

Preface and Acknowledgments

The material from which these translated excerpts were drawn is interesting, sometimes even fascinating, but very little of it could be described as edifying. As the bibliography of German Christian documents at the back of this volume indicates, much more could be translated. Whether even what appears here *deserves* to be translated and published is of course open to discussion. There is always a danger, when one engages in a project like this one, that one might be providing a platform—or be seen to be providing a platform—for views that are ignorant at the least and utterly repugnant at the worst. Other documents, including those expressing views sharply critical of the views presented here, may well have an equal or even a more urgent claim to be published. I took on this project because I believed that it was important for these documents to be accessible in English to those who study this period and either cannot access them or do not read German.

My engagement with this project has broadened my understanding of the challenges that faced the Protestant [Lutheran] church in Nazi Germany and intensified my sense of profound disappointment with its conduct during a period that cried out for ethical and religious courage and found very, very little of it. I am also chastened by the sobering realization that, had I lived through

that period of history and faced those challenges, I might not have shown much courage either.

I have been encouraged in this project by a number of people who know much more about all of this than I do. Their conviction that this project is worthwhile has buoyed me often, and I will always be grateful. Among them are Victoria Barnett, Doris Bergen, Larry Rasmussen, and Lisa Dahill. In Germany I was privileged to interview Peter von der Osten-Sacken and Manfred Gailus, both of whom provided sharp insights into the conduct of the churches during 1930s Germany. Hartmut Ludwig helped me appreciate the considerable variety, and the tensions, that existed among German Christian groups.

Friends as well as colleagues who were kind enough to read and respond to various versions of the introduction have helped me improve it, chiefly by pointing out the need for more information here and there and by reminding me that an introduction needs to be an invitation and not so much a dissertation. I appreciate especially the constructive comments of Mary Beth Walsh, Marty Sozansky, Susan Sparks, Jeanne Gilbertson, John Cha, Thia Cooper, and Sarah Ruble. I am completely responsible for any shortcomings in the general introduction and the introductions to individual documents.

The commitment of Fortress Press to this project started with Michael West and Pamela Johnson; Will Bergkamp and Lisa Gruenisen have shepherded it through to its publication, patiently, attentively, and competently. Linda Maloney made sure my translation was publishable, and I thank her warmly!

My life partner and spouse, Sonia Ramirez, never doubted either the significance of this project or my ability to complete it. That is only a fraction of what I am grateful to her for!

I cannot leave my late parents, Richard and June Solberg, out of these prefatory reflections. Their work in helping to rebuild the

church and church-related social services in Germany after World War II and during the Cold War shaped their lives and their children's lives (including mine) profoundly. Friendships born during those years were passed on to my generation. And we, their children, wrestle even today with what our parents must have known, lived through, and lived out. May God bless their memory.

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