

# *The Freiburg “Bonhoeffer Circle” (1943) on Theology and Germany’s Economic Order*

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When Dietrich Bonhoeffer arrived in the Southern German city of Freiburg on October 9, 1942,<sup>1</sup> he came to relay a most treasonous request. The Nazi regime, arguably at the zenith of its power, had attacked Stalingrad that summer and it would be months of bitter fighting before the pivotal defeat of the German troops in January 1943. Admitting the possibility that Nazi Germany could lose the entire war, let alone planning for the post-war period, was treasonous to the utmost degree; Adolf Hitler and Herman Göring<sup>2</sup> had recently decreed the death penalty for any post-war preparations. Bonhoeffer, at the behest of the Provisional Administration of the *Bekennende Kirche* (Confessing Church), had travelled to Freiburg to ask a group of local academics connected to the Confessing Church to draw up a blue print for a post-war societal order in Germany. The idea was to “if possible, cover all the principal branches of public life from the viewpoints of Christian social ethics,” as recorded in the standard source edited by Helmut Thielicke.<sup>3</sup>

The document was completed in January of 1943 and presented to the Provisional Administration. It was titled *A Political Order of Communal Life: Attempting a Self-reflection of the Christian Conscience Facing the Political Calamities of our Times*,<sup>4</sup> or, after its German short-title, *Denkschrift* or memorandum.<sup>5</sup> Five appendices further detailed concepts for a judicial system, church policy, the education sector, an economic and social order, and the Jewish question. Beginning with the Ten Commandments and aided only by Martin Luther’s views and common sense, the Freiburg group outlined a new societal order in some 130 typed pages.

Recent studies have confirmed that some of the concepts from the *Denkschrift* had decisive influence on the economic and social order that West Germany implemented after the end of the war.<sup>6</sup>

In particular, Appendix 4, “Economic and Social Order,” became a significant contribution to Germany’s post-war economic system. Ludwig Erhard, Germany’s first post-war Secretary of Commerce and later its second chancellor, became key to introducing the *Social Market Economy* in West Germany. Following West Germany’s unmitigated economic success, this concept was adopted for the unified Germany after 1989 and is now part of the constitution of the European Union.<sup>7</sup>

The *Denkschrift*, especially with its “Economic and Social Order” Appendix, remains a remarkable document of modern Protestantism, yet, curiously, it is still virtually unknown outside Germany and the Thielicke edition used here as standard reference. The *Denkschrift* draws much of its continued relevance from *precisely not* explaining how a Christian society or a Christian economy would work; rather, it details what attributes and concepts *any* societal and economic order would require to be desirable from a Christian point of view. In consonance with Luther’s theology of the “Two Kingdoms” the *Denkschrift* assigns hands-on responsibility to the “worldly kingdom” as it deliberately leaves implementation to professional experts. Thus, the *Denkschrift* offers guidance for Christian thinking about the foundation of any just and God-pleasing society. Furthermore, it is one of the few documents elaborating on the rules of an economic order that, while addressing the material needs of the people, also complies with the ability of its economic actors to live by the Ten Commandments. Many contemporary Christians now seem to find it normal to usher God quietly out the backdoor whenever the discussion turns to markets, political economy and, by association, the “social question.” “Political” statements by the church are usually frowned upon as outside its competence. By contrast, the *Denkschrift* places human beings—with their material needs, their need for social relationships, and their right to human dignity—at the center of economic activity. From a Christian foundation the authors derive the general principles of what would later become a “Third Way” for an economic system, positioning their proposal between the extremes of a centrally directed economy (namely, socialism, communism), and an entirely unbridled “free” market economy (namely, Western-style capitalism).

On its 75th anniversary in 2018, the *Denkschrift* remains among the most influential documents that Protestantism has to offer on the subject of social and economic order, although its approach to the Jewish question remains awkward.<sup>8</sup> Churches, again, are struggling to respond to market forces and to claims that society functions best where it adopts the logic of the market. The *Denkschrift* instead reminds us that no society can afford to abandon the principles expressed by the Ten Commandments as a pre-condition for economic success. It may be precisely these values that create a foundation that ensures the dignified existence of all members of society—without requiring them to sacrifice their dignity or their liberty in exchange for the economic means of existence.

This paper provides an introduction to the structure and the key insights of the *Denkschrift* in connection with its fourth Appendix. Although the entire *Denkschrift*, in the Thielicke edition, is not yet available in English, the complete appendix on “Economic and Social Order” is now available in English translation.<sup>9</sup>

### *Historic Background*

Around 1942 the German resistance realized that the Nazi government needed to be dethroned from inside Germany. Toppled from the inside, Germany would at once declare a ceasefire and begin negotiations with the Allied Forces. They also realized that a new order for the state and the economy would have to be established. Any such plans had to be explained to foreign governments beforehand to secure their cooperation and create the space for a German post-war government to reorganize its affairs. From May 30 to June 2, 1942, in Sigtuna, Sweden, Dietrich Bonhoeffer met with George Bell on behalf of the resistance. Bell, Bishop of the British town of Chichester and well connected to the British government, had proposed that a World Church Conference be held soon after the war to serve as a platform to present German views on a post-war order. Thus, Bonhoeffer returned from Sweden with the need for a proposal of a societal order to be established in post-war Germany. What was needed was a memorandum outlining “the principals of foreign and domestic policy that rests on a healthy,

Christian foundation . . . with special attention given to securing the future world peace and to reshaping the affairs of the German state after the war.”<sup>10</sup> In Freiburg there was already an established group known to be both competent and trustworthy enough to draw up the blueprint for a new Germany.

Since 1934, one year after Adolf Hitler became German Chancellor, a group of academics from Freiburg University began meeting privately to express their concerns about a state order that very tangibly encroached on every aspect of life, including church life. As time progressed, the Nazi party had turned openly hostile to anyone in disagreement with its views. It is an indication of the university’s prevailing free spirit that these “Diehl Seminars” continued to be officially announced in the university’s calendar, even though the Nazi power grab had already happened in January of 1933. This seminar series—“‘The individual and the community’; privately held, hours to be determined”—announced events to be held in the home of Karl Diehl, an emeritus university professor and former colleague of many of the attendees. Each participant was asked for a presentation that was then discussed openly.

These Diehl Seminars were not at all a group of the German resistance. Rather, they were foremost an occasion for the participants to clarify their thoughts. Many people experienced disorientation from observing their Christian values together with the legal and ethical concepts sustained by them not only being publicly ridiculed, but deliberately being perverted or abandoned altogether. By the time of the anti-Jewish pogroms of 1938 the Diehl Seminars had enabled participants to better understand the new order being established around them. It had also reassured them of the continued validity of their Christian values in spite of the regime. When it happened, they understood instantly the meaning of the “Reichskristallnacht.”

Shortly after Hitler became Chancellor, the government turned on its Jewish citizens. It began issuing a barrage of decrees and legislation that in many steps large and small deprived its Jewish citizens of their civil rights, their property, and their liberty. Some five years later in 1938 the public conscience had been anesthetized, and the public mood had been conditioned enough that the party, backed by

the machinery of state, could dare an outright pogrom. Organized by the state and its officials, a wave of anti-Jewish atrocities swept the entire country. Euphemistically called "Reichskristallnacht," Jews suddenly experienced the unmitigated ire of their fellow citizens. This well-organized "outcry of the German public" was timed to culminate on the night commemorating Martin Luther's birthday, November 9th. That night at 3 AM the Jewish synagogue in downtown Freiburg was set on fire by local SA and SS troopers. Unlike many other places that night, the Freiburg fire brigade actually showed up. Firemen were prevented from fighting the fire but were allowed to prevent the fire from spreading to adjacent buildings. Rabbi Siegfried Scheuermann, cantor David Ziegler, and teacher Loeb David Maier were dragged from their beds and made to watch the building burn to the ground. Onlookers later watched as the Rabbi Scheuermann was dragged to a public well in the nearby Bertoldstraße where the perpetrators held his head under water.<sup>11</sup> That night, across Germany, Jews and suspected Jews were dragged out of their houses by mobs, mocked and beaten, their property destroyed or looted. Jewish businesses were plundered. About 400 people were killed or driven to suicide. Some 1,400 synagogues and Jewish gathering places throughout Germany were set on fire; Jewish cemeteries were vandalized.

On their way home from a Diehl Seminar that evening of November 9, the participants got first-hand impressions of the devastation the anti-Jewish rampage brought across town.<sup>12</sup> Shocked, the members felt called to action. Adherence to Romans 13 ("Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers"), they were convinced, could not possibly extend to the authorities that had instigated the atrocities they had just witnessed. It was decided to form a circle of like-minded thinkers and explore this question more deeply and see what, if anything, to do about it.

Self-mockingly calling themselves the "Freiburg Council," the group began meeting monthly under the leadership of the political economists Constantin von Dietze, Walter Eucken, and Adolf Lampe who taught at Freiburg University. Other members included the history professor and Reformation scholar Gerhard Ritter, law professor Freiherr Marschall von Biberstein, physics professor Gustav

Mie, the Freiburg pastors Otto Hof, Fritz Horch and Karl Dürr—along with their wives.<sup>13</sup> Their first meeting took place a few weeks later in Adolf Lampe's house. The participants took turns providing their houses as gathering places for the group. Invitations were passed by mouth as telephone connections could not be trusted. Their discussions took on the style of academic seminars, and the views held and shared were in critical opposition to the official Nazi narrative. In a typical meeting, an oral presentation was followed by open, unguarded conversations on political and economic topics—a rare luxury in a totalitarian state that strove to control every aspect of private and public life by openly employing informers, secret police, and detention camps to keep its citizens in line.

The council participants' most important questions revolved around the Christian right to resistance and the problem of tyrannicide. The group discussed, and dismissed, the idea to speak out openly against the Nazi regime—they concluded that a likely martyrdom of the members would most certainly go unnoticed by the public and would thus not make sense as a tool to bring any increased public awareness.<sup>14</sup>

In the fall of 1938, Gerhard Ritter together with the Freiburg Pastors Otto Hof and Karl Dürr produced an essay titled *Church and World. A Necessary Reflection on the Tasks of Christians and Church in our Times*.<sup>15</sup> This paper contained many of the conclusions the Freiburg Council had reached, although the paper itself was likely compiled without their knowledge. Copies were secretly distributed within the circles of the Confessing Church, especially in Germany's southwestern region of Baden, and it was well-received. It is considered established that Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Provisional Administration of the Confessing Church knew about this essay.<sup>16</sup>

Although teaching in Freiburg, Constantin von Dietze occasionally traveled to Berlin-Dahlem to participate in meetings of the Provisional Administration of the *Bekennende Kirche*. He had become a member of the Confessing Church in 1933 and a year later was elected into the local *Bruderrat* in Berlin. He had studied Political Economics in Cambridge, Tübingen, and Halle (Saale). In Tübingen, von Dietze joined the student fraternity *Akademische Verbindung Igel*, which included Dietrich Bonhoeffer among its more prominent members.<sup>17</sup>

Many of the council members had difficulties with the Nazi authorities, some of them repeatedly. For example: Böhm and Thielicke had their teaching permissions withdrawn, Dibelius had to respond in court to accusations of treasonous behavior or speech even before they got involved in the Freiburg Council.<sup>18</sup>

On a visit in Berlin, Dietrich Bonhoeffer introduced von Dietze to the idea of the Freiburgers as the principal authors of the paper outlining a German post-war societal order.<sup>19</sup> Due to the many connections between the members of the Freiburg Council and the *Bekennende Kirche*, Bonhoeffer knew he would meet like-minded people and, indeed, friends, when he travelled to Freiburg in October 1942. It is indeed difficult to imagine how the required level of mutual trust and secrecy could have existed for such a treasonous request, were it not for the relationships that predate Bonhoeffer's visit on behalf of the Provisional Administration of the Confessing Church.

On October 9th Bonhoeffer met with von Dietze and Erik Wolf. He requested that the economists, historians, and lawyers of the Freiburg Council create a memorandum that could be translated and presented at the post-war conference proposed by Bishop Bell. The outline for a post-war order in Germany would be titled *A Political Order of Communal Life: Attempting a Self-reflection of the Christian Conscience Facing the Political Calamities of our Times*,<sup>20</sup> or simply the *Denkschrift*. The chief prosecutor making the case against von Dietze and Bauer would later describe this event as follows:

Furthermore, around fall of 1942, Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, which the accused von Dietze came to know in the year 1937 in Berlin-Dahlem during meetings of leading members of the Confessing Church, requested that he participate in the preparation of proposals . . . to be presented at an ecumenical conference in Oxford. . . . Bonhoeffer communicated to him that Anglo-Saxon circles were considering "a long, potentially multi-year period between the end of hostilities and a permanent peace treaty." Through suitable statements such ecumenical conference would provide the possibility to influence the conditions of a peace, and the [political] structures that would have to be established in the various countries.<sup>21</sup>

Work on the memorandum commenced immediately after Bonhoeffer's visit. The main text was written by Gerhard Ritter, and two appendices were also prepared. The one pertinent here,

covering the economic and social order,<sup>22</sup> is the joint work of the national economists Constantin von Dietze, Walter Eucken, and Adolf Lampe; another appendix, on a judicial system, was written by lawyers Franz Böhm and Erik Wolf.<sup>23</sup> The work on the memorandum began in utter secrecy. Not even the full Freiburg Council, which continued to meet, was informed that some of its members engaged in this project.<sup>24</sup>

It took only nine weeks for the five core authors to ready their draft memorandum for a secret editorial meeting, November 17th–19th in von Dietze's house in Freiburg. Attendees reviewed the main text, written mostly by Ritter, and the two appendices available on a judicial and an economic and social order. At the meeting the Freiburgers were joined by the following individuals: Carl Friedrich Goerdeler, mayor of Leipzig until 1937 and a core member of the resistance, who at times was slated to act as chancellor after Hitler's assassination; Otto Dibelius, theologian and former church superintendent; Helmut Thielicke, Lutheran theologian, who attended on behalf of Württemberg's regional bishop Theophil Wurm; and Walter Bauer a Protestant entrepreneur as technical expert. Dibelius and Bauer also represented the "Berlin Friends" on behalf of the Provisional Administration of the Confessing Church. This group was only one of multiple Freiburg Circles,<sup>25</sup> and to distinguish it from the other groups the authors of the *Denkschrift* are now often called the Freiburg Bonhoeffer Circle.<sup>26</sup> Most of the participants were members of the Confessing Church.<sup>27</sup>

As to process:

Ritter was in charge of the editorial process. Whole passages were rewritten, other parts moved. Ritter usually wrote short additions in ink. Longer additions of several lines he wrote down in pencil and transferred them with the typewriter to small pieces of paper that were glued to the corresponding page. Further changes and additions took place in the context of the Berlin circle around Dietrich Bonhoeffer, partly in the presence of von Dietze.<sup>28</sup>

The result was updated and the group decided to add three more appendices. Dibelius was asked to provide a text on church policy,<sup>29</sup> von Dietze agreed to provide a text on the Jewish question,<sup>30</sup> and Friedrich Delekat, a theologian and educator new to the

group, was asked to contribute an appendix on education.<sup>31</sup> Over the course of December 1942 these additions arrived in Freiburg. Upon the request of the Provisional Administration of the Confessing Church their judicial adviser Friedrich-Justus Perels was also to add an Appendix on a Judicial Order, but his contribution did not reach the Freiburgers in time, so they never knew about its content. In the following weeks Constantin von Dietze and Adolf Lampe traveled separately to Berlin to meet and coordinate the paper with the "Berlin Friends." Beyond Dibelius and Bauer, who had attended the editorial meeting in Freiburg, these friends included Hans Asumussen, Hans Böhm, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Friedrich-Justus Perels.<sup>32</sup> Although Bonhoeffer himself did not attend the November editorial meeting in Freiburg, he participated in additional reviews when members of the Freiburg team visited Berlin.<sup>33</sup>

By mid-January 1943 the work was concluded. Because of its highly treasonous nature, the text would endanger those involved in its creation if it ever got into the hands of the *Gestapo*, the Nazi Secret State Police. Therefore, only three copies of the *Denkschrift* were made—and then hidden.<sup>34</sup> This caution proved well-advised but was inadequate. Some eighteen months later, after the failed assassination attempt on Hitler on July 20, 1944, a small part of the *Denkschrift* was indeed found by the Gestapo. Von Dietze and Lampe were arrested on September 8, 1944, and taken to Berlin. Wolf, Eucken, and Ritter were interrogated in Freiburg. Ritter was later arrested as well and brought to Gestapo headquarters in Berlin.

We know from the indictment against Bauer and von Dietze that the Gestapo knew the names of all the authors of the *Denkschrift*. However, why some of them were never arrested remains unclear. Of the participants, Bonhoeffer, Goerdeler, and Perels were later executed by the secret police, albeit on charges of treason, not for their contributions to the *Denkschrift*. In February of 1945, Roland Freisler, the infamous president of the "People's Court" was killed during a bombing raid. Likely this spared von Dietze, Bauer, Lampe, and Ritter a death sentence for treason—their trial never happened. Some of them had been tortured, and Lampe died in 1948 from injuries sustained during their incarceration. But these four

Freiburgers were among the few political prisoners freed from the Berlin prisons shortly before the arrival of allied troops.

In the chaos after the end of hostilities in 1945 the quest for an appropriate new order of society and economy began almost immediately. The war economy was a centrally directed economy, and, as the Freiburgers had foreseen, shortages in the production of civilian goods and needs were now evident everywhere. After the experiences of hyperinflation and out-of-control capitalism in the 1920s, there were now strong tendencies to try and introduce some form of socialist economy in Germany. Other liberal economists had also recognized the superiority of a managed form of capitalism, where the state plays the role of referee and enforces the rules of the game. Among them were Wilhelm Röpke and Alexander Rüstow who had emigrated because of personal difficulties due to the Nazi regime. They knew each other and the Freiburgers, and they remained in correspondence as long as this was still possible.<sup>35</sup>

After the arrests in the wake of the failed assassination attempt, many of the Freiburg economists continued to discuss post-war economic challenges. Named after its leader Erwin von Beckerath, they continued to prepare over forty expert reports on a wide range of economic topics. In 1948 six members of the original Freiburg Council were called to serve on the advisory board to the first Ministry of Economic Affairs: Eucken, Lampe, von Beckerath, Böhm, Erich Preiser and Theodor Wessels. Von Beckerath chaired this board from 1950 to 1954. Eucken's student Leonard Miksch worked for Erhard in the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

Among the economists remaining inside Nazi Germany who also, at great personal risk, had been thinking about the social-economic future was Ludwig Erhard, who became the first Minister of Economic Affairs under Chancellor Konrad Adenauer from 1949 to 1963, and then Germany's second chancellor in 1963. Early in July of 1944 Erhard, an economist himself, had sent a copy of his own 268-page memorandum to Goerdeler, who, already hiding from the Secret Police, responded that this was "nice work, with which I generally agree."<sup>36</sup> Erhard's memorandum, in line with the thinking in Freiburg, closed: "Never again will the state be returned to the role of a night watchman, because even the most liberal economy—and

especially such economy—will require a body that establishes law and controls adherence to it.”<sup>37</sup>

After the war Erhard was key to introducing the *Social Market Economy* (*soziale Marktwirtschaft*) as the speedy and, for some, miraculous economic recovery of post-war Germany, the *Wirtschaftswunder*. On Franz Böhm’s 80th birthday, Erhard stated: “I freely confess that without Walter Eucken, Franz Boehm, Wilhelm Röpke, Alexander Rüstow, F.A. von Hayek, Alfred Müller-Armack and many others who thought and fought [alongside us], my own contribution to this work would hardly have been possible.”<sup>38</sup>

This Social Market Economy, a “Third Way” between the extremes of a centrally directed economy and a laissez-faire unbridled “free” market economy, continues to be Germany’s economic order. In 2007, the European Union included a commitment to some form of a Social Market Economy in the third article of its founding documents, the *Treaty on European Union*.

### *Three Key Concepts*

Reading the *Denkschrift* 75 years after its completion leads us to acknowledge three key concepts<sup>39</sup> that have since diminished in the public’s eye. The three points, introduced in the main part of the work and later elaborated in its appendices, have in common the recognition of an intricate connection and active interchange between the civic society and the economic system it chooses to follow.

#### *I. A Christian Foundation*

The first thing that stands out about the *Denkschrift* is its decidedly Christian foundation: Christian principles are used as a tool to guide practical social-economic action, not as a nostalgic longing for a Christian utopia. The opening paragraph of the second section of the *Denkschrift*, titled “Main features of a political communal order according to Christian understanding,” makes this clear:

The kingdom of Christ is not of this world. The revelation of the Holy Scriptures is not a law book for secular communities, but deals with God’s way of salvation with humanity. As Protestant Christians we reject as sentimentality

any interpretation that misunderstands [this concept]. Although there is a state built on the principles of Christian morality, there is not an absolutely “Protestant” or “Christian” state *per se*, because no earthly power or legal order can claim to represent the kingdom of God on earth. The kingdom of God is a kingdom of love, not a kingdom of the legal order, not one of politics, and not one of violence, either. If God will be all in all (1 Cor. 15:28), the right and power of the sword will be repealed. . . . On earth there is no perfect justice, and the belief of socialist dreamers (whether of Marxist or humanistic or Christian coloring) to bring about that justice by some kind of legal organization is a superstition that misjudges the sinful corruption of all human endeavor.<sup>40</sup>

In the Appendix, the authors revisit this thought and state an obligation for the church to weigh in on any conversation about the economy: “The Lord’s Commandments are directed not exclusively at the individual human beings . . . They also apply to the communities of life and work, [and] to the content of the orders that govern them. The church must therefore also comment on the economic system.”<sup>41</sup>

No part of Christian life is exempt from the Ten Commandments, the anchor and foundation for actionable conclusions. Compliance with the Commandments thus serves as a timeless yardstick against which *any* economic order needs to measure up. The authors thus begin their proposal by requiring any economic system to allow for all its economic actors to be able to adhere to the Ten Commandments.<sup>42</sup> Although beginning with a Christian foundation, the authors clearly distinguish between the goals of an economic system, that spring from a spiritual foundation, and the practical necessities for successfully implementing such a system:

We do *not* want to try designing a special Protestant or even a general Christian economic system; for we *cannot*, from the foundations of our faith, derive precise rules for an economic system that could claim inviolable validity. Rather, tangible design requirements of an economic system need also to be informed by the situation at hand; and its cognition is the domain of human reason.<sup>43</sup>

Recognizing human fallibility, the authors propose an economic order that, by its design, “provides for the strongest resistance imaginable against the power of sin . . . and . . . whose design does not

make it difficult or downright impossible for economic actors to lead their lives in consonance with their Protestant faith.”<sup>44</sup>

## 2. *Human Individuals at the Center*

Placing the human individual at the center of any social or economic order is the second concept that can be observed throughout the *Denkschrift*:

People are not there for the sake of the economy and not for the sake of the state economic power, but the economy is there for the sake of the people. . . . The inherent moral danger of all economic activity is the demon of greed, which spoils the moral relations among men. We need not renounce the desire for wealth as such, but the sacrifice of higher moral values for the sake of becoming wealthy, the consummation of the soul by material interests; not the enjoyment of earthly goods as such, but the indulgence of pleasure, the egoism of pleasure—in a word, [we need to renounce] the materialistic attitude.<sup>45</sup>

Again, we see the clear distinction between a tool used to accomplish an agreeable end and that same tool being allowed to become an end in itself. Their uniquely historical perspective allows the authors to recognize underlying and perpetual human need as the driving force beyond the fashionable demands of the economic order of the moment. Therefore, the Main Part of the *Denkschrift* defines that the task of any healthy economic order rooted in the principles of Christian ethics must be

[t]o organize economic activities in such a way that

1. the temptation to abuse economic power, to selfishly exploit one’s neighbor, to employ persons as soulless parts of the machine, to ruthlessly fight back competitors with unfair means, and to lazily enjoy wealth is diminished as much as possible, and instead
2. Labor will be regarded as a blessing rather than a curse, inspiring the moral and intellectual powers of economic agents rather than paralyzing and oppressing them; that as many as possible do their work with pleasure, because the able may hope to progress a little bit in the economic struggle for life, but everyone can count on reliable protection in acquired rights and fair pay for work, and not have to worry too much about the loss of opportunity for employment.<sup>46</sup>

Appendix 4 revisits and expands this idea when the authors call out the susceptibility of the economic order itself to succumb to evil:

If God's Commandments "thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal" etc. also apply to an economic system, then it follows that every economic system might itself degenerate to encourage stealing and murder. Even the economic system with the noblest intentions offers access routes for the power of evil. Selfish pursuit of earthly goods does not exclusively proliferate where the individual economic subject is granted a high degree of personal responsibility but [it does so] no less in a collectivist order. One's moral person and soul can suffer if, in free competition, one surrenders to wrestling for earthly possessions without any restraints; but no less so when one is exploited in the service of an idolized collective or even [if one] exploits others.<sup>47</sup>

When this text was written the authors were observing both the ongoing war economy in Germany and the still-young Communist experiment in Russia just a few hundred miles to their East. Furthermore, as economists they had analyzed the excesses of the "Roaring Twenties" with their uncontrolled economic liberalism, climaxing in the 1929 stock market crash followed by the "Great Depression." And while they found the idolized collective easy to blame as a cause for human misery, they recognized the ruthless powers of unbridled free competition as more difficult to identify as a source for human suffering. The same potentially harmful competitive behavior is also responsible for creating the general prosperity observable in competition-based economies. With respect to the goals of an economic order as stated in the *Denkschrift* all three concepts ultimately do not deliver. But as economists the authors of the Appendix realized that while great care must be exercised to foster and protect the forces of competition and thus enable them to produce the desired beneficial outcome, it must also be assured that these same forces are barred from damaging the individual or the community as a whole. In their roles as leading national economists the three authors were convinced that any such a dual strategy required a careful and purposefully designed economic system. For this to work and be stable, a "strong state" would be required—not

to be an economic player itself, like in socialist systems, but rather to enforce and uphold the rules of the economic system. In this sense, the *Denkschrift's* entire Appendix 4 is their outline of a system that walks the line of this dual approach. West Germany's post-war Social Market Economy would later put this concept to its successful practical test.

### 3. *The Importance of Social Bonds*

The third concept that characterizes the *Denkschrift* is the emphasis on the social bonds that connect human beings. The authors believed that the personal character of human beings, and indeed their dignity, could only be guaranteed within the framework of a true community. Consequently, any economic order, regardless of its specific practical needs, must respect persons within their social networks. In their view it can do so only if such order is the product of conscious design, not a hodge-podge of laws made in pure reaction to damage already done and lacking any overarching concept. Observing the failures of the economic liberalism of the 1920s the authors dismiss the notion that we can hope for some sort of natural economic equilibrium to establish itself as the economic system somehow "naturally" finds its way back to its pre-established harmony:<sup>48</sup>

Such goals can never be attained through disjointed remedial economic policy measures when damage is recognized, but only through a well-planned, well-thought-out economic order organized by the state. Proposals for such an economic order, based both on careful consideration of the expected economic situation after the war, as well as on the principles of modern economic theory are included in Appendix 4 (with historical and theoretical justification). They endeavor to avoid as much the extremes of the economic collective with its soul-devastating effects as the economic anarchy of a one-sided and misunderstood economic liberalism that leaves everything to private egoism in its purest form, and trusts in a pre-established harmony of all economic egoism. They want to stimulate the independent initiative and freedom of businessmen, but they are to be lawfully restrained and inserted within the framework of a firm and strictly supervised general order. So they

correspond to the basic idea of our entire elaboration, which sees the personal character of man only secured within the framework of a true community order.<sup>49</sup>

The economic system proposed in Appendix 4 calls for the dual requirement not only to recognize, foster and utilize social bonds where possible, but also not to interfere with or destroy such interpersonal relationships. The authors require that the economic system “must not prevent people from fulfilling the Fourth and Sixth Commandments, but rather it must work to ensure that their inner bonds with their natural and proper communities, especially family and the society, are preserved and consolidated.”<sup>50</sup>

The goal of fostering and providing the necessary opportunities for true community is woven into the fabric of the societal blueprint proposed by the *Denkschrift*. In the final analysis the authors believe it is the proper economic framework that actually creates the necessary space for societal life to unfold:

[In this memorandum] we do not have to decide on a particular conception of the state; we only have to explain which socio-political tasks an appropriate economic policy can solve on its own, and which remain to be solved beyond them. Realizing a general economic order that fulfills the principles of competition on the merits means for the solution of social problems:

- a. Such order provides in the long run—in contrast to desperate short-term efforts—the most abundant total supply of economic goods, so it can also spare more for purely social tasks.
- b. Such order gives the necessary opportunities of life and activity to the communities of the people, who are indispensable for the establishment of a virtuous society. Above all, it gives the family its due position as the foundation of all genuine social life. A special consideration of the family economy is expressly provided for in our proposals . . .
- c. Such order combats the formation of positions of [dominating] economic power and thus prevents the actual, genuine opportunities for exploitation of the weak.<sup>51</sup>

### *The Origins of Totalitarianism*

It is from the mandate to foster social bonds between people that we can glimpse how the seemingly simple question of a proper

economic system goes beyond the task of merely picking the right tool for the job of fulfilling peoples' material needs. While this remains an important aspect of any economic system, the *Denkschrift* also mandates that any appropriate economic system recognizes, enables and supports human beings in their relationships in an active, vibrant community. Today, many find this an unexpected request: Why is this even mentioned in a text proposing an economic system?

The reason is the authors' recognition of a connection between large numbers of economically desolate people and the rise of Totalitarianism. In the first twenty years of the twentieth century the authors of the *Denkschrift* witnessed firsthand the degradation of their society at the hands of an out-of-control market system, culminating in the "Golden" or the "Roaring" Twenties. From a wholesome community of interconnected members their society was transformed to one that reduced an individual's worth in society to their propensity to consume the economy's goods and services, diminished to mere "sources of revenue." Around them they saw interpersonal relations reduced to business transactions serving concrete material needs—without any concern for the parties involved, often with no interest at all except the profitable conclusion of the transaction at hand. As Erich Fromm put it:

Modern man's feeling of isolation and powerlessness is increased still further by the character which all his human relationships have assumed. The concrete relationship of one individual to another has lost its direct and human character and has assumed a spirit of manipulation and instrumentality. In all social and personal relations the laws of the market are the rule. It is obvious that the relationship between competitors has to be based on mutual human indifference. . . . The relationship between employer and employee is permeated by the same spirit of indifference. . . . The same instrumentality is the rule in the relationship between the businessman and his customer. The customer is an object to be manipulated, not a concrete person whose aims the businessman is interested to satisfy. . . . Not only the economic, but also the personal relations between men have this character of alienation; instead of relations between human beings, they assume the character of relations between things.<sup>52</sup>

There is much more to this connection between permanent economic desolation and the rise of Totalitarianism than can be

sketched here.<sup>53</sup> The *Denkschrift* is evidence that the Freiburgers recognized the connection of economic distress and the rise of totalitarianism. Suffice it to say that, historically, systems that commoditize individuals by leaving them to the unmitigated powers of a “free” market seem predictably to produce large numbers of individuals who permanently lack the means to participate in economic transactions. As the economy loses interest in them, that group finds itself sidelined and ultimately excluded from a society that no longer has any use for them. Such a culture renders many individuals isolated and leaves them to their own devices when wrestling with the perils of human existence. This, in turn, creates a pool of impoverished, desolate, hopeless, desperate people who are deprived of a dignified existence in an otherwise affluent society. Any promise of decent work and readmission into society, of human dignity restored and upheld by someone out there that cares about me as a person—is the siren call of the populists that proves so seductive—then as now. For those left to the soul-murdering experience of fending for themselves, resisting this call is not a choice that makes any sense. Rather, they can be expected to embrace it—and do. Here is how one “Nazi” described his experience when interviewed by an American academic in the early 1950s:

You say, “Totalitarianism.” Yes, totalitarianism; but perhaps you have never been alone, unemployed, sick, or penniless, or, if you have, perhaps never for long, for so long that you have given up hope; and so (you’ll pardon me, Herr Professor) it is easy for you to say, “Totalitarianism—no.” . . . In the Labor Front every person we placed in a job remained our responsibility, our care. The owner of a café tried to mistreat a girl I had placed there. She came to me. I warned him. He did it again, and his business was closed. Totalitarian?—Yes, of course. He . . . took it up with the district office of the Party, without any success. And that was not an exceptional case. Totalitarianism?—Yes. But I am proud of it.<sup>54</sup>

The societal model sketched out in the *Denkschrift* recognizes human beings as embedded in their social relations within a functional community precisely not governed by the laws of the market. Connected to, but separate from this civic society, is an economic system that serves the individuals in that society. The Freiburgers recognized the role of a vibrant, inclusive community as a built-in

antidote that avoids the temptations of populists as described above: "a wise social policy by the state must primarily create an environment that fosters and enables the moral forces that can form true community."<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, social policy is not regarded as an afterthought to an economic system, but rather its implementation.

Societies cannot be governed solely by economic considerations. It was a common misconception in the nineteenth century to suggest that proper economic rules and regulations would by themselves create a meaningful social order. Rather, a social order is part of an overall economic system. An economic system policy [that provides such order] is only one, albeit the most important, indeed an indispensable part of social policy.<sup>56</sup>

The Freiburgers may not have known of the work of Erich Fromm who, being a Jew, decided to leave Berlin in 1940. But the *Denkschrift* is proof they reached comparable insights regarding the root causes of totalitarianism. It repeatedly uses the term *Vermassung* to refer to a sequence of events that transform individual humans with their distinct and recognizable individuality into formless members of a crowd. They are undefined outside that crowd, and unrecognizable as distinct persons within it. *Vermassung*, which we could translate as "crowdification," is very different from, and should not be confused with, becoming a member of a group. In a group or community the personal, distinct, and recognizable character of the member never ceases to be identifiable, although the individual may take on different "roles" within the group. The very recognition of playing a role acknowledges that the individual self is separate from its current role.

In crowds, as opposed to groups, individuals coalesce into a single uniform body of people; they begin to act and feel as if they were one body.<sup>57</sup> The authors of the *Denkschrift* considered *Vermassung* as a harbinger of and one of the root causes for the rise of totalitarianism. Many Germans, after years of economic desolation and an existence on the fringes of society, were longing to join the Nazi movement, and once again to experience the solidarity and euphoric inclusiveness of the *Völksgemeinschaft* and the mass events organized by the Nazis.<sup>58</sup> After people melt into the crowd, their conscience is disabled and their ethical judgment suspended as fear and euphoria

drive the group will. In this state of mind any enemies, perceived or real, are demonized, and no longer seen as fellow humans. To such crowds, Auschwitz becomes possible, acceptable, and perhaps even desirable, because for them it is now nothing more than the best technical means to rid itself of such enemies.

The *Denkschrift* thus repeatedly introduces concepts that the authors believed will prevent and obviate “crowdification” from occurring. As already described, one of the most fundamental ideas in the *Denkschrift* is that it wants to establish a system that enables true community amongst all people, a neighborliness in the Christian understanding of mutuality.

In sum, the *Denkschrift* remains one of the major foundation stones on which West Germany’s post-war society and its Social Market Economy came to be erected. Although the major contributors to the discussion were Protestant, other participants were likewise rooted in the same Christian foundation that anchors the *Denkschrift*.<sup>59</sup> References to research on the *Denkschrift* have already been provided,<sup>60</sup> and further in-depth analysis of the connections between the *Denkschrift* and the economic thinking of Walter Eucken, the principal representative and co-founder of the Freiburg School of Economics, have been published by Goldschmidt.<sup>61</sup> The Christian background of the *Denkschrift*’s authors and its influence on the concepts of Christian ethics incorporated into the economic and political concepts of the *Denkschrift* is available in studies by Holthaus.<sup>62</sup> Important early sources illuminate the history of Freiburg University during the Third Reich.<sup>63</sup>

### Conclusion

At the 75th Anniversary of its completion in January of 1943, the *Denkschrift* and its Appendix on an economic and societal order offers a fresh perspective on our contemporary conversation about the economic system. The Christian church, both Lutheran and Roman Catholic, has been highly critical of the excesses and the social fallout from a resurging market liberalism that resembles the “Golden Twenties” of the previous century. “Such economy kills,”

wrote Pope Francis in 2013 when he described an economy of exclusion and inequality.<sup>64</sup> And while many Christians today agree in their criticism of the existing system, their critique typically culminates in demanding repentance, reparations, and repair. Yet such criticism, necessary as it remains, lacks a direction that would allow us to swivel around and move towards an improved system.

The *Denkschrift* offers us such a forward-looking approach by proposing a system that is tangible enough to inspire. Firmly based on Christian principles, it positively defines requirements for any economic order desirable from a Christian perspective. The *Denkschrift* furthermore demonstrates that a conversation about an appropriate set of economic rules can constructively be launched from the Christian perspective by simply demanding a structured economic order that does not require economic actors to violate the Ten Commandments in order to be successful.

As seen, the authors of the *Denkschrift* were convinced that any economy has to serve the people, not the other way around. In their view an economic system cannot be established by laws and stipulations alone. Rather, it happens in the context of an all-inclusive society, its entire people, their needs, and their ethical frame of reference. The experience of Nazi totalitarianism in Germany led the authors to understand the critical role that an equitable economic system plays in the prevention of and protection against such unjust rule. This insight is the basis on which the *Denkschrift* and especially its fourth Appendix propose concepts for both a societal order and an economic system that serves its people.

As for the role of the church, the authors of the *Denkschrift* go even further. They see the church as obligated to look beyond requirements for personal ethical behavior, and to speak up about society and its economic system as a whole. This is not easy in our present environment that glorifies individual free choice as the prime source to direct human existence. A silent church becomes complicit in perpetuating a system it has already recognized as substantially unjust and in need for improvement. Early in the main body of the *Denkschrift*, the authors fault the German Protestant churches for not taking action earlier:

[O]ur German Reformation Churches were complicit in, and bear a large share of responsibility for, the total decay of our political civilization, by excluding the “political” as a sphere [to be considered] alien to the Christian conscience . . .<sup>65</sup>

Thus, “the church must . . . comment on the economic system.” Fortunately, today’s Lutheran churches could not be in a better position to engage their members in an open, inclusive, and forward-looking conversation on an improved economic order that delivers for all members of society. In all its brevity, the *Denkschrift* can again serve to provide direction for an overdue conversation about an economic system that stopped serving the people quite some time ago. Markets are neither God-ordained nor a force of nature but are rather man-made. Any assertions that we have to accept “the markets” as free to follow their own, unalterable set of “laws” are, at best, useful fiction. It follows that it is our responsibility to re-align the purpose of a market-driven economy with Christian principles, and again confine markets to be employed just as the useful tool that they are. After 75 years, the Freiburgers continue to lead the way.

#### NOTES

1. The most likely date. See Christine Blumenberg-Lampe, *Das Wirtschaftliche Programm der “Freiburger Kreise,”* 1st ed., Volkswirtschaftliche Schriften 208 (Duncker & Humblot, 1973), 22. Hereafter, cited as Blumenberg-Lampe.

2. Philip Plickert, *Liberale Ökonomen Im Widerstand in: 70 Jahre Denkschrift Des Freiburger Bonhoeffer-Kreises* (Arbeitskreis Evangelischer Unternehmer in Deutschland e. V., 2015). Available online at [https://www.aeu-online.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/pdf/publikationen/2015AEU\\_FD70\\_web.pdf](https://www.aeu-online.de/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/publikationen/2015AEU_FD70_web.pdf). Hereafter, cited as Plickert.

3. Helmut Thielicke, *In der Stunde Null - Die Denkschrift des Freiburger Bonhoeffer-Kreises* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr and Siebeck, 1979), 27–28. Hereafter cited as DS.

4. “Politische Gemeinschaftsordnung: ein Versuch zur Selbstbesinnung des christlichen Gewissens in den politischen Nöten unserer Zeit”; Published in its entirety in DS and in Gerhard A. Ritter, *Gerhard Ritter: Ein politischer Historiker in seinen Briefen*, ed. Klaus Schwabe and Rolf Reichardt, Schriften des Bundesarchivs 33 (Boppard am Rhein: Boldt, 1984). Hereafter, cited as Ritter.

5. The German word *Denkschrift* used in the document’s republication (see note 3) translates as “memorandum.” The document covered in this paper is the second of two memoranda by the Freiburg Circle. On their first memorandum, see note 15.

6. See for example Hans Maier, *Die Freiburger Kreise. Akademischer Widerstand und Soziale Marktwirtschaft* (Paderborn:Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh GmbH, 2014).

7. Clause 3 of Article 2 of the Lisbon Treaty refers to that Social Market Economy as follows: “The Union shall establish an internal market. It shall work for the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress, and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment. It shall promote scientific and technological advance.” See English-language edition of the Amendments To The Treaty On European Union And To The Treaty Establishing The European Community (Lisbon Treaty). Available online at [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C\\_.2007.306.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ:C:2007:306:TOC#d1e13065-1-1](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2007.306.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ:C:2007:306:TOC#d1e13065-1-1).

8. See note 30.

9. See LutheranQuarterly.com.

10. DS, 27.

11. Käthe Vordtriede, *Es gibt Zeiten, in denen man welkt. Mein Leben in Deutschland vor und nach 1933*. Hrsg. und mit einem Nachwort versehen von Detlef Garz. (Lengwil: Libelle, 1999), 195.

12. Blumenberg-Lampe, 16–17.

13. For a complete list see Nils Goldschmidt, *Die Entstehung Der Freiburger Kreise in Historisch-Politische Mitteilungen*, Archiv für Christlich-demokratische Politik, no. 4 (1997), 1–14. Hereafter, cited as Goldschmidt.

14. Goldschmidt, 10.

15. “Kirche und Welt. Eine notwendige Besinnung auf die Aufgaben des Christen und der Kirche in unserer Zeit”; A complete reprint can be found in Ritter, 635–654.

16. Blumenberg-Lampe, 20 quoting from Eberhard Bethge’s Bonhoeffer biography cited in note 17. See also Ritter. In commentary on the genesis of the two *Denkschriften* of the Freiburg circles, Reinhard Hauf writes with respect to this first memorandum, 630: “This memorandum was made available to a select group of people. It is certain that the Provisional Administration of the Confessing Church knew of it. It is typical for the precautionary measures of the time that this document was not presented in the Council. As stated by von Dietze in a three-page transcript written after the war, the remarks made [in the first Denkschrift] on the right of resistance had deliberately avoided [an] escalation [of the language due to current events].”

17. Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, ed. Victoria J. Barnett, revised edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000) 48–51. Hereafter, cited as Bethge. Bonhoeffer joined the fraternity of the hedgehogs (“Igel”) in 1923 and left in 1933. Constantin von Dietze joined the hedgehogs while studying in Tübingen, likely 1911–1912. See Steffen Lippitz and Petra Hofmann, *Nachlass Constantin von Dietze*, vol. C 100 (Universitätsarchiv der Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg i. Breisgau, 2013) Preface. Available online at <https://www.uniarchiv.uni-freiburg.de/bestaende/Fremdprovenienzen/nachlass/co100/findbuch0100neu>.

18. Regarding Böhm, see Marie Baum, *Leuchtende Spur. Das Leben Ricarda Huchs* (Wunderlich, 1950). 369–372. Regarding Thielicke, see Hans D. Betz et al., eds., *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft*, 4th edition, 8 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 363. Hereafter, cited as RGG. Regarding Dibelius,

see J. S. Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1997) 209.

19. Blumenberg-Lampe, 22; on behalf of the Provisionary Administration.

20. "Politische Gemeinschaftsordnung: ein Versuch zur Selbstbesinnung des christlichen Gewissens in den politischen Nöten unserer Zeit"; Published in its entirety in DS, 31–151.

21. Quoted from the indictment of treason prepared by chief prosecutor at the "People's Court" under its notorious chairman Roland Freisler, against Walter Bauer and Constantin von Dietze on April 9, 1945. Quoted here from Plickert. The final Freiburg Memorandum was indeed submitted as a preliminary document for the 1948 founding Congress of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam.

22. Later to be Appendix 4, on "Economic and Social Order."

23. Later to be Appendix 1, on "Judicial Order."

24. Blumenberg-Lampe, 23.

25. For the detail on the history and composition of all the Freiburg Circles see Goldschmidt.

26. The name "Bonhoeffer Circle" remains disputed; the group did not give itself a name. Numerous publications, notably the Thielicke edition, continue to use the term "Bonhoeffer Circle" to distinguish the group that authored the *Denkschrift* from the other circles that existed in Freiburg at the same time.

27. For the following members of the "Bonhoeffer Circle": Delekat (RGG, 642), Dibelius (RGG, 833), von Dietze (RGG, 850), Perels (legal adviser of the *Bekennende Kirche* of the Altpreußische Union, RGG, 1104), Ritter (RGG, 540), Thielicke (RGG, 363), and Erik Wolf (RGG, 1680). In his introduction to Ritter, Reinhard Hauf writes, 630: "In the eyes of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, von Dietze's connections to leading members of the Berlin "Confessing Church" and their knowledge of the activities of the Freiburg Council left this circle particularly suitable for work on a memorandum destined for international ecumenism."

28. Ritter, 632.

29. Later to be Appendix 2, on "Church Policy."

30. Later to be Appendix 5 on "The Jewish Question". Awkwardly this appendix reflects the racialized anti-Semitism of that era and in fact states that "Jewish guilt" was based on the Jews' refusal to convert to Christianity. Although it acknowledges German guilt and calls for reparations to the Jewish community—this in itself is remarkable for the time (1942!)—it nonetheless deviates in message and sentiment from the other parts of the *Denkschrift*. Decades later theologian Helmut Thielicke acknowledged that the text of appendix 5, written by Constantin von Dietze, was "painfully embarrassing." In his introduction of the *Denkschrift's* reprint Thielicke states "I cannot remember that this last piece of the appendices was being discussed in our circle at that time, and I cannot quite imagine that this write-up was indeed one of the objects of our discussions. [The piece] shows a degree of one-sidedness that I believe would have been corrected in a plenary session [of the group]—despite of all of us being deeply embedded in the context of those times." (DS, 21)

31. Delekat was connected through former church superintendent of the Kurmark, Otto Dibelius, whose *Religionspädagogisches Institut* (a school to educate teachers to teach the subject of religion) he managed from 1925–1929. See Delekat's biographic entry as Professor at the University of Mainz, Germany, at <http://gutenberg-biographics.ub.uni-mainz>

.de/personen/register/eintrag/friedrich-delekat.html. This part of the *Denkschrift* later became Appendix 3, on “Education.”

32. Blumenberg-Lampe, 25.

33. Constantin von Dietze recalls many conversations and specifically two visits early in 1943, see Bethge p. 775–776; see also on p. 776:

Bonhoeffer’s notes for the November discussion in Freiburg were probably made at the preliminary discussion in Berlin at the beginning of November. Besides the date (“Tuesday 17 November, meeting in Freiburg”) he entered the following headings:

Economic questions: Eucken, von Dietze, Bauer, Karrenberg.

Law of the State inside Decalogue God and State outside Europe . . . Asmussen, Ritter, Luther.

God and justice; fundamental and human rights . . . [v. Simson] Böhm-Jena natural law, Mensing. criminal law. State Church.

The Jews.

Education.

The Church’s proclamation to the world. The Word of God and counsel. The basis of right. Existence of the Church in the world. Perels.

These notes suggest that Bonhoeffer conceived the manuscripts “State and Church” and “On the Possibility of the Word of the Church to the World” for the Freiburg plans.

Goldschmidt suggests that Bonhoeffer met with von Dietze before his initial visit in Freiburg, and again during the final editing process of the *Denkschrift*, perhaps in January of 1943; see Goldschmidt, footnotes 71 and 76.

34. More historic detail as well as the German Text of Appendix 4 “Social and Economic Order” are available from the *Arbeitskreis Evangelischer Unternehmer in Deutschland e. V.*: <https://www.aeu-online.de/selbstverstaendnis/denkschrift-des-freiburger-bonhoeffer-kreises.html>.

A PDF file with scans of Lampe’s original copy can be downloaded here: [https://www.aeu-online.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/pdf/veranstaltungen/2017/FD75/FD75\\_Anhang4\\_Typoskript.pdf](https://www.aeu-online.de/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/veranstaltungen/2017/FD75/FD75_Anhang4_Typoskript.pdf)

35. Copies of Wilhelm Röpke’s books were apparently smuggled into Nazi Germany. Plickert reports that Ludwig Erhard read them during the last phase of the war, p. 59.

36. Volker Hentschel, *Ludwig Erhard. Ein Politikerleben* (Berlin: Ullstein Tb, 1998), 38. Quoted here from Plickert, 73.

37. Plickert, 73.

38. Ludwig Erhard, *Franz Böhms Einfluss auf die Politik* in Heinz Sauermaun and Ernst-Joachim Mestmäcker, eds., *Wirtschaftsordnung Und Staatsverfassung—Festschrift Für Franz Böhm Zum 80. Geburtstag* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1975) 15.

39. Nils Goldschmidt, “Christlicher Glaube, Wirtschaftstheorie und Praxisbezug—Walter Eucken und die Anlage 4 der Denkschrift des Freiburger Bonhoeffer-Kreises,” *Historisch-Politische Mitteilungen, Archiv für Christlich-demokratische Politik*, no. 5 (1998): 33–48. Hereafter, cited as Goldschmidt 1998.

40. DS, 55.

41. DS, 129.

42. DS, 129.

43. DS, 128.

44. DS, 129.

45. DS, 90–91.

46. DS, 91.

47. DS, 130.

48. Note that the idea that such equilibrium exists and just needs to be allowed to re-emerge is made popular again today in the guise of criticizing “big government.” If the state just stays away from the economy we would, somehow, all be “better off.” The Freiburgers would wholeheartedly disagree with the suggestion that markets left to their own devices will find their own equilibrium. They knew better; see, for example, the quotation at note 56.

49. DS, 91; emphasis in the original text.

50. DS, 129.

51. DS, 141.

52. The text continues: “Man does not only sell commodities, he sells himself and feels himself to be a commodity. . . . As with any other commodity it is the market which decides the value of these human qualities, yes, even their very existence. If there is no use for the qualities a person offers, he has none; just as an unsalable commodity is valueless though it might have its use value. Thus, the self-confidence, the “feeling of self,” is merely an indication of what others think of the person. It is not he who is convinced of his value regardless of popularity and his success on the market. If he is sought after, he is somebody; if he is not popular, he is simply nobody.” Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, Owl Book edition (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 1994), originally published 1941, 118–119. Hereafter, cited as Fromm.

53. On the causality of hopeless economic distress as a precursor to Totalitarianism see Peter Drucker, *The End of Economic Man: The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Milton: Taylor and Francis, 2017), originally published in 1939, Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Harvest Books (New York: Harcourt, 1973), originally published 1951, and Fromm.

54. Milton Mayer and Richard J. Evans, *They Thought They Were Free: The Germans, 1933–45* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2017) 223. Hereafter, cited as Mayer and Evans.

55. DS, 140.

56. DS, 132. Eucken himself went even further, saying that any properly understood social policy is “identical with policy to [give] order [to] the economy”; see Walter Eucken, *Grundsätze der Wirtschaftspolitik*, 7. Edition (Tübingen: UTB, Stuttgart, 2003), 313. Quoted from Goldschmidt 1998, 42.

57. Anyone who experienced the euphoria that can grab the audience of a rock concert or the fans of a sports club after a decisive goal will recognize the situation. This phenomenon is most aptly described in Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, trans. Carol Stewart (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1984).

58. When asked in the early 1950s, many described the years from 1933 to 1939 as the best time of their lives “The[ir] lives . . . were lightened and brightened by National Socialism as they knew it. And they look back at it now . . . as the best time of their lives; . . . There were jobs and job security, summer camps for the children and the *Hitlerjugend* to keep them off the streets.” Mayer and Evans, 48.

59. The Denkschrift was one of the main contributors, but by no means the only source of inspiration. For a sampling of Roman Catholic and Protestant contributors see

for example Alfred Müller-Armack, *Wirtschaftslenkung und Marktwirtschaft*, ed. Frank Thelen (Munich: Kastell, 1990); Joseph Höffner, *Christliche Gesellschaftslehre* (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker Verlag, 1962). An English translation is available at <http://www.ordosocialis.de/pdf/jhoeffner/Christl.%20Gesellschaftsl/cglenga4neu.pdf>; Nils Goldschmidt and Ursula Nothelle-Wildfeuer, eds., *Freiburger Schule und Christliche Gesellschaftslehre: Joseph Kardinal Höffner und die Ordnung von Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012); Daniel Dietzfelbinger, "Die evangelischen Wurzeln der Sozialen Marktwirtschaft. Genese und ethische Bedeutung einer sozioökonomischen Ordnungstheorie" (presented at the conference Wettbewerbsfähige soziale Marktwirtschaft—Zukunftsmodell oder Utopie? Tagungsnummer: 620311, Bad Boll, Germany, February 3, 2011), <http://www.ev-akademie-boll.de/fileadmin/res/otg/doku/620311-Dietzfelbinger-pdf.pdf>.

60. On the historic background, see Hans Maier's work mentioned above (endnote 6), as well as publications of Goldschmidt. For in-depth coverage of the churches during the Nazi era see Kurt Meier, *Der evangelische Kirchenkampf: Gesamtdarst. in 3 Bd* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1976).

61. See note 39.

62. Stephan Holthaus, *Zwischen Gewissen Und Gewinn: Die Wirtschafts- Und Sozialordnung Des "Freiburger Bonhoeffer-Kreises" Und Ihre Christliche Begründung* (Dissertation, 2014); Available online at <https://core.ac.uk/display/43177060>. Published also as Stephan Holthaus, *Zwischen Gewissen und Gewinn: Die Wirtschafts- und Sozialordnung der "Freiburger Denkschrift" und die Anfänge der Sozialen Marktwirtschaft* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2015).

63. Johannes Vincke, *Zur Geschichte der Universität Freiburg i. Br.* (Freiburg: E. Albert, 1966). Eckhard John, ed., *Die Freiburger Universität in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus* (Freiburg: Ploetz, 1991), especially pp. 191–205 and 207–19.

64. Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel: Evangelii Gaudium* (Washington, DC; Vatican City: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2013); item 53.

65. DS, 35.