [*sic*] and there is no strife about words, he does not care very much for his own formulation, but what he wants solely is never to loose [*sic*] the only possible and real ground of theology. He is himself not yet quite clear about many important ethical problems and he confesses that frankly. It certainly was a pity that you were not there at that time. I thought of you many a time. But since the main lecture was not given you can be consoled.^[9]—At the time I was [at] Bonn, the situation in Germany became more and more endangered,^[10] as you know very well. For some days we did not believe anymore that it would be possible to keep down the fascists and communists; there were many revolts in the cities and as a matter of fact it is almost a miracle that in those days Germany did not turn [into] a battlefield. Now after the election^[11] the whole mood is a little

[6.] See the postcard of July 10, 1931. See 1/2a, and *DB-ER*, 175–76.

[7.] Union Theological Seminary, New York.

[8.] The friends had stopped over in Elmhurst [Illinois, accompanied to that point by Paul Lehman, whose parents lived in Elmhurst—MBL] on a trip to Mexico. See *DB-ER*, 152.

[9.] [See 1/4, ed. note 3.—MBL]

[10.] The world economic crisis that began on “Black Friday,” October 25, 1929, was now affecting Germany as well. The respected Darmstädter and Nationalbank closed its customer windows on July 13, 1931. Following this, there was a general bank crash in Germany.

[11.] This may refer to a referendum on August 9, 1931, on dissolving the Prussian [regional] parliament. It did not receive a majority of votes.

more quiet than before, but probably only for a short time. The prospects for the winter are perfectly horrible, we count on more than 7 millions [*sic*] unemployed people! The taxes are raised from month to month, the misery is frightful; and the most terrible thing of all is the hopelessness of this situation. The Hoover plan was “a drop in the bucket.”^[12] And at the same time Germany is near the complete breakdown^[13] our Western neighbour is prospering and his policy remains selfish and brutal.^[14] You certainly know about the new idea of Danubian monarchy^[15]—against Germany. It is hardly credible that only anxiety causes such procedure.^[16] We know how much we would need the church, especially during the next winter, but what is its message and who will listen to it? It is awful to be almost damned to inactivity!

17:93

Now about your books. I can get Ritschl: *Rechtfertigung* . . . 3rd edition^[17] for thirty-nine marks, maybe even less. Do you want it? Barth's *Römerbrief*^[18] will be sent to you as a gift from me, *Wort Gottes und Theologie*^[19] as well. *Dogmatik*^[20] costs 14. Do you want it? “*Zwischen den Zeiten*”^[21] fifteen a year. I'll be getting other copies of Ritschl offered to me. Just write me approximately how much you want to spend. I'll send it then right away. The prices at the bookstore^[22] are too high! Now one

[12.] On July 6, 1931, the so-called Hoover moratorium was passed. In it, the United States convinced France in particular, despite strong opposition, to agree to suspension of payment of German war reparations to the Allies for one year. [The phrase in the original letter is in German: “drop on a hot stone” (*ein Tropfen auf den heißen Stein*).—MBL]

[13.] There were continuing raises in bank rates by up to 15 percent, closing of trading on the stock market, and so on.

[14.] Regarding the anxiety and anger over France's policies, see the comments by Ernst Jansen in 1931 and Johannes Schattenmann in 1932, in Alston and Welker, “Die-trich Bonhoeffer,” 467–68n5.

[15.] In the fall of 1931 and spring of 1932, French prime minister Tardieu pursued a plan toward the political and economic unification of the Danube region under French leadership.

[16.] Here the original letter continues in German.

[17.] The reference is to Ritschl, *Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*.

[18.] Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*. [The reference is to the 2nd edition from 1922.—MBL]

[19.] Barth, *Word of God and the Word of Man*.

[20.] *Die Lehre vom Wort Gottes: Prolegomena zur christlichen Dogmatik*.

[21.] The journal *Zwischen den Zeiten* (Between the times), published by Karl Barth, Friedrich Gogarten, and Eduard Thurneysen from 1923 to 1933.

[22.] [The original text has “bookstore” in English, probably referring to the bookstore at Union Theological Seminary, New York.—MBL]

17:94 more request. Could you send me a commemorative stamp^[23] for seven, nine, eleven, thirteen cents (unused). I will then deduct that amount from what you owe for the books. It is for a friend of mine. If you could take a few regular American stamps (used!) from your letters and send them to me, for a little cousin^[24] of mine, I would be grateful. Now enough for today.^[25]

Give my greetings to your wife. I am thinking often of both of you and of the great time I could have with you in your New York home.^[26] Let me thank you therefore once more.

I remain as ever Yours very affectionately
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

9. To Paul Althaus^[1]

Berlin-Grunewald, September 16, 1931

Dear Professor Althaus:^[2]

24 I take the liberty of sending you by the same mail a copy of the book that has just been published and which was published due in large part to your kind recommendations.^[3] I would like to send you my sincere thanks again today for your help and for the great kindness with which you showed support for me last winter. In the current situation, we younger ones are almost entirely dependent on such help and are deeply grateful when it is offered to us.

[23.] In original text “commemorative stamp” in English. This is a reference to stamps in the “American Presidents” series: seven cents, McKinley; nine cents, Jefferson; eleven cents, Rutherford Hayes; and thirteen cents, Harrison. These were not newly issued but were “reprints” (information from Clifford Green).

[24.] Walter von Hase, a considerably younger brother of Hans Christoph von Hase. He was killed in the war.

[25.] [Here the original text continues in English.—MBL]

[26.] See the letter of November 5, 1931, 1/16a.

[1.] *NL*, Anh. A 10, 2 (a); photocopy of the handwritten letter. Some missing parts along the right margin had to be added. See also *NL*, Anh. A 10, 2 (b); later typewritten transcription.

[2.] [Bonhoeffer uses the formal mode of address: “Highly esteemed Professor” (*Hochverehrter Herr Professor*).—MBL]

[3.] The reference is to Bonhoeffer’s postdoctoral dissertation, *Act and Being* (*DBWE* 2). In a very favorable review, Paul Althaus had recommended publication of the book in the series *Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie* (Contributions to the advancement of Christian theology). See *DB-ER*, 136.

I also take the liberty of enclosing the book *Sanctorum Communio*, which was submitted in 1927 as the dissertation for the Licentiate but did not appear in print until 1930.^[4] Its characteristics as the work of a novice are obvious to me today, but I am sending it along anyway. For me there is a connection between the essence and the factual content of the two works, which are both basically about nothing other than the church.

In sincere admiration and gratitude I remain yours respectfully
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

**9a. Bonhoeffer Inscription at Union Theological Seminary^[1]
Dietrich Bonhoeffer to Franz Hildebrandt,^[2] in *Act and Being*,
Berlin, after mid-September 1931^[3]**

“And now a catechism is supposed to come out of this?!”^[4]

[4.] [*Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church* (DBWE 1), which was Bonhoeffer’s doctoral dissertation.—MBL]

[1.] Edited by Clifford Green. First published in *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Jahrbuch* 4:15. See also the article in the same volume, “Commentary: Three Bonhoeffer Inscriptions at Union Theological Seminary Library.”

[2.] Inscription in ink written at the top of the front cover of the 1st edition of *Akt und Sein*. The Burke Library Archive at Union Theological Seminary, New York, purchased the volume in 2008 from the daughter of Franz Hildebrandt, Esther Shreeve.

[3.] *Akt und Sein* was published by Bertelsmann-Verlag, Gütersloh, in September 1931. On September 16, Bonhoeffer mailed a copy to Paul Althaus, who had recommended the volume to Adolf Schlatter and Wilhelm Lütgert, general editors of the series *Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie*. See the cover letter (1/9) in this volume. As Holger Roggelin discovered in 2005, Lütgert had written the report recommending to the faculty the acceptance of the *Habilitationsschrift* (cf. DBWE 10:210–14). (In the same package Bonhoeffer also included a copy of *Sanctorum Communio*, which had been published in 1930.)

[4.] [The German inscription reads: “Und daraus soll nun ein Katechismus werden?!”—VB] After his return from the year at Union Theological Seminary, Bonhoeffer had written a catechism together with Franz Hildebrandt in the summer of 1931; see document 2/7 in this volume. For a similar sentiment about *Akt und Sein*, see Bonhoeffer’s letter of February 28, 1932, to Erwin Sutz, his Swiss friend from Union Seminary days (1/39).

10. From Wilhelm Stählin to the German Section of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches^[1]

Münster i[n] W[estphalia], September 19, 1931

Dear Mr. Petrick,^[2]

In Cambridge^[3] we did not have time to talk about the meeting that is planned for the Provisional Bureau^[4] for Ecumenical Youth Work. I am confident in the hope that a way can be found to continue the work of this administrative office, which is not very extensive, together with an office of the German Section of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches,^[5] even after the office you have headed on Georgenstrasse is closed on October 1 as a result of the difficulties in the Inner Mission and the difficult situation in these times in general.^[6] I have already spoken with Superintendent

[1.] LKA Nuremberg, XVIII: Nachlaß Stählin; carbon copy; one carbon copy, which has not been preserved, went to Bonhoeffer.

[2.] Herbert Petrick held a full-time position as secretary of the Administrative Office of the German Section of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches until September 30, 1931, and was Bonhoeffer's predecessor as secretary of the Provisional Bureau for Ecumenical Youth Work (*DB-ER*, 192–93 and 239). In October 1931, he was relieved of his position due to the financial difficulties of the German Section of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches. See the letter of November 5, 1931, from Schreiber to Schönfeld, EZA 623/77.

[3.] Wilhelm Stählin had been in Cambridge as the representative of the International Committee of the International Section and of the Council of the German Section of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches, with Herbert Petrick as a representative of the Youth Delegation of the German Section of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches (see the list of participants in *Handbook of the Eighth International Conference*, 19 and 21).

[4.] The Provisional Bureau for Ecumenical Youth Work (Mittelstelle für ökumenische Jugendarbeit) was founded at Stählin's initiative on April 24, 1931. It served as an informal office coordinating the youth work of church organizations and the youth organizations of the German Reich (see the organizational diagram, appendix 4, p. 505). In September 1931, Bonhoeffer took over from Petrick the work as secretary of the Provisional Bureau. Bonhoeffer was supposed to intensify contacts with the Church Federation Office and the Administrative Office of the German Section of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship in Berlin. [Cf. also *DBWE* 12:56, ed. note 1.—MBL]

[5.] The reference here is to the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches, which was founded in 1914 and had set itself the task of working through the churches, independent of any denominational questions, toward the goal of maintaining world peace. See the organizational diagrams in appendix 4.

[6.] Because of financial difficulties, the German Section of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches had closed its office at

Diestel^[7] in Cambridge about steps that should be taken. Also, the German youth representative elected in Cambridge, Licentiate Bonhoeffer, has kindly agreed to help Superintendent Diestel with the work for the Provisional Bureau for Ecumenical Youth Work. So I am confident in the hope that the concerns you mentioned in Cambridge, that this work might have to stop when the administrative office is closed, are unfounded.

You will probably be continuing as the head of the administrative office on Georgenstrasse until the first of October, and so I assume that you will still be doing the planning for the conference of the Provisional Bureau scheduled for October. But just in case, I am sending a copy of this letter to Licentiate Bonhoeffer and would ask you two to work it out with each other. It is very important to me that under all circumstances the continuation of this work is assured. That is why I think it is important that Mr. Bonhoeffer should be informed about the discussions that have taken place up to now.

The result of the discussions with Dr. Stange^[8] is that Tuesday, October 20, is a possible date for the conference of the Provisional Bureau.^[9] We will need to meet longer this time, if we want to cover everything that is planned for this meeting. For this reason, I suggest that we meet at ten o'clock in the morning and plan to meet, with a short break, until about five or six p.m. Please inquire at the Church Federation Office whether we can have the conference room in the Church Federation Office for that day. If that request meets with any difficulties, we could, as Dr. Stange has suggested, go to the YMCA House, Wilhelmstrasse 34. The house is, admittedly, not very nice at all, but it would have the advantage that some of the dignitaries who will be attending have meetings on the same day, as far as I know in the same building, and might be better able to participate in our meeting at least for a short time.

26

Fruchtstrasse 64, Berlin O 17 [postal code], as of September 30, 1931, and let the secretary, Herbert Petrick, go. The office of Superintendent Diestel, Dahlemerstrasse 87, had taken over the work of the secretariat (see the letter from Schreiber to Schönfeld, EZA 623/77).

[7.] In 1927 Superintendent Max Diestel had been entrusted by General Superintendent Otto Dibelius with the development of ecumenical youth work. Since 1931 he had been executive chairman of the German Section of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches (*DB-ER*, 141 and 192).

[8.] Erich Stange, national leader of the German Protestant Young Men's Association (Ev. Jungmännerwerk Deutschlands) and from 1921 to 1927 secretary of Life and Work.

[9.] The meeting of the Provisional Bureau mentioned above took place on October 20, 1931, in the Church Federation Office, Berlin.

As an agenda I suggest:

1. Discussion of our experiences at this year's ecumenical youth conferences, especially Cleveland and Cambridge.^[10]
2. Plan for the work of the Provisional Bureau:
 Newsletter
 Preparation of a card file^[11] (The questionnaire for which I gave you suggestions would have to be ready for this meeting.); suggestions for the promotion of ecumenical ideas in church youth work, especially in religion classes.^[12]
3. Preliminary planning for a theological conference to discuss ecumenical questions in the spring of next year. Preparation of a draft of the guidelines for this larger conference.

The invitations to the meeting on October 20 would have to be sent out as soon as possible to all groups and organizations affiliated with the Provisional Bureau. I would ask you to state specifically in the invitation the wish that was strongly expressed at the meeting on April 24^[13] that as far as at all possible the same representatives who already participated in the earlier meetings should be sent. One question that does not seem to me to be completely settled yet is the question of whether the groups that belong to the committee of the German Protestant Youth Associations should only be sent invitations through this committee, that is, through Dr. Stange, or whether they should be sent invitations directly. I consider the latter to be better and more proper; it should just be handled in such a way that the same procedure is followed for all the groups that come into question.

27 Finally, I ask that, before the administrative office of which you are the head is closed, you request reimbursement from the Church Federation Office for the expenses to date. May I remind you as well that I have not yet been reimbursed for my expenses from April, in the sum of fifteen marks.

Sincerely,
 Yours [W. Stählin]

[10.] The twentieth world conference of the YMCA took place August 4–9, 1931, in Cleveland. At this conference, a resolution on the question of responsibility for the First World War was passed, which contained a refusal to assign sole responsibility to one nation or group.

[11.] See 1/12.

[12.] [I.e., in the public schools.—VB]

[13.] See the minutes of this meeting, LKA Nuremberg, XVIII: Nachlaß Stählin.

11. To Erwin Sutz^[1]

Berlin-Grunewald, October 8, 1931

Dear Mr. Sutz,

Since you are in favor of efficiency, you are receiving a typewritten letter, which you will also appreciate for other reasons.^[2] A sense of pity has moved me to buy a typewriter, and I have a strong feeling that in doing this I have really entered the age of technology—even if it is only in an imperfect way.

First, I must thank you for two very kind letters,^[3] in return for which my sending my book^[4] was too simple a response. The same goes for the pictures,^[5] which really pleased me very much. Thank you very much for remembering me in such a nice way. The last picture attracted a great deal of attention here, naturally.^[6] Since I heard Gogarten yesterday—by the way, after the picture, his appearance was somewhat of a disappointment—only Thurneysen is still missing in the list of Olympians.^[7]

Gogarten gave a lecture on ethics^[8] that included a couple of very good formulations but was received with anger and disdain on the part of the people here—they were education majors. With a break of ten minutes, he had talked for three hours! It was again surprising to me to see how great the difference is from Barth in purely human aspects. I wouldn't feel at all especially attracted to Breslau, while I would go to Bonn again in a minute.^[9] That was really an unusual time there.

28

I was very happy to see from your letter how much you like being in Pratteln.^[10] If only once in my life I had been able to meet and work together

[1.] *NL*, A 29, 4(5) (a); typewritten with handwritten greeting; cf. *NL*, A 29, 4(5) (b); later typewritten copy by Eberhard Bethge. Partially reproduced in *GS* 1:22–24.

[2.] [This is probably a reference to the difficulty of reading Bonhoeffer's handwriting. See an indirect confirmation of Sutz's earlier complaint in 1/6.—MBL]

[3.] Not extant.

[4.] Bonhoeffer's postdoctoral thesis, *Act and Being* (*DBWE* 2).

[5.] See the photos from the time they were both in America, in Bethge and Gremels, *Life in Pictures*, centenary ed., 46–49. [The comment that follows (referring to Gogarten and Thurneysen), indicates that at least one photo included Gogarten. There is no such photo in the *Life in Pictures* volume.—VB]

[6.] [The reference is uncertain.—MBL]

[7.] That is, of the leading theologians of so-called dialectic theology.

[8.] The lecture given in Berlin on October 7, 1931, by Friedrich Gogarten, professor of systematic theology in Breslau, was published as "Das Problem der Ethik und die Erziehung" (The problem of ethics and education).

[9.] Barth was teaching in Bonn, Gogarten in Breslau.

[10.] Erwin Sutz was an intern pastor (vicar) in Pratteln, under the guidance of Lukas Christ.

with an older man who could have really been a teacher for me—I don't know why that was never granted me. Would I possibly not have been able to take it? In any case, you have it good. It must give you an unbelievable sense of security.

Now I am sitting here preparing for my lecture course, and for the work as pastor for the students, and would sometimes be happy if I could be in the country somewhere for a while, to get away from everything everyone wants from and expects of me. It's not that I'm afraid of disappointing—at least I hope not primarily—but that sometimes I simply cannot see how I will be able to do all these things right. The cheap consolation that one just does what one can, and that there are others who would do it even worse, isn't always enough. It is certainly not right for me to come into such things so soon—and also on the basis of what qualifications? Now and then I would like to laugh grimly about all of that.

At the present time, I am especially conscious of these things in the unprecedented situation of our public life here in Germany. It really looks unbelievably serious. There apparently is really no one in Germany who has even the slightest overview of things. But in general everyone has a strong feeling that very great changes in the course of world history are before us. Whether it will lead to Bolshevism or to a wider general understanding—who knows? And who even knows, in the long run, what is better? But the coming winter in Germany will probably leave no one in Germany unaffected. Seven million unemployed, that means fifteen or twenty million people hungry. I don't know how Germany and how each individual can live through that. Intelligent people in the field of economics have told me that things look as if we are being pushed at an enormous speed toward a destination that no one knows or could prevent. But will our church survive *another* catastrophe?^[11] Will it not reach the end of its existence then, if we do not change immediately, speak and live completely differently? But how? Next Wednesday is a meeting of all Berlin pastors to discuss the winter problems; let's see what kind of problems there are! I fear bad things from this meeting. But no one knows how to do it better. And in times like these! What good is a person's theology? In a couple of weeks the work will start. The *omina*^[12] are strange.

[11.] Perhaps Bonhoeffer considers the separation of church and state in the Weimar Republic to be a result of the First World War and fears now that the worsening economic crisis might have similar consequences for the church.

[12.] "The omens."

Take care! I'm always very happy when I receive a letter from you. Write soon. Excuse a letter like this, but I really could not have written much differently, try as I would. Soon again and more.

Sincere greetings from
Your Dietrich Bonhoeffer

12. Circular Letter of the Provisional Bureau for Ecumenical Youth Work^[1]

Münster in Westphalia, October 15, 1931

Questionnaire for a Catalog

As an important part of its work, the newly founded Provisional Bureau for Ecumenical Youth Work plans to prepare a list of all young people who might come into question as participants in international meetings of Protestant youth. The necessity of such a list is obvious. Sending representatives to international meetings is a special responsibility for us Germans. Participation will be left to chance unless one central location keeps an overview of which young people from the different associations would come into question for the different tasks. For this reason, the Provisional Bureau requests that all organizations, groups, and individuals associated with it answer the following questions by and send the lists to [.].^[2]

30

If this card index is to be of use, all the questions on the enclosed sheet must be answered exactly for each individually named young person, and the organizations should make it a point to correct and add to this information each year by the Otherwise, such a listing quickly becomes outdated because of the rapid changes in all youth groups.

It is specifically requested that not only the members of individual associations and organizations be named but also young people who are not members of organizations but who have shown their ability in the youth activities of a congregation or possibly in student life.

[signed] Dr. Stählin

[1.] LKA Nuremberg, XVIII: Nachlaß Stählin; carbon copy. At this time Bonhoeffer was already taking part in the work of organizing the Provisional Bureau for Ecumenical Youth Work. Bonhoeffer sent out the questionnaire again in 1932 (see 1/31).

[2.] [Presumably dates and addresses were entered into specific letters by hand.—MBL]

Model Questionnaire

Which young people (in general ages 18–25 years) in your organization—field of work—are suited for participation in international (ecumenical) conferences?

Name _____

Year of Birth _____

Education _____

Profession _____

Organizational Membership _____

Which international conferences attended up to now? _____

To what extent was this participation successful? _____

Especially familiar with which questions of theology, church work, youth work, Germans living outside Germany, minorities, question of responsibility for the war, other international political questions? _____

31 Which languages does he understand and which does he speak? _____

Able to take time off to attend such conferences? _____

13. To Wilhelm Stählin^[1]

Berlin-Grunewald, October 17, 1931

Dear Professor Stählin:^[2]

Finally, I was able to speak directly with Dr. Schreiber^[3] about the date of the meeting for the Provisional Bureau.^[4] There is some dissatisfaction at the Church Federation Office, because the Provisional Bureau has sup-

[1.] LKA Nuremberg, XVIII: Nachlaß Stählin; handwritten manuscript.

[2.] [Bonhoeffer uses the formal term *hochverehrt* (esteemed) in the salutation.—MBL]

[3.] August W. Schreiber, High Consistory Councillor in the Church Federation Office, had hosted regular ecumenical evening gatherings at his home, out of which the Provisional Bureau had developed (see *DB-ER*, 192). [The titular address refers to an honorary doctorate.—MBL]

[4.] [The Provisional Bureau for Ecumenical Youth Work.—VB]

posedly upstaged the ecumenical working group^[5] that Hosemann inaugurated. In order to secure further support of the Church Federation Office for our work now, Schreiber thinks it would be good to ask the Church Federation Office whether this time our meeting might be held on the same day as the meeting of the ecumenical working group, since actually almost all those attending would be there anyway. (Apparently it also seems that there is some danger that the people would otherwise not come to the “ecumenical working group.”) That meeting is on the eighth of December.^[6] Now the gentlemen know, however, that this date is not good for you, but they are requesting very strongly that you somehow find a way to make it possible to come, nonetheless. Dr. Zoellner^[7] would be there anyway.

I doubt that the continuation of the discussion in April^[8] can really just be taken up again today. Shouldn't we just start over again? May I ask that you let me or Dr. Schreiber know soon? What I said above about the Church Federation Office I naturally request you to treat as confidential.

In sincere admiration I remain yours most respectfully
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

32

[5.] The German ecumenical working group, founded by Johannes Hosemann, was an informal gathering of the ecumenical groups in Germany. The German subcommittees of Life and Work, Faith and Order, and the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches (*DB-ER*, 241–42), among others, met here. That meant that some of the groups organized there were also represented in the Provisional Bureau for Ecumenical Youth Work. See the organizational diagram in appendix 4.

[6.] As far as one can tell from Stählin's literary estate, a meeting did not take place on December 8, 1931. The meeting announced here was probably postponed until April 29, 1932.

[7.] Wilhelm Zoellner was the general superintendent of the Westphalian church. He retired in 1931 but continued to be active in ecumenical work. Zoellner had organized a working group of younger pastors, which primarily discussed problems of “Faith and Order” (see *DB-ER*, 239).

[8.] On April 24, 1931, the constituting meeting of the Provisional Bureau for Ecumenical Youth Work had taken place in the Church Federation Office (see the minutes of the meeting, LKA Nuremberg, XVIII: Nachlaß Stählin).

14. To Helmut Rößler^[1]

Berlin-Grunewald, October 18, 1931

Dear Friend,

I can hardly believe that I am doing today what I have wanted to do since the last day of December, when I received your letter,^[2] which riveted my attention and occupied me like almost nothing else. When you wrote me then, what you said about your work stayed with me for a long time. I wanted very much to send you a long and detailed answer. Then Christmas came, it became later and later, and finally I could not decide to do it anymore. At that time I did something that I must also confess to you. Namely, I read your letter aloud to a group of American friends, to give them a firsthand impression of the work and the opinions of a young German pastor—if that is not all right with you, please excuse me for it. In any case, it seemed to me to be a very welcome opportunity for once to let a completely different voice be heard in that ridiculously Europeanized world, and that was also felt very much. My stay in America^[3] and recently also in England^[4] has made one thing clear to me: the absolute necessity of cooperation and at the same time the inexplicable divisions that seem to make such a coming together simply impossible. Seen from over there, our situation and theology seem so local, and one just can't imagine that in all the world it should be Germany, and there only a few men, who should have understood what the gospel is. But then I don't see a gospel message from anywhere else. The huge project of American mission is hollow on the inside. The mother

[1.] *NL*, A 20,4(7); photomechanical reproduction from Bonhoeffer, *Einführung in seine Botschaft*, 60ff.; the original manuscript was not accessible. Edited version published in *GS* 1:60–62. Helmut Rößler was a friend of Bonhoeffer's from his days as a student in Berlin (see *DB-ER*, 82 and 96).

[2.] Not extant.

[3.] On Bonhoeffer's time as a student in New York, see *DBWE* 10 [and *DB-ER*, 147–66—*MBL*].

[4.] Bonhoeffer is referring to the conference in Cambridge (see 2/1 below).

church itself is dying. And yet it is certain that our current understanding of the gospel simply cannot be heard over there. There is an unparalleled gap between us. One large country I would still like to see, if perhaps the great solution will come from there—India.^[5] For otherwise it seems to be over; the great dying out of Christianity seems to be here. Is our time over? Has the gospel been given to another people, perhaps proclaimed with *completely* different words and actions? How do you see the eternal nature of Christianity in light of the world situation and our own way of living? It is becoming less and less understandable that for the sake of *one* just man “the city should be spared.”^[6] I am presently the pastor for the students at the Technical College. How should I preach such things to these people? Who still believes that anymore? Invisibility is ruining us. If we cannot see in our personal life that Christ has been here, then we want at least to see it in India, but this madness of being constantly thrown back to the invisible God himself—no one can stand that anymore.^[7] I had hoped very much to be able to see you sometime and to speak with you. One actually has the feeling that any minute something very big must be about to happen, but we are told just to wait. Will the winter bring the great change for things? I hope and yet fear—not. Take care—give my kindest regards to your wife and your little boy, whom I don’t know yet. He must make you see many things differently. The perspective on the future must be a completely different one. Let me hear from you!

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In sincere friendship
Yours faithfully, Dietrich Bonhoeffer

[5.] On Bonhoeffer’s plans to get to know India, see 2/5 below and *DB-ER*, 105, 147–48, 165, 233–34.

[6.] See Gen. 18:22–33.

[7.] [Bonhoeffer may be referring here to an exclusively abstract theology in the face of the need for practical realization of gospel values, attained in concrete ethical actions.—MBL]